Absent presence/present absence: hauntings in Québécois and Canadian literature and film

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Contributors

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Ceri Morgan is a senior lecturer at Keele University, UK. She works on literary geographies in Québec fiction, place writing, walking studies and GeoHumanities. Her publications include *Mindscapes of Montreal* (2012) and 'Walking studies, the Eastern Townships, and William S. Messier's *Dixie*', *Nottingham French Studies*, 55.2 (2016). Her recent projects include a digital map of literary Montréal entitled, 'Fictional Montreal/Montréal fictif' (British Academy small research grant 2016–17), produced with media artist, Philip Lichti; and *Seams* (2018) – a show about coal mining developed and performed with participatory performance company, Restoke, a walking-writing group at Keele University called the Dawdlers, and community participants.

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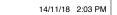
Introduction: Ghost H(a)unts

Agata Handley, Ceri Morgan and Vanja Polić

Ghosts come in a variety of guises. They serve to unsettle the present, reminding us of unfinished business from the past. They also comfort, recalling loved ones who are no longer with us. They can gesture towards those who are yet to be born if, along with Jacques Derrida, we accept that ghosts disrupt chronological time.[1] In all cases, however, ghosts are characterized by a play between absence and presence, self and other, silence and speech. As Susan Bruce argues, 'absence [is] the paradoxical evidence of the ghost's existence'.[2] Ghosts do not necessarily assume human form: animals are not very present in this issue, but places certainly are. The concept of place as made up of layers formed over time and which bleed into each other, as found in Walter Benjamin's *The Arcades Project*,[3] is taken up by many critics and creative practitioners.[4] In what follows, cities, villages, islands and continents shimmer in and out of view, as do loved ones, lost ones and ones who resist being forgotten even though their actions suggest they should be.

In her book on spectrality in contemporary women's writing, Martine Delvaux describes Derrida as undertaking a 'ghost hunt' in Marx's work.[5] The articles in this issue engage in a similar exercise. Agata Handley's article focuses on the struggle of dealing with loss and re-living the past in Jane Urquhart's *The Stone Carvers* (2001). Referring to the concept of the death mask and the classical topoi of nekuia and katabasis, Handley discusses the way in which the theme of haunting is interwoven by Urquhart into a larger narrative, forming an ongoing meditation on the migrant experience, traumatic memory and artistic endeavor, while reflecting the transience of human existence. As its name suggests, Amy Coquaz's critical-creative 'Writing absence: troubled and troubling texts' centers on questions around absence: in the first instance, the absent

fathers in Delvaux's Governor-General's Award shortlisted novel, *Blanc dehors* (2015) and her own forthcoming novel, *Toi*. These ghostly paternal figures go on to become prompts for exploring what it means to write absence and, ultimately, stimuli for writing itself. Doubling – of self, of voice, of language, of fact and fiction – works as a haunting which deliberately seeks to trouble and disturb by challenging homogeneity and normativity. Coquaz claims, 'it is a long-understood principle of creative writers that what is *not* said is as important as what *is* said' (page 23). Ceri Morgan's 'Sonic spectres' analyses the different kinds of haunting and their connections with the said and unsaid in Madeleine Thien's *Dogs at the Perimeter* (2011) and the digital map she produced with media artist, Philip Lichti entitled 'Fictional Montreal/Montréal fictif' (2016–17). Reflecting on the ways in which both novel and map play around absence and presence, Morgan argues that they embrace the potentially utopian aspect of spectrality identified by Derrida.[6]

Sound also features in Evelyn Deshane's and Travis Morton's 'The Words Change Everything: Haunting, Contagion and the Stranger in *Pontypool*' (1998). Using Bruce McDonald's 2008 film as a case study for exploring issues around contagion – notably linguistic contagion – Deshane and Morton argue that it challenges some of the genre conventions of the zombie movie. Claiming that *Pontypool* effects a shift in focus from 'invasion' associated with spectacular gore, to 'haunting' (page 23) as expressed through language, the authors suggest that it has the potential to promote linguistic and gender inclusivity. Questions of genre come into play in Vanja Polić's 'The Hauntings of Canada in Michael Crummey's *Sweetland*' (2014). Viewing Crummey's novel through the lens of the gothic, Polić draws attention to the ways in which it challenges conceptualizations of Canadian national identity – and, indeed, national identities in general – by insisting on the significance of the local. Jasmina Bolfek-Radovani examines the notion of 'postcolonial hauntings', and their role in the construction of the language of memory, in two narratives by francophone authors of mixed background: Robert Lalonde's *Sept Lacs plus au Nord* (1993) and Nina Bouraoui's *Mes mauvaises pensées* (2005). Applying a method of a close textual reading, Bolfek-Radovani investigates different aspects of the postcolonial framework, including but not limited to the notions of postcolonial ambiguity; the re-appropriation of native space; and the idea of the moment of 'stillness' as a resurgence of memory.

Several of the articles were first given as papers at the British Association for Canadian Studies conference in London in April 2017 as part of a special panel entitled 'Absent presence/present absence: hauntings

in Québécois and Canadian literature and film'. As the UK prepares to leave the European Union, it is, perhaps, a timely moment to think about a project undertaken by colleagues in Croatia, Poland and the UK as itself a kind of ghost – of international cooperation, collaboration and friendship across disciplines and languages.

Notes

1   Jacques Derrida, *Spectres de Marx: L'État de la dette, le travail du deuil et la nouvelle Internationale* (Paris: Galilée, 1993), 72.
2   Susan Bruce, 'Sympathy For the Dead: (G)hosts, Hostilities and Mediums in Alejandro Amenàbar's The Others and Postmortem Photography', *Discourse*, 27.2 & 27.3 (Spring and Fall 2005): 22.
3   Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (London: The Belknap Press, 2002).
4   See, for example, Robert E. Macfarlane, *The Old Ways: A Journey on Foot,* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2012), Will Self, *Psychogeography* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007).
5   Martine Delvaux, 'Hanté par la figure de Hamlet, Derrida part à la chasse aux fantômes dans l'œuvre de Marx', *Histoires de fantômes. Spectralité et témoignage dans les récits de femmes contemporains* (Montréal: les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2005), 17.
6   Derrida, *Spectres de Marx*, 71.

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identity construction recurring in Tony Harrison's work from the 70s onwards. She is a member of the editorial team for *Text Matters: A Journal of Literature, Theory and Culture*.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interests with this work.

Conjuring Ghosts of the Past: Landscapes and Hauntings in Jane Urquhart's *The Stone Carvers*

Agata Handley

Abstract

Jane Urquhart's novel *The Stone Carvers* (2001) portrays the struggles of a community of German immigrants in the nineteenth century, as they attempt to settle in Western Ontario; it also includes a fictionalized account of the construction of the Canadian National Vimy Memorial[1] (for First World War Canadian dead, and missing, presumed dead, in France). The article explores the issues of dealing with loss, and re-living the past, which are interwoven by Urquhart into a larger narrative, forming an ongoing meditation on the experience of 'in-betweenness' – transgressing not only spatial, but also temporal boundaries – and incorporating individual and communal histories as they are passed on through generations. The lives of Urquhart's characters are marked by the ambivalence of belonging – the experience of having more than one homeland, in more than one landscape. They are haunted by lost places, and by the memory of people who perished as a result of war, or who they left behind in the course of their own personal journey. The article explores the issue of 'landscape biography', and also examines Urquhart's employment of the literary topoi of nekuia/katabasis (i.e., encounters with the dead). It demonstrates how the confrontation with the past becomes, in the novel, a prerequisite for regeneration of the present, and the establishment of the future.

Keywords: Canadian fiction, hauntings, katabasis, nekuia, The Stone Carvers, Jane Urquhart

The novelist and poet Jane Urquhart has commented on the quality of in-betweenness pervading Canadian writing, that stems from the ambivalence of belonging, provoked by the experience of having more than one homeland, and more than one landscape. According to the author, with the exception of indigenous peoples, Canada is a nation of immigrants who 'carry in their imaginations . . . an abandoned homeland',[2] accessible only through the dense and fragmented net of memories, which create an ever-changing pattern, a fascinating but confusing kaleidoscopic effect. The result is a permanent sense of displacement and loss, strengthened by the fact that the landscape that has been left behind acquires, in the migrant narrative, a ghost-like quality. It is not forgotten, but not remembered precisely – its contours blurred and diluted; and as such it becomes superimposed on the new landscape, more immediate, but less familiar. As Urquhart observes:

> It's hard to let it [a landscape] go. I believe that it's one of the things that people mourn almost as much as they mourn the loss of a person who's close to them. They may even mourn for a longer time. I know that people who have lost their towns or their villages are just heartbroken, because it will not be possible to introduce this mourned world to their children or their children's children; . . . the chain of inheritance is broken.[3]

In *The Stone Carvers*, Jane Urquhart shows people trying to create roots in the landscape, building structures in space to give them a sense of purchase, commemorating the landscapes and the dead they left behind. The first half of the book follows the growth in the nineteenth century of the fictional town of Shoneval in Canada. Father Gstir, who arrives from Germany, chooses it as a spot to build a stone church. It is perhaps worth mentioning that, in accordance with Urquhart's belief that 'entry into history is always local',[4] this part of the novel recalls the story of an existing town called Farmosa, home of the Church of the Immaculate Conception. Its construction was overseen by Rev. Archangelus Gstir, a priest who arrived in Canada in 1861, to tend to the congregation of the Formosa parish. In the novel, the fictional Gstir organizes a Corpus Christi procession; it is joined by local people carrying carved miniature models of 'structures they either remembered fondly from their pasts or fervently hoped would appear in their futures';[5] Bavarian farms and castles, a convent, an opera house, a tavern, etc. The attachment to the lost landscape persists, but the cultivation of memory proves harder with the passing of years.

In *Memory: An Anthology*, Craig Raine argues that memory is an 'anthology of snapshots',[6] like the series of images at the beginning of James Joyce's *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* (1916): 'a snatch of baby talk, the sensation of wetting the bed; covering and uncovering your ears at refectory'.[7] To reconstruct the whole picture means to fill in the gaps between the fragments, using the power of imagination, at the cost of losing the authenticity of experience. Being aware of this fact will not stop us from striving for completeness, as if continual attempts to give a full story of the past could give it justice. Raine continues: 'Anything fragmented is given a penumbra of suggestion that we mistake and read as vividness of outline'.[8] The person trying to remember is always tempted to fill in the gaps between Wordsworthian 'spots of time'.[9] Raine quotes Milan Kundera's novel *Ignorance* (2000), suggesting that one reason for the need to obtain a continuity of remembrance is nostalgia, 'the suffering caused by an unappeased yearning to return'.[10] The miniature models of an urban landscape in Urquhart's novel can be read as the product of nostalgia. Gaps in the patchwork structure are filled with new ideas, and the result is a memory/dream construction, which helps to sustain the collective memory of the lost landscape.

Because it is dealing with a migrant community, *The Stone Carvers* is in this sense about constructing 'roots' rather than finding them in a landscape which cannot be re-inhabited or even revisited. At the time when Father Gstir is organizing his procession, the immigrants cannot discover traces of their ancestors: there are no footprints that can be followed, no existing outlines that can be copied, to accept the gift of inheritance. However, the story of the building of the church is itself cherished as a founding myth through succeeding generations, which suggests that the roots are at least partially successfully constructed, together with a concomitant sense of community. As Alicia Fahey notes, the first chapter of the novel 'begins with a group of women engaged in an act of storytelling about the origins of their village'.[11] The very first sentence is concerned with 'the production and dissemination of stories across the boundaries of time and space':[12]

> There was a story, a true if slightly embellished story, about how the Ontario village was given its name, its church, its brewery, its tavern, its gardens, its grottoes, its splendid indoor and outdoor altars.[13]

The women who sustain the story (a community of nuns, and the spinster Klara), believed that it connected them 'through ancestry, through *work* and worship and through vocation to the village's

inception'.[14] They clung to it, 'as if by telling the tale they became wit-nesses, perhaps even participants in the awkward fabrication of matter, the difficult architecture of the new world'.[15]

What enables the 'roots' to emerge are the conscious cultivation of memories, the conjuring of ghosts, faithfulness to the abandoned land-scape, and the translation of this landscape into a story. The reader learns that the story is 'true', but this is immediately questioned by the narrator, with the assertion that it is also 'slightly embellished'.[16] The condition of the migrant, Urquhart seems to suggest, is characterized by attachment to ghost-like places without substance, whose images run the constant risk of being erased from the mind-maps of their former inhabitants. If they are not to be forgotten, they have to be sustained through the life-support system of a story.

It seems, also, justifiable to say that in the novel, all landscapes (both past and present) are unfixed, and haunted by the ghosts of the old land-scapes, either the ones they replaced, or the ones they were modelled on. At this point it proves interesting to look at Urquhart's landscape narra-tives from the perspective of the notion of landscape biography, which, as Johannes Renes writes

> is not a hermetic theory but rather an inspiring metaphor used as an umbrella for a number of ideas that have changed the way we look at history of as well as the actual dealing with landscapes. The core of this set of ideas is the vision of landscape as an object that is handed over and over again from generation to the next, in the pro-cess undergoing not only physical changes, but also changes in . . . meaning.[17]

Renes sees landscape, similarly to the way it is understood in the novel, as constructed of 'historical layers'. He refers to vertical time-layers, 'distinguished literally by geologists and archaeologists mapping stratified sediments and buried landscapes',[18] and to horizontal layers of artefacts and spatial structures; but he also distinguishes a third form of layer, described as palimpsests, 'when older traces shimmer through a landscape that is dominated by the relics of later developments'.[19] This last type is given a metaphorical rendering in Urquhart's writing, where 'traces from different periods do not just lie . . . on the top of each other, but are also actively given new roles, values and meanings'.[20]

Urquhart makes us aware of the way that one landscape is always superimposed onto another, which continues to 'shimmer' through. The history of a given place is never firmly located in the past, but manifests

itself in the present in the form of spectres, and in 'the production and dissemination of stories'.[21] In constructing her vision of landscape, Urquhart pays close attention to the long-term changes which landscapes undergo, through the actions (both creative and destructive) of the inhabitants, and the imprints they leave behind them, both consciously and unconsciously. Marta Dvorak and Héliane Daziron-Ventura observe that Urquhart's landscape aesthetics are deeply humanistic in their character, and focused on the significance of human presence.[22] Urquhart's own words confirm this view:

> I've always been very drawn to landscape and particularly landscape where some evidence of human activity is left behind. Pure wilderness really doesn't interest me that much, because there are no traces left by human beings. The agricultural landscape, when you can see evidence of the past, interest me more . . . I do believe that there's a kind of presence in landscape . . . It's almost as if every boulder has a particular . . . name, and often there is an associated story.[23]

It is the connection between the landscape and the story, the visual and the verbal, reflecting and informing each other in a continual relationship, which recurs at different levels of Urquhart's fiction. In her 'Address' in the book *Resurgence in Jane Urquhart's Œuvre* (2010), Urquhart refers to a work of art which constitutes an example of this interdependence, and perhaps also an example of aesthetics akin to the one she develops in writing: *The Penitence of Saint Jerome* by fifteenth century Flemish painter Joachim Patinir. Patinir created a series of paintings revolving around the saint, his figure always located in landscapes so full of intricate and vibrant details that 'one might think that Saint Jerome need not be in the scene at all'; and yet this is not the case, since the main story of the painting revolves around him.[24] As Urquhart asserts:

> Arguably any figure in any landscape hints at the telling of a story, but the Patinir that I am thinking of . . . tells many stories at the same time and on the same canvas. In one part of the painting, near a cave, we see Saint Jerome removing the thorn from the lion's paw. In another . . . the lion chases wolfs away from the sheep. In still another, the lion seems to be chatting with a gathering of people in front of the gate of a town miles and miles away.[25]

The viewer is exposed to 'multi-layered, interwoven plot lines'; the act of looking means making sense of the way they connect to the

context they inhabit, the 'environment' in which they are imbedded.[26] What Urquhart says about the painting – namely, that 'without . . . the landscape the stories would have no place to unfold. Alternatively . . . without the stories, landscape itself might never have existed'[27] – proves to be also true about *The Stone Carvers*, in which the landscape simultaneously becomes a vessel which carries multifaceted stories, and continues to be transformed by the personal and communal histories of its inhabitants.

In the book, Urquhart recounts the legend of the origins of the village, as re-told by the women; of how it 'was given its name, its church, its brewery, its tavern. . . . its blacksmith's shop',[28] which is essentially a story about the transformation of the carved miniature models, ghosts of Bavarian structures, carried in Father Gstir's procession, into a real, inhabited place. The litanic enumeration of the structures which make up the village seems to offer no sense of spatial organization; it is as if the buildings are passing one-by-one in front of our eyes, towards nothingness. By this point in time (the 1930s), the rail fences are tattered, the porches collapsing, 'the tannery and blacksmith's shop had disappeared years ago, and though the general store was still a fixture, its counter was so warped and scarred it looked as if it might have once served as a butcher's block'.[29] Even the legend of the founding of the village is threatened with extinction, since it appeals 'to fewer and fewer people'[30] in the depression era. The village itself, with its older parts in a state of decay, and newer parts half-finished, seems to be turning into dust, acquiring a hollow, ghost-like quality. The landscape is withering slowly, either because it is disappearing from memory, or through the disintegrating forces of time and neglect; but it cannot be understood in separation from its former incarnations, the palimpsests of what it may once have been, and the narrations, dreams and histories which participated in its creation.

And so the reference to the 'work'[31] of the women who cling to the legend suggests not only the process of everyday toil, but also the work of mourning, which sustains remembrance. In an interview with Laura Ferri, Urquhart claims that the fact that 'the world is always disappearing from us, it's always moving away from us',[32] is one of the forces which can drive people to create art. Marta Dvorak suggests that Urquhart here aligns herself with Salman Rushdie, who has argued that 'metamorphosis, the knowledge that *nothing holds its form*, is the driving force of art'.[33] In *The Stone Carvers*, the sense that the world is always disappearing is what triggers the creation of stories, and also encourages the villagers to create wooden structures for Father Gstir's procession. The models, like Joseph's carvings, and the actual buildings of the town, will eventually turn to dust;

but, it seems, they will not disappear entirely – they will return as hauntings, recognized by those who believe in the power of a story.

At the climax of the book, Klara, Joseph Becker's granddaughter, goes to France, to work on the Vimy Memorial. The building of the monument in the second half of the novel parallels the building of the church in Shoneval in Ontario – both acts of dedication to community, and setting down roots in place; commemorating landscapes and people, whose images, still vivid, are at risk of falling into oblivion. Ultimately, she chooses to carve the features of her dead lover on one of the statues; she may have been driven by the same impulse that prompted Joseph's creativity: an awareness 'that nothing *holds its form*',[34] and of the transformative experience of loss.

The re-creation of her lover's face on the statue constitutes an act of mourning, through which a ghost, more real to Klara than the living who surround her, obtains a face. The gesture of the stone carver can be read as gesture of silent prosopopeia, a trope which has, in the core of its meaning, the idea of figuration, and more precisely the creation of a face, as the emblem of human identity, carrying with it the notion of individual distinctiveness, but also the notion of identification with others, with humanity as a whole. In a study of Wordsworth's Essays upon Epitaphs, Paul de Man defines prosopopeia as

> the fiction of an apostrophe to an absent, deceased, or voiceless entity, which posits the possibility of the latter's reply and confers upon it the power of speech. Voice assumes mouth, eye, and finally face, a chain that is manifested in the etymology of the trope's name, *prosopon poien*, to confer a mask or a face (*prosopon*).[35]

The statue which Klara works on is not endowed with the power of speech in a literal sense, but it ceases, despite the original intentions of the memorial's designer, Walter Seymour Allward, to be an anonymous figure. Instead, it obtains the particular story of a dead soldier, an individual 'voice' which participates in the larger war-narrative, in the communal, Canadian experience. Allward is initially critical of Klara's work, convinced as he is that indistinctiveness in the statue's features will ensure the clarity of the message he is aiming to convey, but he eventually changes his mind, and allows the identity of one individual soldier to be rescued from the mass grave of war casualties.

Another feature of the trope of prosopopeia is that it functions on the border between the world of the living and the world of the dead, bringing them closer together: it brings the dead back to life, but at the

same time, reminds the survivors of their mortality, and 'shows a necessary inadequacy of our relation to death'.[36] Consequently, it forces the one who remains alive to confront the ghosts whose faces or voices they encounter. Klara's experience – forging the face of her dead lover – can be read in the context of a classic literary topoi: the journey of the protagonist into the realm of the dead, only to emerge again alive, to continue his/her life. As Michael Thurston explains:

> The Underworld descent tradition actually conflates two narrative topoi—the 'nekuia', in which the shades of the dead are invoked and confronted and 'katabasis', in which the protagonist actually enters (literally 'goes down into') the Underworld . . . The protagonist, usually at the nadir of his journey, at a dark moment of exhaustion, confusion or despair, is driven to seek counsel and guidance from the past . . . [S]uch descents appear as a crucial episode or as a large part of entire narrative in many of the classic texts in western literature: Odysseus's encounter with the shade of Tiresias becomes Aeneas's meeting with his father, Anchises, in Virgil's *Aeneid*. Aeneas's trip into the classical Underworld becomes Dante's descent into the medieval Christian's Hell in *Inferno*. Dante's *Inferno* is echoed in by Milton's Satan in *Paradise Lost*. Milton in turn provides a backdrop for Blake in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.[37]

Klara's actions can be seen as the process of conjuring the ghost of her dead lover, Eamon. After the work is finished, she is forced to confront the image of her lover's countenance, transferred from the realm of memory to the realm of the physical, palpable world. In the course of her work, she also utters, and then carves in stone, the name of her lover, invoking the ghost through the use of language, and so she exposes herself, for the first time in many years, to the sound of his name. The visual and verbal are thus closely connected; the dead is brought to life through both word and image. At this point of the narrative, Klara's experience fulfils the conditions of nekuia (invocation and confrontation). Like Odysseus in the 11th book of *The Odyssey*, she interacts with the shade of the dead, without actually descending into the Underworld.[38]

As the one who outlived the war casualties, 'left behind to battle with the pain of remembering',[39] Klara has to deal with the war's aftermath, both as a carver participating in the public enterprise of commemoration, and as an individual dealing with the loss of her lover. Urquhart does not expose the reader to the agony of the battlefield: she 'avoids representing the subaltern experience . . . she is focused on how to make sense of the

war insider's scars'.[40] The face of Eamon carries no scars. The bodies of two of the characters, Tilman and Recouvrir, are marked by the battlefield's brutality, and their presence constitutes a reminder of the past. Eamon, on the other hand, has vanished, in a truly ghostly manner, in the chaos of war, never to return, alive or dead, and so his scars cannot be witnessed. It also means he has no grave other than in Klara's memory, where he remains untouched by violence, unscarred and whole, at least as long as she can sustain his image in her mind's eye. She internalizes the ghost of Eamon through the years, which seems to remain vivid and alive, at the cost of her own self-petrification and feeling of detachment from the world of the living:

> Urquhart considers the possibility that certain forms of remembering may prove to be unsafe . . . Klara's determination to 'train herself in the art of stoic apartness' eventually leads her to feel such rupture between herself and others that she cannot conceive of herself as existing in the present. It is only after her work on the memorial . . . she can participate in life and in love.[41]

The haunting countenance of Eamon binds Klara to a particular moment in history, locking her in the past, until she becomes almost completely frozen, as if she has encountered the gaze of the mythical Gorgon, capable of turning the living into stone. As the narrator suggests, 'no matter how it is cherished, an absent face that is a fixed reference becomes tyrannical and tyranny eventually demands revolt'.[42] It is pertinent to examine, at this point, the connection between the past, and revolt. Julia Kristeva, who conducts an etymological analysis of the word in *Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt*, suggests that 'two semantic shifts mark the evolution of the word: the first implies the notion of movement, the second, that of space and time'.[43]

> The Latin verb *volvere*, which is at the origin of revolt, was initially far removed from politics. It produced derivatives with meanings . . . such as 'curve', 'entourage', 'turn', 'return' . . . [U]nder Italian influence in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, *volutas*, *voluta*—in French *volute* . . . as well as *volta* and *voltare* suggest the idea of circular movement and by extension, temporal return. *Volta* also means 'time'—as in 'one time' or 'once'—hence, 'turning back'.[44]

In Klara's case, revolt is conducted through the experience of nekuia – reaching into the past in order to eventually turn towards the

future. It involves artistic endeavour, and the personification of lifeless matter: by breathing life into stone, she gives an actual shape to previously untamed memory, exerting control over its form. In this respect, Klara's personal experience corresponds to the idea that guided Allward during his own creative process. In real life, as in the novel, the architect conceived the monument as a vessel for communal grief, or (in Jacqueline Hucker's words), a structure which would 'harness the violent and irrational forces released by the war' and 'offer a promise to a return to order and harmony'.[45]

The face brought by Klara from the realm of shadows to the realm of physical reality is probably the last image of Eamon which will ever be made, 'the face that the dead person left behind'.[46] It bears a resemblance to the death mask, which always has absence as its premise, and which is born out of the longing for the lost object, in the hope of preserving it for the eye of the living. As Hans Belting writes, paradoxically 'it represents a presence that can only emerge through the absence of what it represents'.[47] The difference, however, is that Eamon's 'mask' has never been taken off the actual face; it was not separated from the flesh and bone of the human being.[48] This moment in the creation of the death mask is sometimes referred to as 'violent break, *Facies interrupta*';[49] it could never have happened to Eamon, since his body was never found. This lack of closure, and lack of ceremony, the fact that his body was returned to earth directly, unobserved, unattended and without burial, lead to Klara's internalisation of the memory of the face. To free herself from the face's tyranny, she imitates the 'violent break'.[50] The formation of the lover's face leads to the rupture necessary for healing to begin. But first, she has to recall every feature of the young man with astonishing precision, and 'peel back the layers the time had built around her visual memory'.[51] She remembers

> the bones under the skin, the scar on his left temple, the beautiful, full mouth, his upturned glance and radiant expression when searching the sky for a kite, an aeroplane . . . The two graceful wings of his eyebrows. How his hair fell when he threw his head back, the soft, slightly slanted contour of his eye. He had been only a boy, the inquisitive child he had been had never left his face. He must hold the torch aloft. But because this figure would become Eamon and would be looking up towards his beloved ether, his expression must be of astonishment . . . forever reaching toward the sky. His arm illuminating clouds.[52]

The images seem to melt into one another, overlapping, inter-connecting; the stone statue metamorphoses into Eamon, his eyebrows become aeroplane 'wings',[53] his body connects with the sky by a beam of light streaming out of his torch. The softness and sensuousness of this description could be misleading; memories do not simply enter Klara's consciousness in a film-like procession of frames. Rather, they are salvaged from oblivion in a brutal way, obtained with difficulty by the carver who uses tools of her trade not to mould the stone but to mould herself, as though separating the flesh of Eamon from her own flesh, or removing his death mask from the obverse side of her own face: 'She stood on the ladder, eyes squeezed shut, scraping these images from the deepest recesses of her memory as if using the sculpting tool on the inner curve of her skull'.[54] In accordance with the demands of the nekuia/katabasis topoi, Klara undergoes a 'rehearsal' of the past.[55] While carving, she has to 'lean over the upturned face . . . looking down at him as she had so often done as a girl, in haylofts, in orchards, in the sunroom . . . and . . . she felt as if she was falling into the ghost of an embrace'.[56] It seems that all the past instances of closeness between the lovers, now become one moment, relived through the process of carving. Her gesture of leaning over to approach the ghost may be metaphorically understood as a form of descent into the realm of the dead, where 'all pasts are made equally present'.[57] But Klara also descends into the realm of the dead in a more literal sense, when she chooses the network of trench tunnels as a place for love-making, with her new lover Giorgio.

The subterranean imagery in the novel forms part of a metaphoric dimension in the landscape as a whole. Urquhart divides it horizontally, into the space over and under the ground, and the narrative develops in parallel in both realms. The dividing line, however, does not imply a lack of connection. On the contrary, one realm depends on the other, and both create a larger 'interconnecting system',[58] whose description brings to mind a living organism: the tunnels serve as 'extended tangled roots reaching up to the monument above, feeding its construction by their very existence'.[59] This organic metaphor suggests that the world beneath the surface is alive: it is more than a foundation, it spurs the memorial's growth, which springs out of the earth like a tree. The way that Allward's actual construction interacted with the environment was itself not accidental. Architectural historian Jacqueline Hucker claims that 'for Allward it was extremely important that the monument not simply sit on the crest of the ridge but be positioned in such a way that it appeared to grow out of the battle landscape'.[60] In reality and in fiction, the subterranean world,

filled with detritus of war, is the source from which Vimy Memorial stems. Yet, despite its seemingly solid character, the earth does not, according to Urquhart, offer a sturdy foundation; it seems unfixed and fluid. The impression is achieved through water imagery and through references to the way in which loose material, the product of disintegration and war destruction, surges above the ground, reminding the living that what they build on is land occupied by the dead, a mass grave. It is clear, in the following description, that the earth that received war casualties, and which now has to be disturbed, is still fresh; the organic and inorganic debris that saturates it still, as if half alive, unfossilized, untouched by geological forces. This is a time when the war is still raw, both under the thin layer of dust and in the minds of the survivors.

> Body parts and clothing, bibles, family snapshots, letters, buttons, bones and belt buckles were unearthed daily, and under the plot of earth from which the central staircase would one day rise, the fully uniformed skeletal remains of a German general were disinterred . . . Once, a mine half a mile away exploded, unearthing a young oak tree and the carcass of a horse, intact, activated, it would seem, by the fractional movement of the underground growth of roots.[61]

Klara makes her journey into this realm. The trench tunnels, containing the remnants of the soldiers, is where she regularly meets her lover and fellow carver, Giorgio. At one point, he leads her deeper into the maze, to show her traces of the soldiers' lives, preserved in the darkness: 'The whole labyrinth seemed a parody of the world above as soldiers had chiselled into the passageways and underground rooms the names of places they have been fond of, or places they have imagined. One oval space had been called Centreton Ball Park, and another Convocation Hall'.[62] At this moment of exploration, Giorgio's role echoes the one of Virgil and Tiresias, as he, like a psychopomp, guides Klara through the network of tunnels in which she fears to lose herself. '"Are you sure you know where we're going?"',[63] she asks him, '"Will we be able to get back?"'.[64] The underground landscape, with familiar place names carved on the walls, signs of the lost life, can be read, not only as haunted, but also as a haunting in itself, a ghost of the physical world to which it refers. Suddenly, their lantern illuminates a carved portrait of a young soldier, executed by someone who, as Giorgio imagines, must have had 'compassion for the suffering of this face',[65] who must have cared about it the way that Klara cares about the face of the statue she carves above the ground. By association, the

portrait may be seen as a shadow of the effigy of Eamon; the sentiment that inspired its creation is the same. This encounter with this anonymous portrait prompts Giorgio to ask Klara to tell him the name of her dead lover, but she refuses to answer. Disappointed, he walks away towards the entrance, carrying the torch with him:

> The air around Klara grew first dim and then dark . . . Since the day of her departure, Klara had never once said aloud the name of her young lover. She felt that to release the syllables into the air all these years later would be a kind of amputation, a violent removal of a part of the self. To present them to the man she had so recently embraced would betray, she believed, Eamon's bright, eager passion, would for the second time annul it. She wanted to crawl away from Giorgio now, to curl up somewhere in the dark, alone . . . She had only two choices: to stay alone in the dripping shadows of the underground labyrinth or to follow Giorgio, follow his light.[66]

The idea of articulating the name of her lover is described, like the action of carving the face, in terms of the pain which Klara inflicts upon herself. The image of the physical desecration of the body is accompanied by the idea of the obliteration of love, already destroyed once by Eamon's departure. Yet, as the narrative subsequently reveals, this repetition is necessary if Klara is going to participate fully in life. In the passage, she refrains from fulfilling Giorgio's wish, but she already understands that this time, she would be the one to kill the 'eager passion' of Eamon's love. Cruel and bleak as it may be, the act of destruction suggests agency; Klara exerts control over the situation. It is her choice whether to perform the 'violent break', or to refrain from action, and stay 'in the dripping shadows'.[67] She follows the light.

Eventually, Klara discloses Eamon's name to Giorgio, and subsequently carves it on the monument, among the names of other Canadian soldiers who lost their lives in the war. By chiselling it letter by letter, Klara invokes the ghost once more; and this time again, as in her underground journey into the tunnels, she is led by Giorgio, who (in this case) guides her hands. The moment is described as the concluding stage in her journey, the final 'confrontation' with her dead lover: 'Klara knew this would be the last time she touched Eamon, that when they finished carving his name all the confusion and regret of his absence would unravel, just as surely as if she had embraced him with forgiving arms'.[68] Sorrow and passion 'enter' the monument's stone, which becomes, as was planned, 'a

huge urn . . . designed to hold grief'.[69] Eamon's death becomes a part of a broader war narrative, composed of the stories of (to use Primo Levi's term) 'complete witnesses':[70] those who have stared into the face of the Gorgon, and will never return to the world of the living. The litany of names covering the stone surfaces of the Vimy Memorial brings to mind the image of ghost-like silhouettes crossing London Bridge in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, moving in silent procession, not alive and yet not entirely dead either; a multitude of lost lives, embodying Wilfred Owen's 'pity of war'.[71] The gesture of carving the soldiers' names in stone is an attempt at commemoration and individualisation, but also an inscription of the stories that these names represent into the landscape of Vimy.

By fulfilling her artistic potential, Klara not only embeds Eamon's story in the larger story of war, but also inscribes herself into the narrative of her familial history; she sustains the tradition of her grandfather's craft, and equals him in the skills she has mastered. Becoming a carver means she maintains a continuity of experience with her ancestors, whose quiet graves inhabit the ground surrounding the church in Shoneval, the landscape she temporarily abandons to take part in the creation of the Vimy Memorial. On another level, through Urquhart's employment of the topoi of nekuia and katabasis, Klara's journey is situated within the enduring literary tradition of descent to the underworld, and confrontation with the dead. This mythologizes or universalizes Klara's story, even as it remains an intimate personal narrative of love and mourning. In this way, the novel encompasses the idea of eternal return and regeneration; the human need both to salvage and preserve memories from oblivion, and to renew, reconstruct and innovate, 'against the horizon of the past',[72] and in the face of death.

Notes

1   Referred to subsequently as Vimy Memorial in the rest of the article.

2   Jane Urquhart, 'Bringing Landscape Home: An Interview with Jane Urquhart', in *Bringing Landscape Home in the Writings of Jane Urquhart*, ed. Dorota Filipczak et al. (Łódź: Łódź University Press, 2010), 12.

3   Jane Urquhart, 'Confessions of a Historical Geographer', in *Speaking in the Past Tense*, ed. Herb Wyile. (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007), 101.

4   Urquhart, 'Confessions of a Historical Geographer', 100.

5   Jane Urquhart, *The Stone Carvers* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2001), 105.

6   Craig Raine, 'Memories in Literature', in *Memory: An Anthology*, ed. Harriet Harvey Wood et al. (London: Vintage Books, 2009), 30–31.

7   Raine, 'Memories in Literature', 30–31.

8   Raine, 'Memories in Literature', 30–31.

9   William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 257.

10   Milan Kundera, *Ignorance*, trans. Lidia Aster (London: Faber and Faber, 2002), 5.

11 Alicia Fahey, 'Voices from the Edge: De-Centering Master Narratives in Jane Urquhart's *The Stone Carvers*', in *The Great War in Post-memory Film and Literature,* ed. Martin Löschnigg et al. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 411.

12 Fahey, 'Voices from the Edge', 411.

13 Urquhart, *The Stone Carvers*, 5.

14 Urquhart, *The Stone Carvers*, 6. My emphasis.

15 Urquhart, *The Stone Carvers*, 6.

16 Urquhart, *The Stone Carvers*, 6.

17 Johannes Renes, 'Layered Landscape', in *Biographies: Geographical, Historical and Archaeological Perspectives on the Production and Transmission of Landscapes*, ed. Jan Kolen et al. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015), 404.

18 Renes, 'Layered Landscape', 404.

19 Renes, 'Layered Landscape', 404.

20 Renes, 'Layered Landscape', 404.

21 Fahey, 'Voices from the Edge', 411.

22 Marta Dvorak and Héliane Daziron-Ventura, 'Resurgence', in *Resurgence in Jane Urquhart's Œuvre*, ed. Héliane Daziron-Ventura et al. (Bruxelles: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2010), 13.

23 Jane Urquhart, 'Confessions of a Historical Geographer', 100.

24 Jane Urquhart, 'Address', in *Resurgence in Jane Urquhart's Œuvre*, ed. Héliane Daziron-Ventura et al. (Bruxelles: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2010), 17.

25 Jane Urquhart, 'Address', 17.

26 Urquhart, 'Address', 17.

27 Urquhart, 'Address', 17.

28 Urquhart, *The Stone Carvers*, 5.

29 Urquhart, *The Stone Carvers*, 5.

30 Urquhart, *The Stone Carvers*, 1.

31 Urquhart, *The Stone Carvers*, 6.

32 Jane Urquhart, 'A Conversation with Jane Urquhart by Laura Ferri', in *Jane Urquhart: Essays on Her Works*, ed. Laura Ferri. (Toronto: Guernica, 2005), 19.

33 Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981–91* (London: Granta, 1991), 291. Italics in the original.

34 Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, 291. Italics in the original.

35 Paul de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 75–76. Italics in the original.

36 Simon Critchley, *Very Little . . . Almost Nothing: Death, Philosophy and Literature* (London: Routledge, 2000), 86.

37 Michael Thurston, *The Underworld in Twentieth-Century Poetry: From Pound and Eliot to Heaney and Walcott* (Palgrave Macmillan US, 2009), 2.

38 Thurston, *The Underworld in Twentieth-Century Poetry*, 4.

39 Neta Gordon, *Catching the Torch* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2014), 113.

40 Gordon, *Catching the Torch*, 106.

41 Gordon, *Catching the Torch*, 114.

42 Urquhart, *The Stone Carvers*, 332.

43 Julia Kristeva, *The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 1.

44 Julia Kristeva, *The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt*, 2. Italics in the original.

45 Jacqueline Hucker, 'Vimy: A Monument for the Modern World', *Journal of the Society for the Study if Architecture in Canada* 1 (2008): 46, 2017.

46 Hans Belting, *Face and Mask: A Double History*, trans. Thomas S. Hansen et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 77.

47 Belting, *Face and Mask*, 77.

48 Belting, *Face and Mask*, 77.

49 Belting, *Face and Mask*, 77. Italics in the original.

50 Belting, *Face and Mask*, 77.

51 Urquhart, *The Stone Carvers*, 332.

52 Urquhart, *The Stone Carvers*, 332–333.

53 Urquhart, *The Stone Carvers*, 332.

54 Urquhart, *The Stone Carvers*, 333.

55 Thurston, *The Underworld in Twentieth-Century Poetry*, 10–11.

56 Urquhart, *The Stone Carvers*, 333.

57 Thurston, *The Underworld in Twentieth-Century Poetry*, 11.

58 Urquhart, *The Stone Carvers*, 356.

59 Urquhart, *The Stone Carvers*, 356.

60 Hucker, 'Vimy: A Monument for the Modern World', 44.

61 Urquhart, *The Stone Carvers*, 271.

62 Urquhart, *The Stone Carvers*, 358.

63 Urquhart, *The Stone Carvers*, 359.

64 Urquhart, *The Stone Carvers*, 359.

65 Urquhart, *The Stone Carvers*, 360.

66 Urquhart, *The Stone Carvers*, 360–361.

67 Urquhart, *The Stone Carvers*, 360–361.

68 Urquhart, *The Stone Carvers*, 376.

69 Urquhart, *The Stone Carvers*, 377.

70 Primo, Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017), 70.

71 Wilfred Owen, 'Strange Meeting' in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Vol.2, ed. Meyer Howard Abrams. (Norton and Company: London, 1993), l. 25.

72 Thurston, *The Underworld in Twentieth-Century Poetry*, 6.

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The author declares that there are no conflicts of interests with this work.

Troubled and Troubling Texts: Writing Absence in Martine Delvaux's *Blanc dehors* and *Toi* (Amy Coquaz)

Amy Coquaz

Abstract

This article combines theory, analysis and creative writing to explore what it means to write absence. The two novels discussed, Martine Delvaux's *Blanc dehors* (2015) and my own, *Toi* (unpublished), deal with absent fathers, but their true concern is absence itself, and the result is a troubled, perforated narrative. Drawing on feminist definitions of what it means to trouble, as well as on translation theory and discussions of translingual writing, the article explores the sense of fragmentation that comes from a layered self and narrative, and the resulting investigative mode the narrators of these novels live in. Through a discussion of the techniques used to create a sense of the underlying narrative of absence, the article argues that the process of bringing two opposites – narrative and non-narrative – 'on a single surface' highlights the need for both (Simon, 2006, 219). Troubled texts remind us of our plurality; they deconstruct it, study it, celebrate it. In the case of these two novels, the acceptance of plurality is closely linked to the mothers, who share in the narrative of absence. The narrators' ultimate acceptance of absence as a narrative in its own right heals the divisions they imposed on themselves and allows them to reconnect to the mothers' narratives.

Keywords: Troubled texts, troubling, feminism, translation theory, translingual writing, narratives, absence, creative writing, mother-daughter relationships

Trouble

Time and again, I encounter haunted texts; haunted by actual ghosts, as in Anne Hébert's *Les fous de Bassan*;[1] by absent parents, as in Marie-Sissi Labrèche's *Borderline*[2] and Heather O'Neill's *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night*;[3] by things not quite so palpable, as in Nicole Brossard's *Le Désert Mauve*.[4] And all of them, in one way or another, haunted by language. Is it any surprise that I find myself conjuring up ghosts in my own writing? To disrupt and trouble has long been the hallmark of feminist texts, both creative and academic, and indeed of any strand of theory that seeks to question norms. In 'A cyborg manifesto: science, technology and socialist-feminism in the late twentieth-century', Donna Haraway, using the image of the cyborg, 'a hybrid of machine and organism' argues 'for *pleasure* in the confusion of boundaries'.[5] Judith Butler, in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, advocates for the subversion of gender binaries, arguing that '"reality" is not as fixed as we generally assume it to be'.[6] Haraway and Butler show us that there is power in disturbance: a political and even revolutionary power. In September 2016, I interviewed Sherry Simon, and the notion of troubling was at the core of our discussion: troubled languages, troubled categories, troubled narrators, etc. She argued for the illuminating power of this troubling.[7] When boundaries are blurred, when opposites meet, when differences share a space, light is shone. As Haraway argues, '[s]ingle vision produces worse illusions than double vision or many-headed monsters'.[8] Thus, troubling allows us to see more clearly.

In *Translating Montréal: Episodes in the Life of a Divided City*, Simon said of the juxtaposition of classical and contemporary thinkers that when '[b]rought together on a single surface, each gains focus through the other'.[9] This article is concerned with what is brought together on a single surface, with layered texts. More specifically, the focus will be on texts haunted by absence. The novels discussed, Martine Delvaux's *Blanc dehors*[10] and my own, *Toi*,[11] are both set in Québec and written by bilingual authors. As such, they share similar themes and concerns, and having read and studied *Blanc dehors* while writing my novel, intertextuality is inevitable. The core of my comparison in this article is that they both deal with absent fathers. The absence that underlies the text is not quite so straightforward, however: the father himself is no ghostly figure, but rather the narrative is haunted by an absence of narrative, the silence surrounding the father. This article will explore what it means to write absence and what light is shone through this troubling, with an analytical but also a

practical slant, discussing the implications of an investigative narrator and the techniques used to create a sense of haunting, as well as offering extracts from my novel as creative illustrations of the ideas explored.

The layers I see in these two novels are not dissimilar to linguistic layers in other novels I have studied, unsurprisingly if we consider creative writing practices. It is a long-understood principle of creative writers that what is *not* said is as important as what *is* said: the absence of words is in itself a communicative tool, a language of sorts. Just as when languages come into contact, these two communication modes of creative writing suggest that there is more than one way to say something: plurality belies singularity. In line with Butler and Haraway, Barbara Johnson, a translation theorist, argues that 'the plurality of languages and the plurality of sexes are alike in that they both make the "one" impossible'.[12] Michael Cronin corroborates this idea: 'The scandal of translation is to show that the origin is fragmented.'[13] In *Blanc dehors* and in my own novel, silence, weaved in among the writing, denotes the fragmented narratives of the characters.

At a recent conference entitled *A New Language—a New Life? Translingual literature by contemporary women writers*, Mary Gallagher identified an identity crisis in translingual expatriates, focusing on Nancy Huston in particular and her practice of writing in her second language and self-translating back into her first language.[14] Gallagher argues that '[u]nlike "monolingues impatriés", translingual expatriates have several selves'.[15] As Johnson and Cronin show us, however, multiplicity is always present and merely betrayed by linguistic layerings. Translingual practices reveal the fragmented nature of identity and narratives and other texts that bring together on a single surface are equally troubling; they blur categories and overthrow notions of singularity and homogeneity. Anne Fleig points out that monolingualism is a recent norm.[16] In this light, the notion of languages haunting texts is especially appropriate: ghosts from the past reminding us that we are plural.

Godela Weiss-Sussex defines translingual writing as a movement: moving from one language to another with bits of the first language infiltrating the target language.[17] This is a form of haunting but here, I am interested in a more intense and static form of coexistence. Anna-Louise Milne argued that translingual implies a vector, but she sees a space, a more static interaction; not a translation (or movement) but a cohabitation.[18] In this article, I will consider these two texts as spaces and I will be concerned with the ways in which the present narrative interacts with the absent narrative within that space.

Investigative Daughters

Martine Delvaux, although primarily a creative writer, is also an active figure in literary criticism, but she has not much been the subject of it. Her work often deals with hauntings – missing girls in *Rose amer*,[19] the notion of another voice speaking inside us in *Ventriloquies*[20] – but never as explicitly as it does in *Blanc dehors*. In this introspective novel, the narrator digs deep into her memories, herself and what people have told her, to weave the incomplete narrative of her father's absence and the events surrounding her birth. In an interview I carried out with Delvaux in 2016, I asked her how she went about writing absence. She thought back on her process and explained:

> I think I work a little like a detective. But there isn't a crime. Or there is one but far, far away from me. There isn't any evidence, there isn't a file, there aren't clues, we won't go to court, there won't be lawyers. But it's the same process. It's like digging in a vacuum. If there's no information to find then I'll try to find the traces of this lack of information.[21]

She has very little information, but she writes anyway, sometimes reflecting on the absence and the various ways it manifests in her life, sometimes building on the few details she does have, sometimes following fantasies – a detective television show with echoes of her own story, an unconscious actress in a hotel room – and sometimes drawing out of her narrative entirely and looking at absence in the world, becoming almost an historian of absence – Marilyn Monroe's own absent father, a communal grave discovered in Ireland where hundreds of babies had been buried, etc.

My novel is more traditionally narrated and plotted, but I also seek to write absence. My main characters, Penelope and her daughter Jane, both grow up without a father. Penelope is born in the 1970s in Cornwall, Ontario, near the Québec border. Her mother is unmarried and both she and Penelope bear the stigma of this. When growing up, Penelope is completely without information about her father; her mother keeps this secret locked up tight. Penelope is set on protecting her own potential children from such an absence but gets swept away into a passionate romance and is abandoned in the early months of her pregnancy. Jane is born in the 1990s in Montréal and unlike Penelope, she is told some details about her father and the events surrounding her birth. However, he

remains absent from their lives and questions are unwelcome, even if they are not forbidden. In the atmosphere of silence and secrecy Penelope and Jane grow up in, they too become detectives.

Such an investigation is necessarily obsessive, for when information is scarce, every detail counts. The daughters in *Blanc dehors* and in my novel obsess over places, objects and language. In *Blanc dehors*, for example, the narrator often comes back to an orphanage in Québec City where she may or may not have been left for a few days by her mother. She was left in an orphanage, but her focus on this particular one is speculative. '"Is this where my mother left me?"' she asks.[22] In my novel, places also stick out: Cornwall as Penelope's hometown, Montréal as the place she moved to with Jane's father, Lyon as the place Jane chooses to put some distance between herself and her mother. Smaller spaces are also loaded: the house of Penelope's grandmother, the studio where she lives when Jane is born. All of these places, big and small, hold secrets; they are haunted places inhabited by silent narratives. Penelope and Jane live for several years in a studio in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, an anglophone neighbourhood in Montréal. Only when they move out does Jane learn the significance of this studio:

> 'What's wrong?' I asked.
>> That was what you would ask me if I were crying.
>> 'I don't know. It's hard, you know. I wanted to leave but I kind of miss it. It felt like leaving your father behind.'
>> This was the first time I caught onto the fact that my father had also inhabited the studio. I'd never thought to ask and you never pretended he didn't but suddenly I felt cheated and I, too, wanted to go back. I would have memorised it better if I'd known; I'd have explored further.

Here, Jane loses a connection without ever knowing she had it. Places become sacred but stand out almost as cemeteries: the narratives are buried, unreachable. The following is an extract in which Penelope explores her grandmother's house, and more specifically her mother's old room:

> Her room was the smallest and the most tucked away. Her name, Camilla, was carved into the door. She hated that name—she went by Millie instead.
>> The room was sparse, maybe because she'd taken everything with her when she left. The furniture was matching and a thick layer

of dust covered everything. The colours of the bedspread were faded. It was dark but the light coming in through the slits of the blind was enough to see by. The only real objects in the room were a bible, on the nightstand, and a photo frame lying face down on the dresser. The dust around it stirred when I picked it up, clumps falling to the floor.

The photo was of my mother. Although her hair was much longer and thicker and her waist much thinner than I'd ever seen, her dark eyes and strong jaw were unmistakable. She was smiling and was surrounded by friends, mostly male friends. There were five men in that photo and one of them was touching shoulders with her. I scrutinised his face but recognised nothing. They seemed to be near the river; there were bikes in the background but they were all leaning against a truck.

I turned the frame over and opened it. I didn't want to fold the photo so I placed it in the bible. I shut the frame and put it back how I found it.

As we see here, objects are similarly valued, cherished almost, as potential clues. In the following extract, Penelope snoops through her mother's belongings hoping to find information about her father.

She kept mementos; trinkets that I assumed held some significance. But objects don't talk.

In the draw of her nightstand, right at the back, there was a broken music box. It was very simple; the mechanism encased in cheap, see-through plastic. When I turned the crank, only the first note sounded. There was no indication anywhere of what the tune was.

Stowed beneath a pile of bank statements, in the living room cabinet, was a half-full photo album that only contained landscapes.

Harvested wheat fields. Endless bike paths. A river; it could have been the Saint-Lawrence, the other bank seemed unreachable across the wide expanse. Smaller rivers, water trickling over stones and rocks, dark wooden bridges. Bright-coloured trees; forests made of jewels: gold, ruby, emerald. Anonymous landscapes. Nothing that couldn't be found in a tourism brochure.

The only other thing the album contained was a date: 1970. This was the year before I was born. One afternoon, I took out all of the photos, one by one, and checked their backs. There was no other information.

These objects, although revered for their potential significance, only really call out the absence of significance. Penelope does not hold the pieces that might allow her to place any meaning in the music box or the photos. The narrator of *Blanc dehors*, for her part, searches archives and indulges in fantasies of an imaginary file. She consults the records of an orphanage but cannot find anything related to her year of birth.[23] She dreams of a 'document holder' and of 'turning the pages, writing down the places and the dates, memorising the names on the dotted lines, following the investigation step-by-step, the transcripts, the photos, the confession and the charges'.[24] She grasps for but finds no concrete evidence. On the other hand, the novel begins with an object: a letter written by the narrator when very young and revisited years later, a preamble to this text. Here, the focus is not on the hollowness of clues but on their very absence and on what she does have: her own words.

Finally, language is perhaps the biggest source of obsession for each narrator: the words spoken, the words held back, the terms chosen or imposed. Language is a source of information. As Penelope pointed out in the extract, objects do not talk; but people do. And in the case of these characters, people do not. In *Blanc dehors*, Delvaux speaks of 'absent, lost, transparent, forbidden words'.[25] These narrators investigate because there is something hidden: an identity, but not just that, the story around the absence, the words that tell that story. There are also unspeakable words, ones they know but are not allowed to speak: their experience of absence, their own story. In my novel and in *Blanc dehors*, absence is lived but not spoken: the people around the narrator are silent and they are themselves pushed into silence. The narrator of *Blanc dehors* describes herself as stuttering when she tries to break this silence later in life, to put words to the absence she knows so well.[26]

Language is an obstacle, but it is also the source of the narrative: the father is absent because people said he was. Penelope, Jane and the narrator of *Blanc dehors* are all labelled as 'bastards' and this becomes their narrative. If the vocabulary used had been one of empowered single motherhood, absence would not have been the focus. In our interview, Delvaux explained: 'the issue isn't that you're born illegitimate, it's that they stick it to your skin. They said, "You are illegitimate."'[27] An identity, and therefore a narrative, is imposed. They are defined by others, including by their mothers and family, by their fathers' absence. Being branded as a bastard has an equally powerful effect on my narrators and the narrator in *Blanc dehors*. In her novel, Delvaux describes it as 'a word served up every which way and which, every time I hear it, suffocates me'.[28] In the following extract, Penelope learns what the children at school mean when

they call her a 'bastard'. She had heard the word before but without knowing what it meant.

The next day in school, word had got round that I had a baby sister. One of the girls asked, 'How cute is she?'

'The cutest,' I said. 'She pouts—like this.'

I imitated Helen's cute pout. Olga watched on, frowning. Amidst several requests to play at my place after school, she spoke up.

'Yeah, how's the little bastard?'

The word itself is ugly, isn't it? Too many hard sounds.

The other girls went quiet.

'Don't call her that,' I said.

'That's what she is.'

The word had never driven me to fight back before but Helen, with her tiny fists and her eyes that barely opened, deserved better.

'No, you are. You're a bastard.'

A few of the girls giggled and Olga's frown broke into a derisive smile.

'I have a dad, stupid.'

The feeling was not dissimilar to discovering the truth behind Father Christmas, another piece of information that had been revealed by Olga.

Of course, that's not what it actually means but we were too young for detailed definitions. And at the time, that was often what it meant: no dad in the house, no man. People weren't as uptight about unmarried couples as they used to be by then but for the dad to be completely out of the picture was pushing it too far.

The injustice of it nearly suffocated me. My cheeks burned as I closed the distance between myself and Olga. She stopped smiling and her eyes widened as I raised my arm. I slapped her, hard.

Not all fatherless children are bastards, but in these two stories, these children are. These novels are not about absent fathers, but rather about bastards; not about the absent person, but about absence itself. Once Jane solves the puzzle of her father, she reflects that it does not change anything. Penelope, after learning who her father is, feels no satisfaction either. The sense of secrecy and silence remains; their narratives are unchanged because absence is in itself a narrative. To fill in the blanks would not be a writing, but a rewriting. Their experience of absence cannot be replaced with another experience. In our interview, Delvaux discusses the intentions in *Blanc dehors*: 'It wasn't about finding my father;

the aim of the narrative wasn't to find the absent person but to find how this person was rendered absent.'[29] The characters are not so much investigative as they are haunted: they search, not to uncover a narrative, but because searching has become their narrative mode. And what they find is not any sort of presence, but a better understanding of the narrative that has dominated their lives.

Writing Absence

Formal techniques are used in both novels to create a sense of haunting. For example, structure is used purposefully. In my novel, the story is not told linearly; we start with the blanks, with Jane and her absent father and the secrets her mother keeps. *Blanc dehors* is not a linear narrative either; its path is even more tortuous. Drawing a clear timeline would be difficult, as scenes are constantly revisited and there is no real plot. In our interview, Delvaux explained her process: 'I worked . . . from fragments, from pieces, and I left holes in the text; I kept the blanks. So I didn't try to fill in where I didn't have words. Where I didn't have information, I subtracted information.'[30] She describes it herself as a perforated text; it bears the formal marks of absence with blanks lurking around the writing. She uses line spaces generously, which means that full pages of uninterrupted text are rare.

Delvaux also makes purposeful use of pronouns: the narrator mostly uses the first person, but sometimes the third as well, when referring to herself. This doubling reinforces the sense of haunting, of a layered text, but it is also a more overt silencing of the I, the narrator, as well as a questioning of her ownership of the story. Split, doubled, mirrored figures are a hallmark of gothic literature and of haunted texts to this day, a symbol of the troubled identities these texts explore. In *Ventriloquies*, Delvaux, alongside Catherine Mavrikakis, stages a similar kind of doubled voice to *Blanc dehors*: a presence within her that speaks without her lips moving. In *Les fous de Bassan*, the two murdered cousins, Nora and Olivia, often seem indistinguishable, while in *Le Désert Mauve*, translator and author coexist on the page, the overtness of the translating process making it impossible to forget the 'original' and its writer. In *Blanc dehors*, the mother also stands as a split figure: a 'fille-mère'.[31] Both young girl (maiden) and mother, she is trapped between these two identities: she is both, but under this derogatory term, these two words pushed together, she is reduced to neither. In my own novel, there is a doubling in the narration as well as in the narrators' position: Penelope and Jane speak in turn as mothers and

as daughters, dipping in and out of these roles, and this back and forth blurs the boundary between their individual experiences.

This use of doubled narrators also hints at a different type of haunting, a further troubling in these texts: of the opposition between fiction and autobiography. As we have seen, troubled texts challenge binary thinking. According to Weiss-Sussex, in translingual writing this goes further than the contact between languages: she thinks of these texts as 'transcending genre'.[32] In *Histoires de fantômes. Spectralité et témoignage dans les récits de femmes contemporains*, Delvaux looks at contemporary women writers and comes to this conclusion: '[i]ntimate, troubling, catastrophic texts, these recent writings by women are important because they break away from the classic oppositions between lies and truth, fiction and autobiography, presence and absence'.[33] A blurring occurs; borders weaken. Delvaux openly plays with genre categories in her work, both academic and creative. In our interview, she explained: 'I've always tried to explore the link between the abstract, the political, the literary and the narrative of self.'[34] In the novels discussed here, Delvaux's and my own, the author haunts the work. The novels contain, to different extents, autobiographical elements but they are not autobiographies: they resist categorization.

Other than narrative details, a major way in which the authors haunt their work is via language. Both Delvaux and I are bilingual and have an emotional history with our languages. This inevitably comes through in our writing: considering how important words are to these narrators, it is not surprising to find, alongside the unspoken, the spoken differently. In the words of Lori Saint-Martin, herself multilingual: '[e]verytime I write . . . I'm aware that it could be said differently'.[35] In our interview, Delvaux explained that '[a]n author of Palestinian origin told me, after she read *Blanc dehors* that she felt as though I wasn't writing in French, as though I was writing in another language. I think I also have this feeling'.[36] This feeling is partly found in the syntax, the anglophone structure of some of the sentences, such as 'Peut-être que je n'ai jamais fait que ça, mettre des mots à l'endroit des blancs' – 'Maybe that's all I've ever done, write words where there are blanks.' The other quotes used in this article were just as easily translated into English. A few English words actually appear, in italics, and some French words are also italicized, almost always to signify that someone else is speaking them: '*[b]âtarde*' (bastard) is one of those words.[37] The presence of English and the link being drawn here – words imposed – is the result of Delvaux feeling marginalized in her forming years for an incorrect use of both French and English. She explained: 'I was kind of without language. That is to say that I spoke

French wrong and I didn't know English very well.'[38] This feeling of marginalization echoes her experience of being labelled a 'bastard'. What is said, what is not, what can and what cannot, is of such vital importance to these investigative daughters that Delvaux's linguistic struggles are understandably inseparable from her experience of absence.

For my part, I adopted English as my primary language when I was eighteen and it felt incredibly liberating. I could say things I'd never been able to say before. Anne Fleig, when discussing the writer Yoko Tawada, argued that turning to another language, from Japanese to German, was for her 'a form of emancipation'.[39] But silence was still ever present because I was saying these words in a language my family, and my mother in particular, could not understand, or not fully. In my novel, the roles are reversed: French is the liberating but unsatisfying language for Jane. French actually appears on the page, and the two languages interact, but French lurks: it is hidden in plain sight. French works hand in hand with silence and, to Jane, they become almost synonymous. The following extract takes place in Grand-Mère, the Québec town where Jane's father lives, although unknown to her at the time of this visit. It is important to understand that at this point, Jane's French vocabulary is extremely limited; she does not understand the conversation. She is writing this years later so she is making educated guesses about what might have been said.

You ushered me in and we huddled in the small space, my hip pressed against the cold of the plastic panel. Next to the booth was a wooden shack selling corn and strawberries.

You put in change and ignored me when I asked if I could do it. There was a number written on your hand; I hadn't noticed it before. You held up your hand and dialled the number. I watched the woman in the wooden shack; she sat behind the counter, one elbow resting on it and her chin resting in her palm.

'Est-ce que Monsieur Masau est là?'

You waited a while then started talking again.

'Je suis ici.'

Further on, there was a gas station. A big white car pulled in and a man got out. He took hold of a pump and inserted it into the car then stood very still.

'Ce n'est pas la peine de te mettre en colère. Je ne cherche pas á t'attirer des ennuis.'

Someone had drawn a heart on the plastic panel and there were two letters in it: P + P.

'Oui, elle est avec moi.'

A woman walked past the booth, a pushchair ahead of her.

'Je voudrais juste te voir.'

The woman waited for the crossing light.

'Tu me dois bien ça.'

The child in the pushchair threw their dummy on the floor. The woman picked it up and put it in her mouth, before handing it back to the child.

'On est en centre-ville.'

The crossing light came on and the woman pushed the child along.

'Oui, je le vois.'

When she got to the pavement, she stopped and waited for the other light.

'D'accord, on t'attendra là-bas.'

You hung up the phone and looked down at me.

'Are you hungry?'

I shrugged.

'Who were you talking to?' I asked.

'No one.'

So here, we have a dialogue on the page but to Jane, it is just like blanks. Presented with riddles, Jane believes that learning French is the key to her search. She writes:

I began to see it not as a school requirement but as a tool that I could use. It was like learning a secret code. Maybe I thought it would reveal other secrets, beyond the content of conversations; that it would lift the cloud of mystery that seemed to hang about us.

But the kinship she develops with French has the opposite effect. Her broken-hearted mother being averse to that language, because Jane's father was francophone, communication between them becomes even more strained, silence even more dominant. Jane reflects on this break in their relationship:

The sense that French was forbidden, which had always been present, grew into a tangible law. This language that we now both knew became just another unspoken thing, a shadow we were both aware of but pretended not to see.

It becomes highly significant that Jane is writing in English. While French is the language of emancipation, English is the language of communication: literally the mother tongue.

Searching for the Mother

Since these novels are about the experience of absence, about writing silence, they must inevitably converge towards the gatekeeper of information, the mute interlocutor: the mother. It goes even further back: both novels reflect on the grandparents' role in silencing narratives – silence is a family affair. Although there is conflict in these novels, blame is overwhelmingly absent. While it may be an initial instinct, the movement of these stories is one of understanding and sharing. Grandparents and mother are not enemies but companions: the narrative of absence is a shared one. Weiss-Sussex argues that '[t]he process of translation is essential to understanding the other and their viewpoint'.[40] Let us think again of silence as a language, in which case the work of the narrators in these novels may be considered a translating one, producing a text, not out of an existing original, but out of this non-existent one. In *Re-Belle et Infidèle: La Traduction Comme Pratique de Réécriture au Féminin/The Body Bilingual: Translation as a Rewriting in the Feminine*, Susanne De Lotbiniére-Harwood argues of translation that it is *'never neutral . . . . The I who translates inscribes their knowledge, their choices, their intentions, their convictions in the text being rewritten'.*[41] When Delvaux imagines scenes before and after her birth, scenes she herself has no concrete claim to, she nonetheless invades, floats above them like a ghost, lurks in the shadow. The 'I' haunts the untold narrative, and although these scenes may or may not have taken place, they are full of meaning, they are the narrator's reading, her interpretation. And in this speculative translation work, her intentions are revealed: she is looking, not for her father, but for her mother. She writes: 'There are no photos of my mother pregnant with me. No way to find this distraught, desperate young woman, the young woman who doubted when it came to deciding whether to have me or not.'[42] It is this young woman that the narrator looks for in her speculations. The same search for the mother occurs in my novel, from the very first line. Jane writes: 'I thought I saw you on the métro today.'

Because of the way *Blanc dehors* is structured, the mother's experiences, whether real or invented, intertwine with the daughter's, so much so that they become a single narrative. The novel concludes on the narrator's

statement that she is all the women she has written; she is her mother. *Blanc dehors* is not in the second person, but it nonetheless seems addressed to the mother and, although it is haunted by silence, it is also an offering of words, a reflection on a shared narrative and a reaching out. In my novel, we see a similar reaching out in Jane's return to English. There is a split in her movement towards French, a writing out of the mother, because although she might feel freer to speak absence, the experience is no longer shared. Her return to English is a return to shared narrative.

Cohabitation

I established earlier that troubled texts challenge the notion of singularity. These characters' narratives are not in one piece. However, a lack of singularity does not mean that unity is impossible, that these characters are condemned to an inescapable sense of fragmentation and an irreconcilable narrative. In *Des langues en partage? Cohabitation du français et de l'anglais en littérature contemporaine*, Catherine Leclerc reflects on the ways in which languages cohabit. She argues that '[t]oday . . . it becomes possible to contemplate linguistic cohabitations that result from a movement of openness rather than denunciation'.[43] Another word for haunting is cohabitation, two 'opposite' things – living and dead – inhabiting the same plane. Cohabitation is a space happily shared, an embrace of multiplicity. To be cohabited is to be positively haunted, not split or troubled, but plural. Rather than dreading fragmentation, and the ones who make it apparent – the foreign language, the silencing parent – there is an openness to the impossibility of singularity. The told and the untold cohabit, not in order to blame or denounce, but in order to understand, to open. Haraway offers yet another word for it: irony, which she argues is 'about contradictions that do not resolve into larger wholes . . . about the tension of holding incompatible things together because both or all are necessary and true'.[44] The two novels studied here do not seek to 'resolve into a larger whole' but offer the narratives in all their fragmentation; they offer irony and cohabitation. While accusations and tensions do underpin the writing, the movement is ultimately one of acceptance. The told and the untold cohabit because the narrators are made up of both.

In *Histoires de Fantômes*, Delvaux writes: 'The words of these authors weave ghost narratives, produce haunted texts where an absence, a rupture

constantly spectralizes the writing and the one who writes, a void that the author doesn't seek to fill, a breach she doesn't wish to mend but rather inhabit and learn to live with.'[45] Ultimately, *Blanc dehors* and my own novel do not set out to summon the father, in any figurative or concrete way. Absence itself is their subject and both a troubling and necessary force. As Butler argues: 'trouble is inevitable and the task, how best to make it, what best way to be in it'.[46] Absence, in these two narratives, is inescapable, and this article has set out how these novels have written and encompassed it: silence and voices come together on the page, blurring the boundaries between the told and the untold. At the start of the article, I introduced the figure of the obsessive investigator. This investigation reveals places and objects to be hollow and unsatisfying, but words invariably stick, for better or worse, because the investigation was nothing more or less than their personal narrative, in all its contradictions, and this is what they each come to write; not the solution to an enigma but the experiences that have shaped them. Although these two novels are narrated very differently, *Blanc dehors* being highly introspective while my own novel sees mother and daughter writing to each other, both embrace absence as a narrative in its own right and, rather than replacing this narrative, the characters learn to share it, thereby breaking the silence between mother and daughter.

Notes

1 Anne Hébert, *Les fous de Bassan* (Paris: Seuil, 1982).
2 Marie-Sissi Labrèche, *Borderline* (Montréal: Boréal, 2000).
3 Heather O'Neill, *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night* (London: Quercus, 2014).
4 Nicole Brossard, *Le Désert Mauve* (Montréal: l'Hexagone, 1987).
5 Donna Haraway, 'A cyborg manifesto: science, technology and socialist-feminism in the late twentieth century', in *The Cybercultures Reader*, ed. David Belle and Barbara M. Kennedy (London: Psychology Press, 2000), 292.
6 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1999), xxv.
7 Sherry Simon, personal interview (unpublished, September 12, 2016).
8 Haraway, 'A cyborg manifesto', 295.
9 Sherry Simon, *Translating Montréal: Episodes in the Life of a Divided City*

(Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 219.
10 Martine Delvaux, *Blanc dehors* (Montréal: Héliotrope, 2015).
11 Amy Coquaz, *Toi* (unpublished work, 2018).
12 Barbara Johnson, *Mother Tongues; Sexuality, Trials, Motherhood, Translation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press: 2003), 25.
13 Michael Cronin, *Across the lines; travel, language, translation* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2000), 28.
14 Mary Gallagher, 'Nancy Huston on Othering the Mother-Tongue' (paper presented at *A New Language—a New Life? Translingual literature by contemporary women writers*, London, March 1, 2018).
15 Gallagher, 'Nancy Huston.'
16 Anne Fleig, 'New Language and Female Voice—Heteroglossia in the Writings of Emine Sevgi Özdamar and Yoko Tawada'

(paper presented at *A New Language—a New Life? Translingual literature by contemporary women writers*, London, March 1, 2018).

17 Godela Weiss-Sussex, 'Translingual Creativity and Belonging in Katja Petrowskaja's *Vielleicht Esther* (2014)' (paper presented at *A New Language—a New Life? Translingual literature by contemporary women writers*, London, March 1, 2018).

18 Anna-Louise Milne, 'Plural Subjectivities, or "Writing With"' (paper presented at *A New Language—a New Life? Translingual literature by contemporary women writers*, London, March 1, 2018).

19 Martine Delvaux, *Rose amer* (Montréal: Héliotrope, 2009).

20 Martine Delvaux and Catherine Mavrikakis, *Ventriloquies* (Montréal: Leméac, 2003).

21 Martine Delvaux, personal interview (unpublished, September 8, 2016). [my own translation] Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine. 'Je pense que je procède un peu comme une détective. Mais il n'y a pas de crime. C'est-à-dire qu'il y a un crime très, très loin de moi. Il n'y a pas de preuve, il n'y a pas de dossier, il n'y a pas d'indices, on n'ira pas en cour, il n'y aura pas d'avocats. Mais c'est le même processus. C'est comme creuser du vide. S'il n'y a pas d'information à trouver alors je vais essayer de trouver les marques de l'absence d'information.'

22 Delvaux, *Blanc*, 71. 'Est-ce que c'est là que ma mère m'a laissée?'

23 Delvaux, *Blanc*, 85.

24 Delvaux, *Blanc*, 99. 'porte-document'; 'que je tourne les pages, que je note les lieux et les dates, que je mémorise les noms sur les lignes, que je suive l'enquête pas à pas, les transcriptions, les photos, les aveux et les accusations'.

25 Delvaux, *Blanc*, 13. 'mots absents, disparus, transparents, interdits'.

26 Delvaux, *Blanc*, 14.

27 Delvaux, interview. 'ce n'est pas d'être né illégitime le problème, c'est qu'on nous a collé ça sur la peau. On a dit, «Tu es illégitime.»'

28 Delvaux, *Blanc*, 77. 'Un mot servi à toutes les sauces et qui, chaque fois que je l'entends, m'empêche de respirer.'

29 Delvaux, interview. 'Il ne s'agissait pas de trouver mon père; ce n'est pas un récit qui avait pour but de trouver la personne absente mais de trouver comment on a rendu cette personne absente.'

30 Delvaux, interview. 'J'ai travaillé [. . .] à partir de fragments, de morceaux, et en laissant, dans le texte, les trous; en laissant le blanc. Donc je n'ai pas essayé de remplir là où je n'avais pas de mots. Là où je n'avais pas d'information, je soustrayais l'information.'

31 Delvaux, *Blanc*, 143.

32 Weiss-Sussex, 'Translingual Creativity'.

33 Martine Delvaux, *Histoires de fantômes. Spectralité et témoignage dans les récits de femmes contemporains* (Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2005), 8. 'Textes intimes, troublants, catastrophiques, ces écrits récents de femmes sont importants en ce qu'ils rompent avec les oppositions classiques entre le mensonge et la vérité, la fiction et l'autobiographie, la présence et l'absence.'

34 Delvaux, interview. 'J'ai toujours essayé de creuser ce lien entre la pensée abstraite, politique, littéraire et le récit de soi.'

35 Lori Saint-Martin, personal interview (unpublished, September 10, 2016). 'Chaque fois que j'écris [. . .] je suis consciente du fait que ça pourrait se dire autrement.'

36 Delvaux, interview. 'Une auteure d'origine palestinienne m'a dit après avoir lu *Blanc Dehors* qu'elle avait l'impression que je n'écrivais pas en français, que j'écrivais dans une autre langue. Et je pense que j'ai moi-même un peu cette impression-là.'

37 Delvaux, *Blanc*, 77.

38 Delvaux, interview. 'Au fond, j'étais un peu sans langue. C'est-à-dire que je parlais mal le français et je ne connaissais pas bien l'anglais.'

39 Fleig, 'New Language'.

40 Weiss-Sussex, 'Translingual Creativity'.

41 Susanne De Lotbiniére-Harwood, *Re-Belle et Infidèle: La Traduction Comme Pratique de Réécriture au Féminin/The Body Bilingual: Translation as a Rewriting in the Feminine* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1991), 27. '*Traduire n'est jamais neutre*. [. . .] Le *je* qui traduit inscrit son savoir, ses choix, ses intentions, ses convictions dans le texte qui se réécrit.'

42 Delvaux, *Blanc*, 50. 'Il n'y a aucune photo de ma mère enceinte de moi. Rien ne permet de retrouver la jeune femme désemparée, désespérée, la jeune femme qui a douté quand il était question de décider de m'avoir ou pas.'

43   Catherine Leclerc, *Des langues en partage? Cohabitation du français et de l'anglais en littérature contemporaine* (Montréal: XYZ, 2010), 181. 'Aujourd'hui [. . .] [i]l devient possible d'envisager des formes de cohabitation linguistique qui soient le résultat d'un mouvement d'ouverture plutôt que de dénonciation.'
44   Haraway, 'A cyborg manifesto', 291.

45   Delvaux, *Histoires*, 10. 'Les mots de ces auteurs tissent des récits fantômes, fabriquent des textes hantés ou, toujours, une absence, une rupture, vient spectraliser l'écriture et celle qui écrit, un vide que l'auteure ne cherche pas à combler, une faille qu'elle ne souhaite pas colmater, mais plutôt qu'elle fréquente et avec laquelle elle apprend a vivre.'
46   Butler, *Gender*, xxix.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interests with this work.

Sonic Spectres: Word Ghosts in Madeleine Thien's *Dogs at the Perimeter* and the Digital Map Project, 'Fictional Montreal/ Montréal fictif'

Ceri Morgan

Abstract

This article analyzes various ghosts and their connections with the unsaid and said in relation to Madeleine Thien's *Dogs at the Perimeter* (2011) and the digital map project, 'Fictional Montreal/Montréal fictif' (Morgan and Lichti, 2016–17). Drawing on Jacques Derrida's work on spectres, it suggests that Thien's novel offers both negative and positive hauntings, by drawing attention to the far-reaching effects of the Cambodian genocide. It goes on to reflect on absence and presence, voice and body in relation to the digital map, which features recordings of authors reading extracts of their fiction set in Montréal. Arguing that 'Fictional Montreal/Montréal fictif' performs an interplay between material and imaginary geographies, the article proposes that the map offers the possibility of new conceptualizations of Montréal. In so doing, it argues that both it and *Dogs at the Perimeter* embrace the potentially utopian aspect of spectrality identified by Derrida. This is due to their encouraging readers to think about our collective responsibilities to each other in a world characterized by mobility and migration.

Keywords: ghosts, sound, map, Madeleine Thien, Montréal

In 'Walking in the City', Michel de Certeau claims, 'haunted places are the only ones people can live in'.[1] This assertion tends to be overlooked in responses to a text which has become ubiquitous in urban studies. These usually focus on the distinction it makes between the map – associated with authority – and the path formed by walking.[2] Like walking, Certeau identifies remembering as part of a set of 'everyday practices', which offer micro-resistances to pervasive workings of power.[3] Returning recently to his chapter after a gap of some years, I have become fascinated by the potential for positive, as well as negative, hauntings. Derrida points to the likelihood of such following his own re-readings (of Marx's re-readings of Shakespeare), by referring to 'la possibilité du spectre, le spectre comme possibilité'.[4] In this article, I consider how (re)reading – by following words on the page or via listening[5] – and haunting come together to produce particular 'spectro-geographies'.[6] These embrace the critical aspects of Derrida's account of Marxist ghosts. I shall bring together literary analysis and reflections on a digital map project I devised and undertook with sound and media artist, Philip (Phil) Lichti, called 'Fictional Montreal/ Montréal fictif'.[7] In so doing, I examine how the unsaid and unsayable in Madeleine Thien's novel, *Dogs at the Perimeter* contribute to a set of troubling textual hauntings which nevertheless offer a politics of hope.[8] Contrasting the absence of sound in *Dogs at the Perimeter* with the presence of sound on the map, I argue that both embrace the potentially utopian aspect of spectrality identified by Derrida.[9] These sonic spectres enable imaginative engagements with the city which may, in turn, become material ones.

Derrida highlights the connection between spectrality and the uncanny:[10] Freud's famous account of 'that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar'.[11] In literary studies, haunting is generally identified with the uncanny; associated with the return of a repressed wish or desire or, as Avery F. Gordon identifies, a broader superstition.[12] Another psychoanalytically informed conception of haunting is at play in the work of several postcolonial theorists, who suggest that it reveals the workings and history of colonialism which are otherwise rendered invisible by their power. In his analysis of some of the limitations of this approach, Michael F. O'Riley describes how 'postcolonial haunting . . . is figured as an interruptive or affective moment in the course of Western consciousness where the repressed colonial scene returns'.[13] Significant here are the responses provoked by hauntings, such as anxiety and feeling unsettled. The uncanny has been taken up by several *québécistes*, including myself, to describe the ways in which Montréal is often represented in fiction in French in terms of the 'unhomely'.[14] It is not possible to identify broad trends in the city's English-language

fiction,[15] besides noting that much of the work associated with the post-2000 'renaissance' of this literary scene is produced by writers who are not of British or Irish descent. Whilst individual texts, such as Rawi Hage's *Cockroach*,[16] might mediate a certain 'unhomeliness' in terms of an exclusion from participation in Montréal's middle-class consumer culture and society, others represent a sense of being at ease within the city.[17] Nevertheless, Québec's majority literatures have been very much identified with Montréal, particularly since Québec's French-language fiction's 'urban turn' of the 1940s.[18] The economic and cultural centre of Québec, historic site of a concentration of the province's anglophone population and a pole of immigration more broadly, Montréal is a flashpoint for social tensions.[19] One of a number of cities Sherry Simon describes as 'translational',[20] Montréal offers visual language hauntings in the form of old advertisements in English which seep through into the present of the post-Bill 101 urban landscape – an image the critic uses in discussing the city.[21] Aural hauntings are found in the patterns of many Montréalers' everyday speech, which includes expressions like 'mon chum', 'je vais scruncher mes cheveux' and 'I'm going to the dep'. Literature contains language ghosts, too. Some French-language novels published during the 1960s and early 1970s include anglophone characters and elements of English in their mediation of either struggles between francophones and anglophones or,[22] conversely, Montréal's embracing of modernity as figured through economic success and ethno-linguistic diversity.[23] English-language fiction published in the decades following the post-World War II nationalist assertion known as the Quiet Revolution saw some writers reach out to francophones by including French words and referencing particular politics, or engaging in feminist exchanges.[24] Fiction of the last 10 years or so often mediates today's less obviously fraught language-scape in the use of French or francophone characters.[25]

In some ways, then, Montréal is the perfect location for haunting tales. All the same, the city appears only occasionally in Thien's novel, despite being the setting for much of the present of the narrative. *Dogs at the Perimeter*, which contains lengthy sections set in the past, can be described as a 'ghost stor[y]' in the sense of Gordon's description of this as 'concerning exclusions and invisibilities'.[26] It opens with 44-year-old neuroscientist Janie recounting the invisibilization of a friend and colleague from Montréal's Brain Research Centre (BRC). We learn that on 29 November 2005, security footage shows Hiroji Matsui leaving his workplace and descending a flight of stairs. He then 'walked into the city and disappeared into air'.[27] This vanishing figure is the first of many in the novel, much of which is set in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge. Janie

guesses that Hiroji has left Montréal to search for his brother, Junichiro, or James, Matsui. James had gone missing in 1975 whilst carrying out humanitarian work for the International Red Cross, first in Vietnam and then in Cambodia – Janie's original home country. Some months previously, Janie had offered to help Hiroji in his quest for his brother and, in so doing had become overwhelmed by what, in a Western context, would be described as depression and traumatic flashbacks.[28] These symptoms are compounded by the death of her adoptive mother. Janie becomes increasingly unable to maintain domestic routines with her partner and child and moves out of the family home to stay in Matsui's empty apartment. As the novel goes on, we learn that Janie – then named Mei – had arrived in Canada aged 12, after being saved from a shipwreck by fishermen and adopted by a woman living in Vancouver. In between her abrupt expulsion from her home in Phnom Penh and her arrival in North America, the girl had: seen her father taken away, worked in a series of cooperatives where she had witnessed people tortured and killed, observed her brother align himself with the Khmer Rouge, then use his trusted position to enable himself and his sister to escape, been subject to sexual and physical assault when the boat taking the siblings to Malaysia was hijacked and seen her brother float away from her in the sea to his certain death. The dead or lost also include Mei's grandfather, the girl whose bloody clothes the 10-year-old Mei is forced to wear on the first cooperative to which she was sent, Mei's biological mother who dies alone surrounded by rats in an infirmary run by children, Mei's friend Bhopa, James's wife and the baby son he never met, and many former neighbours, associates and guards.

Many of the novel's 'disappeared' refuse to remain in the past, with Janie telling Hiroji, 'some ghosts could never be put to rest'.[29] One example is a former patient who, like the doctor, is of Japanese descent. Hiroji had treated the man many years previously and is astonished by the latter's sudden appearance in a café near the BRC in Montréal: 'Hiroji stared at the stranger and he knew, instantly, that it was his brother. That it could not be his brother. And yet, that it was'.[30] Similarly, whilst walking on Côtes-des-Neiges and Queen Mary, Janie/Mei encounters her father 'in the shape of another person'.[31] Given that Montréal is significantly less ethnically diverse than Canada's other metropolises – Toronto and Vancouver – one way of reading these moments has them signal the hypervisibility of Asian faces in the city's streets.[32] However, the similarity with 'A Map of the City' prevents this. Thien's 'long short story'[33] published in 2001 opens with the following wistful observation: 'in the years after I left home, I used to glimpse my parents in unexpected places. I would see the

two of them in the Safeway, my mother standing patiently by while my father weighed oranges in his hands, feeling for signs of imperfection'.[34] We later discover that the narrator's parents separated several years prior to these recollected instances. There are a number of similarities between Thien's 2011 novel and 'A Map of the City', in which the father's inability to maintain a stable job and family life in Vancouver is connected with the political turmoil in Indonesia which led him and his wife to emigrate.[35] *Dogs at the Perimeter*'s epic reach means that we move away from the focus on the individual family that we get in the earlier story to confront the large-scale destruction wrought by the Khmer Rouge. The novel presents a context where Angkar (the ruling party) is in power, but no one can identify who or what Angkar is, as alliances become broken, people denounce others or confess to fantastical crimes, names and identities are put on and shrugged off. The disembodied and all-pervasive quality to Angkar means that it is, at once, nowhere and everywhere: it is impossible to find its origin or source. It has undergone what Derrida describes as a 'fantomalisation',[36] reinforcing its hegemony.[37] In this way, a father warns his son, who is reciting verse, 'Angkar is listening'.[38] Announcing itself as the new and only time, Angkar takes on a monumental quality, standing outside of chronological time like Derrida's ever-watchful spectre: 'la hantise est historique, certes, mais elle ne *date* pas'.[39]

Angkar is one of several negative hauntings in *Dogs at the Perimeter* that disrupt understandings of time. In addition to the monumental time of Angkar, we encounter the elliptical time of grief,[40] the halted time of horror,[41] and temporal fissures in which the past interweaves the present. The temporal shifts in Thien's novel bring about slips in space, as when Phnom Penh and Montréal coincide. Janie describes walking in the city/ies: 'I walk out onto the wide boulevard of Côte-des-Neiges . . . I smell coffee from a nearby bakery, I see my little brother and myself . . . . We are caught outside when the air raid sirens begin'.[42] These spatio-temporal slips and folds are found within both the narrative and form, so that intertextual hauntings in allusions to Thien's earlier work combine with intra-textual ones. One day, Janie forgets to collect her son from daycare. She struggles to engage with her child once the two are reunited, shocking herself by hitting him. Distressed, she reflects, 'I wanted to tie my son's wrist to mine with a piece of string and in this way save us both'.[43] This moment is recalled later, when a flashback reveals that one of the teenage guards at the first cooperative to which the girl who became Janie was sent employed this string technique to ensure that 'if one . . . were taken, the other would wake'.[44] Thien's novel offers the porosity between

the past and the present, the real and the spectral outlined by Derrida[45] to disorienting – and often devastating – effect. *Dogs at the Perimeter* contains both returning and ever-present ghosts, with the latter frequently taking the shapes of past and new selves. Mei is not Janie's first name – in fact, we never learn what this was – but one given to her at the first cooperative in which she worked. Her brother, Sopham, becomes Rithy as he perfects his effacement of his bourgeois past in order to stay alive.[46] For his part, Hiroji's brother, James, becomes Kwan in prison, after his guard advises him that he recognizes him as an old school friend, who was a mute and trustworthy young man:

> In the room, a mosquito buzzed at James's cheek and he wondered how the insect had found its way into the locked room where there were no windows and the air was stale. It must have come in with the man.
> "Are you Kwan?"
> "No."
> Generously, the man extended his hand and hushed the mosquito away. "Can you be certain?"[47]

James remains Kwan for the rest of his life, although opts for taciturnity rather than complete silence. Even when Hiroji tracks down the man he believes to be his brother, it is not clear at first whether the Kwan he meets ever was James as the latter 'didn't respond'[48] when the Montréal doctor arrives on his doorstep. Referring us to the ethnographic work of Janet McLellan, Y-Dang Troeung describes how Thien's novel is informed by *sramay*, which McLellan defines as 'ghost haunting . . . caused by the visitation of spirits . . . of family members or other loved ones who were murdered and not given proper burial rites'.[49] Troeung argues persuasively that Western understandings of trauma are not appropriate for understanding *Dogs at the Perimeter*; highlighting the 'incommensurability between Janie's experience of *sramay* (ghost haunting) and her work as a brain research neurologist'[50] to represent the gap between Canadian and Cambodian forms of knowledge. She draws attention to the way in which, through offering parts of the Cambodian elements of the narrative from a Japanese-Canadian perspective, *Dogs at the Perimeter* 'works against the framing of the . . . genocide as an isolated case in world history',[51] by positioning this within a broader context of Western imperialism. In this respect, the overlaying of Montréal and Phnom Penh is not only a symptom of Janie's being overwhelmed by her traumatic past, but

also a reminder of the connections between West and East, and the material – as well as imaginary and symbolic – impacts of the actions of the more powerful on the less so.

Nevertheless, Thien's novel invites post-postmodern readings as well as postcolonial ones, with these frequently intersecting. *Dogs at the Perimeter* has an emotional resonance found in literature associated with new sincerity, post-postmodernism, or metamodernism.[52] The emotion-work carried out by the novel operates at a number of levels within and beyond the text: dedicated to Thien's late mother, it is partly framed by a grieving for the maternal. Janie's sadness at the death of her adoptive mother overlays her continuing sorrow over the loss of her biological mother, as well as her concerns that she is unable to be an adequate mother due to everything she has endured. The scale of Janie's/Mei's distress alone is likely to be beyond the imaginative grasp of most readers. Thien's characters' collective grief and pain is immeasurable and unchartable, in contrast to the painstaking research carried out by Janie and Hiroji. This mass sorrow is both a response to Angkar and a counter-'fantomalisation',[53] disrupting the present in unbearable ways in order to remember atrocity and yet, offer hope. It can be compared with the 'becoming-ghost'[54] we encounter in the form of the digital Hiroji who vanishes from the screen at the start. As might be expected given that it is not possible to claim that postmodernity is over, *Dogs at the Perimeter* mediates certain aspects of life and culture within late- or post-industrial capitalism which Fredric Jameson associates with postmodernism,[55] even if it eschews some of the formal games identified with the avant-garde or postmodern writing of authors like Nicole Brossard and Daphne Marlatt.[56] These aspects include the degree of easy mobility enjoyed by Hiroji and Janie as adults, which is contrasted with the enforced migration of both as children,[57] and the 'becoming-ghost' of Hiroji and his former patient, since the latter is described as 'a reflection of a reflection'.[58] Writing at the beginning of the internet era, Derrida highlights the spectralities engendered by mass media technologies,[59] pointing to their contribution to global power hegemonies. In our 'post-internet' age,[60] however, we are able to make a constructive connection between the impoverished former patient and the ephemeral digitized Hiroji. Like Hamlet's father in *Spectres de Marx*, these characters function to warn viewers or readers of impending catastrophe. They point to a difficult past, framing Thien's novel from the start with histories of violence, loss and multi-generational trauma connected with the historical relationships between Japan and North America.[61] They also signal a troubling present, characterized by homelessness, poverty, global inequality, forced migration and emotional breakdown. In this sense, they

are both negative and positive ghosts. They act like Hamlet's father as read by Derrida, who interprets the former's warning that '*the time is out of joint*'[62] as paving the way for a potential remedying of affairs.[63]

In contrast, though, to the voice of the father which reverberates in *Spectres de Marx*, the unsaid and unsayable echo throughout *Dogs at the Perimeter*. Sound plays a key role in Thien's other novels: *Certainty* features a character who is a producer of radio documentaries, whereas music is central to *Do Not Say We Have Nothing*.[64] It is the absence of sound or, more precisely, of certain words, which informs *Dogs at the Perimeter*, as indicated in Mei's account of the attack on the boat: 'time stopped. I have no words for what was done'.[65] These silences are suggested not only narratively but formally, with the underwritten and fragmented prose pointing to the word ghosts of the unsaid.[66] In an interview I undertook with her, Thien discussed how she had been motivated by 'find[ing] a way to articulate what [Janie] is unable to speak'.[67] *Dogs at the Perimeter* silently 'speaks' in that it offers a fictionalized witnessing of terror to raise awareness of the Cambodian genocide. In this respect, it is vital that certain spectres remain restless to remind readers of the continuing tragedy of Cambodia. Offering repeated reminders of how war and violence impact upon multiple generations across two continents, *Dogs at the Perimeter* carries out a refusal to mourn as conceptualized by Freud as a moving towards an acceptance of loss.[68] When I met with Thien in 'late Summer' 2016,[69] she told me how she hoped that the attention being paid to her latest novel would lead readers to discover, or rediscover *Dogs at the Perimeter*. *Do Not Say We Have Nothing* went on to win the Governor-General's Award for English-language Fiction and the Scotiabank Giller Prize. It was also shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize. In a café on avenue Mont-Royal against the sounds of clattering crockery, Thien spoke with me about her attachment to Phnom Penh; contrasting this with the way she often feels out of place in Montréal. The writer had just recorded her contribution to 'Fictional Montreal/Montréal fictif', which is a digital map built around sound: audio recordings of authors reading short extracts of their fictional works set in particular locations in the city. A pilot project, it includes readings by a selection of writers – not only Thien, but also Monique LaRue, Nicole Brossard, André Carpentier, Marie-Célie Agnant, Martine Delvaux, David Homel, Anita Anand, Dimitri Nasrallah, Rawi Hage, Neil Smith and Heather O'Neill. Due to Québec's dual star system, there is less crossover than might be expected between French-language and English-language media and cultures. Although the digital literary map is not a particularly new phenomenon, most examples focus on the visual.[70] Informed by geocriticism's commitment to giving

attention to other senses besides sight,[71] 'Fictional Montreal/Montréal fictif' centres on the auditory. As Marcel Cobussen and Vincent Meelberg highlight in their editorial to a special issue of *Journal of Sonic Studies*, there are a number of ways of listening.[72] They cite a 2005 address given by Dutch musicologist and composer, Elmer Schönberger, in which he pleads for 'a disinterested, disengaged listening to "real" music' rather than what he saw as the '"easy" or consumptive listening' of popular music.[73] Cobussen and Meelberg problematize the identification of what Schönberger calls 'Large Listening' with canonical or high cultural forms. They draw our attention to the various listenings proposed by the contributors to the special issue of *Sonic Studies* they are editing, which include: attentive listening to the sounds of daily life,[74] 'Deep Listening',[75] ethical listening,[76] political listening,[77] 'productive' listening to site-specific sound art,[78] and 'affective listening'.[79] 'Fictional Montreal/Montréal fictif' most likely prompts 'affective listening'. The affective turn within the humanities and social sciences has prompted a number of critical and theoretical responses, with considerable discussion around definitions of affect and the distinctiveness of this (or not) from emotion.[80] Musicologist Nicholas Reyland offers a useful shorthand of debates within his discipline, suggesting, 'affects are immediate; emotions respond, in part, to affect, weaving affect into relationships with signification'.[81] However, he goes on to point out that 'there is, in truth, no hard dividing line between affect and emotion'.[82]

Adel Wang Jing describes 'affective listening' as 'listening with and to the body'.[83] An item in 'Fictional Montreal/Montréal fictif''s project notes offers an example of this kind of embodied experience: 'I was meeting with a graduate student in my office, when an audio file shared with me on Dropbox suddenly popped onto my computer screen. It was Phil's recording of Nicole Brossard reading from *French Kiss*; my favorite Montréal novel. My eyes instantly filled with tears'.[84] Certain sounds seem to lend themselves to 'affective listening': in his work on opera and the voice, Michel Schneider argues, 'dans l'ordre ordinaire de la vie, la sonorité, le timbre, les intervalles de la voix qui nous parle sont comme effaces derrière la signification de ce qu'elle nous dit, mais la signification disparaît dès que notre écoute se porte vers la voix en elle-même'.[85] Consequently, the recordings of the readings on the digital map offer more than extracts of canonical and recent examples of fiction. The variety of voices, timbres and accents prompts its own a set of pleasures beyond those provoked by the words performed. Similarly to the photograph,[86] the authors' readings on the digital map offer traces of the latter's presence – [87]even if, as with Certeau's famous 'path', the embodied recording performances are not captured in their

entirety. The words read are both highly significant, in that they link with individual geographical points; and irrelevant, as the voices have particular resonances of their own. On the map, Thien reads from the start of *Dogs at the Perimeter*. We thereby get a play between the absent presence of the writer's voice and the presence-absence of the security footage of Hiroji with which her novel begins. Of course, (re)reading their own writing was itself a source of enjoyment for certain authors, such as Monique LaRue who, after reading a section on Expo 67 from *La Démarche du crabe*,[88] commented on the pleasure she felt in familiarizing herself anew with work she had not thought of for some time. If, as Nicole Brossard suggests, our creative writing alters across the life course,[89] then re-reading is itself an enactment of haunting, with the older self ventriloquizing the younger one.[90]

'Fictional Montreal/Montréal fictif''s play between absence and presence, the real (but invisible) radio waves and the imaginary, performs the relationship between material and imagined geographies. It is difficult definitively to establish this relationship, but there is some consensus amongst literary and cultural geographers that cultural productions and physical environments inform each other. For example, Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift argue that, 'a city named in certain ways also becomes that city through the practices of people in response to the labels. They perform the labels'.[91] In this way, the Brain Research Centre in *Dogs at the Perimeter* both is and is not the Montréal Neurological Institute. The city (or suburb, or village) is a dream-space, and cultural productions, including literary fiction, foster a dreaming-haunting/haunting-dreaming which prompt uncanny sensations of knowing, yet not knowing a place. Novels, poems, songs, films, paintings, graffiti and so on give rise to hundreds of micro-hauntings we experience every day in traversing an urban or non-urban space. Tim Edensor, who also reprises Certeau's remarks on remembering, stresses the mundanity of hauntings in a piece on suburban Manchester in which he reads (and re-reads) his commute to work: 'modern imperatives to swiftly bury the past produce cities that are haunted by that which has been consigned to irrelevance'.[92] For him, repetition across generations of routines like shopping and gardening produce their own hauntings.[93] However, spatial hauntings are not only triggered by the passage of time or accumulation of memories, but also by mobilities and migration, yearnings and reveries. For if, as Certeau suggests, remembering is an 'everyday practice' which can help to challenge dominant power relations, it is important to acknowledge that the memories which contribute to the hauntings of a particular place may not have originated there. Places can prompt recollections, dreams or fantasies of others, all of which feed into each other.

Edensor draws on Certeau's description of disruptions to urban order: 'excessive scraps, inconsistencies, peculiarities, incongruities, traces and conspicuous absences can . . . extend the potential for reading and experiencing the city otherwise'.[94] 'Reading and experiencing the city otherwise' means attending to marginalized voices. Although Thien disavows this ambition, *Dogs at the Perimeter* can be said to be carrying out a kind of healing.[95] The end offers a degree of reconciliation with certain ghosts, as Hiroji is reunited with James/Kwan and Janie seems to promise increased contact with her partner and son. Offering performances of (re)readings of creative texts, 'Fictional Montreal/Montréal fictif' is a performance in its own right, which informs understandings and experiences of the city. The project will doubtless contribute to dominant conceptualizations of Montréal as essentially split between its majority languages for,[96] as Graham Huggan and others have made clear, maps are not transparent tools.[97] This is further highlighted by Sara Luchetta, who argues, 'maps . . . guide our gaze to the world'.[98] So, like all maps, 'Fictional Montreal/Montréal fictif' is haunted by what it leaves off. All the same, it offers certain 'spectro-geographies'[99] in that it has the potential to complicate some imaginary mappings of the city and thereby cross cultural-linguistic divides. This is due to its including French- and English-language authors alongside one another.[100] It also prompts readers-listeners to think about belonging to/in the city. The diversity of voices on the digital map connects with the attention given to diasporic communities in *Dogs at the Perimeter* and other featured texts, such as Agnant's *Le Livre d'Emma* and Nasrallah's *Niko*.[101] In their own ways, then, *Dogs at the Perimeter* and the digital map project embrace the potentially utopian aspect of spectrality contained in Derrida's claim, 'au fond, le spectre, c'est l'avenir'.[102] In its fictionalized recalling of an unspeakable past, Thien's novel reminds us of the impossibility of forgetting yet, in so doing, offers a haunting of hope by reminding us of our collective responsibilities to each other. An auditory snapshot of Québec's most literary city, the digital map encourages an affective engagement with fiction on the part of listeners-readers and, through this, imaginary – and potentially real – connections with various spaces, places and communities in and beyond Montréal.

Notes

1   Michel de Certeau, 'Walking in the City', in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Randall (London: University of California Press, 1984), 108.

2   See, for example, Brian Morris, 'What we Talk about When we Talk about "Walking in the City"', *Cultural Studies* 18.5 (2004).

3   Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

4   Jacques Derrida, *Spectres de Marx: L'État de la dette, le travail du deuil et la nouvelle Internationale* (Paris: Galilée, 1993), 34.

5   Matthew Rubery describes listening to audio books as reading. Matthew Rubery, 'Tapeworms: Books on Tape and the People Who Love Them' (paper presented at English Research Seminar, Keele University, March 2, 2016).

6   Guest editors, Jo Frances Maddern and Peter Adey use this term 'as a deliberate reference to Derrida's spectro-politics' in an editorial to a special edition of *Cultural Geographies*. Jo Frances Maddern and Peter Adey, 'Editorial: Spectro-geographies', *Cultural Geographies* 15 (2008): 291.

7   Ceri Morgan and Philip Lichti, 'Fictional Montreal/Montréal fictif', British Academy small research grant project, 2016–17.

8   Madeleine Thien, *Dogs at the Perimeter* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2011).

9   Derrida, *Spectres*, 71.

10 Derrida, *Spectres*, 165.

11 Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Volume XVII (1917–1919). An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works*, trans. James Strachey, ed. James Strachey et al. (London: The Hogarth Press and The Institute of Psycho-analysis, 1955), 220.

12 Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, 2nd edn (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008). References are to the Kindle edition.

13 Michael F. O'Riley, 'Postcolonial Haunting: Anxiety, Affect, and the Situated Encounter', *Postcolonial Text*, 3.4 (2007): 1.

14 Ceri Morgan, *Mindscapes of Montréal: Québec's Urban Fiction, 1960–2005* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012).

15 In the introduction to a special edition on Anglo-Quebec Poetry, Jason Camlot writes, 'there has not been a coherent, nationally recognized identity for anglophone Quebec writing since the 1960s when a lyric-based poetry in the tradition of Irving Layton and Leonard Cohen was still a dominant mode and was identified as a signature mode of Canadian poetry'. Jason Camlot, 'Introduction: (Im)possible Conditionals: Anglo-Quebec Poetry/la poésie anglo-québécoise', *Canadian Poetry*, 64 (Spring/Summer, 2009): 11.

16 Rawi Hage, *Cockroach* (Toronto: Anansi, 2008).

17 See, for example, Heather O'Neill, *Lullabies for Little Criminals* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006). O'Neill is from Montréal originally, unlike many of the writers currently associated with the city's anglo-lit scene.

18 See Jean-François Chassay, *Bibliographie descriptive du roman montréalais* (Montréal: Groupe de recherche Montréal imaginaire, Université de Montréal, 1991). The last 10 years or so have seen a return to the rural in fiction in French. See Samuel Archibald, 'Le néoterritoir et moi', *Liberté*, 295 (April 2012).

19 For cities as sites where political tensions crystallize see, for example, Robin James Smith and Kevin Hetherington, *Urban Rhythms: Mobilities, Space and Interaction in the Contemporary City* (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), 7.

20 Sherry Simon, *Cities in Translation: Intersections of Language and Memory* (London: Routledge, 2012), 3.

21 Sherry Simon, 'Montreal and the City as Translation Zone' (paper presented at the Society for Francophone Postcolonial Studies The Postcolonial City conference, Institut français, London, 19 November 2011).

22 Hubert Aquin, *Trou de mémoire* (Montréal: Cercle du livre de France, 1968).

23 Lucile Vallières, *La Fragilite des idoles* ([Montréal]: Éditions du lys, 1964).

24 See, for example, Gail Scott, *Heroine* (Burnaby, B.C.: Talonbooks, 1999).

25 Neil Smith, 'Isolettes', in *Bang Crunch* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), Heather O'Neill, *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2014).

26 Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 17.

27 Thien, *Dogs*, 1.

28 Thien, *Dogs*, 53.

29 Thien, *Dogs*, 53.

30 Thien, *Dogs*, 43. The same is suggested later in Thien's novel when, in a flashback, we learn Mei's reaction on seeing her brother arrive at her cooperative: 'in the same moment, I believed and disbelieved'. Thien, *Dogs*, 127.

31 Thien, *Dogs*, 63.

32 In the 2016 census, just over half of the populations of Vancouver and Toronto identified as 'visible minorities' (a Canadian census term), in contrast to just over 30% of Montréalers. Tara Carman, 'Visible minorities now the majority in

5 B.C. cities', CBC News, 27 October 2017, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/visible-minorities-now-the-majority-in-5-b-c-cities-1.4375858; Julia Whalen, 'Census 2016: more than half of Torontonians identify themselves as visible minorities', CBC News, 25 October 2017, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/census-visible-minorities-1.4371018; Shari Okeke, 'Ethnic, visible minorities want Montréal mayoral candidates to address diversity', CBC News, 31 October 2017, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/ethnic-visible-minorities-want-montreal-mayoral-candidates-to-address-diversity-1.4379795.

33 Madeleine Thien (interview with Ceri Morgan, Montréal, 12 September 2016).

34 Madeleine Thien, 'A Map of the City', in *Simple Recipes* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2001), 161.

35 Thien's deceptively 'simple' story is considerably more complex than it appears, so that here, again, we have more than one set of hauntings. This is underlined by Gemma Allt, who interprets the narrator's walking and driving around Vancouver as a kind of haunting of the city, asking, 'who is the ghost in this story?' (seminar contribution, Canadian Metropolis module, Keele University, 12 October 2017).

36 Derrida, *Spectres*, 75.

37 Derrida describes how Marx writes about 'le signe monétaire' as a kind of ghost (80); with money and the state becoming spectral: 'la métamporphose des marchandises . . . était déjà un processus d'idéalisation transfigurante qu'on peut légitimement appeler spectropoétique' Derrida, *Spectres*, 81.

38 Thien, *Dogs*, 86.

39 Derrida, *Spectres*, 22.

40 Thien, *Dogs*, 71.

41 Thien, *Dogs*, 137.

42 Thien, *Dogs*, 61.

43 Thien, *Dogs*, 38.

44 Thien, *Dogs*, 94. Oliver Clarke identifies a similar technique in 'A Map of the City' (seminar contribution, Canadian Metropolis seminar, Keele University, 12 October 2017).

45 Derrida, *Spectres*, 72. If, as Derrida suggests, a ghost challenges chronology (72), 'revenant' is perhaps not the right term to describe it. Derrida suggests that the spectre is characterized by repetition and return: 'un spectre est toujours un revenant'. Derrida, *Spectres*, 32.

46 Thien, *Dogs*, 105–106.

47 Thien, *Dogs*, 189.

48 Thien, *Dogs*, 246.

49 Janet McLellan, Cambodian Refugees in Ontario: Resettlement, Religion, and Identity (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 104. Cited in Y-Dang Troeung, 'Witnessing Cambodia's Disappeared', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 82.2 (Spring 2013): 157.

50 Troeung, 'Witnessing', 161.

51 Troeung, 'Witnessing', 156.

52 On metamodernism, see/hear, for example, Kristian Shaw, 'BrexLit: Hope and Melancholy in the Contemporary British Novel' (paper presented at the second AHRC Metamodernism Symposium, Keele University, 23 May 2018). Audio recording available at https://ahrc-metamodernism.co.uk/papers-from-the-2nd-symposium.

53 Derrida, *Spectres*, 75.

54 João Biehl and Peter Locke explain that for Deleuze, becoming is a mode of being which challenges fixed notions of identity and hierarchical divisions between self and other: 'in becoming, as Deleuze saw it, one can achieve an ultimate existential stage in which life is simply immanent and open to new relations—camaraderie—and trajectories'. João Biehl and Peter Locke, 'Deleuze and the Anthropology of Becoming', *Current Anthropology*, 51. 3 (June 2010): 317.

55 Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 5–6.

56 See, for example, Nicole Brossard, *French Kiss* (Montréal: Éditions du Jour, 1974), Daphne Marlatt, *Ana Historic* (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1988).

57 Other characters who have experienced forced migration include Nuong, with whom Hiroji stays in Cambodia. As a child, Nuong was briefly under the guardianship of the doctor in a refugee camp in Aranyaprathet. Adopted by a family in the United States, he is deported to Cambodia as an adult after he commits a crime and loses his refugee status.

58 Thien, *Dogs*, 44.

59 Derrida, *Spectres*, 93.

60 Guillaume Morissette, *The Original Face* (Montréal: Véhicule Press, 2017), 37.

61 Many Japanese living in Canada were subject to internment during World War II, and it is impossible to read an account of

an apparently vanishing Japanese man without thinking of the atomic bombs launched on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

62 Cited in Derrida, *Spectres de Marx*, 47, Derrida's italics.

63 Gordon offers a similar view in her description of conjuring: 'conjuring is a particular form of calling up and calling out the forces that make things what they are in order to fix and transform a troubling situation', Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 22.

64 *Certainty* features a character who is a producer of radio documentaries, whereas music is central to *Do Not Say We Have Nothing*. Madeleine Thien, *Certainty* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2006), *Do Not Say We Have Nothing* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2016).

65 Thien, *Dogs*, 137.

66 Guy Beauregard discusses the reading practices invited by Thien's novel, which he describes as 'a text that sets out to represent, in [. . .] a fragmentary manner, . . . histories of destruction and loss'. Guy Beauregard, 'Interwoven Temporalities: Reading Madeleine Thien's *Dogs at the Perimeter*', *Studies in Canadian Literature/Études en Littérature Canadienne*, 39.2 (2014): 176.

67 Thien (interview with Ceri Morgan, Montréal, 12 September 2016).

68 Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV (1914–1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1953).

69 Thien (interview with Ceri Morgan, Montréal, 12 September 2016).

70 See, for example, 'Mapping the Lakes: A Literary GIS', http://www.lancaster.ac.uk /mappingthelakes/How%20to%20 use%20this%20site.html.

71 See Robert T. Tally Jr., 'Translator's Preface: The Timely Emergence of Geocriticism', in Bertrand Westphal, *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces*, trans. Robert T. Jally Jr (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

72 Marcel Cobussen and Vincent Meelberg, 'Editorial: Listenings', *Journal of Sonic Studies*, 2.1 (May 2012), http://journal .sonicstudies.org/vol02/nr01/a01.

73 Elmer Schönberger, 'Het Grote Luisteren—reikhalzen naar muziek' (Huizinga Lecture, the Pieterskerk, Leiden, the Netherlends, 2005).

74 Ruth Herbert, 'Modes of Music Listening and Modes of Subjectivity in Everyday Life', *Journal of Sonic Studies*, 2.1 (May 2012), http://journal.sonicstudies .org/vol02/nr01/a05.

75 Sharon Stewart, 'Listening to Deep Listening: Reflection on the 1988 Recording and Lifework of Pauline Oliveros', *Journal of Sonic Studies*, 2.1 (May 2012), http://journal.sonicstudies .org/vol02/nr01/a12.

76 Salomé Voegelin, 'Ethics of Listening', *Journal of Sonic Studies*, 2.1 (May 2012), http://journal.sonicstudies.org/vol02 /nr01/a08.

77 Huw Hallam, 'The Production of Listening: On Biopolitical Sound and the Commonplaces of Aurality', *Journal of Sonic Studies*, 2.1 (May 2012), http://journal.sonicstudies.org/vol02 /nr01/a07.

78 Isobel Anderson, 'Voice, Narrative, Place: Listening to Stories', *Journal of Sonic Studies*, 2.1 (May 2012), http://journal .sonicstudies.org/vol02/nr01/a10.

79 Adel Wang Jing, 'Affective Listening: China's Experimental Music and Sound Art', *Journal of Sonic Studies*, 2.1 (May 2012), http://journal.sonicstudies .org/vol02/nr01/a11.

80 See, for example, Nigel Thrift, 'Intensities of Feeling: Towards a Spatial Politics of Affect', *Geografiska Annaler B*, 86.1 (2004); Deborah Thien, 'After or beyond Feeling? A Consideration of Affect and Emotion in Geography', *Area*, 37.4 (2005); Divya P. Tolia-Kelly, 'Affect—an ethnocentric encounter?: Exploring the 'universalist' imperative of emotional/ affectual geographies', *Area*, 38 (2006).

81 Nicholas Reyland, 'Affect, Representation, Transformation: *The Royle Family*'s Musical Bodies', in *Music, Analysis, and the Body: Experiments, Explorations, and Embodiments*, eds. Nicholas Reyland and Rebecca Thumpston (Leuven: Peeters, 2018), 172.

82 Reyland, 'Affect', 172.

83 Wang, 'Affective Listening'. This kind of listening is found in Dogs at the Perimeter, when Elie, one of the patients at the Brain Research Centre, loses language as left side of her brain atrophies. This causes

her to replace words with images: 'the Lord's Prayer touched her in the same bodily way that the wind might, it was the sensation of sound but not meaning'. Thien, *Dogs*, 10–11.

84   Ceri Morgan, Project notes, 'Fictional Montreal/Montréal fictif', unpublished, 2017.

85   Michel Schneider, Prima Donna. Opéra et inconscient (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2001), Kindle edn, p.101.

86   Susan Bruce describes how photography has been linked with ghostliness: 'since its inception, photography has been spoken of in terms of the ghostly, ghosts in terms of the photographic'. Susan Bruce, 'Sympathy For the Dead: (G)hosts, Hostilities and Mediums in Alejandro Amenàbar's *The Others* and Postmortem Photography', *Discourse*, 27.2 & 27.3 (Spring and Fall 2005): 24.

87   Even if we recognize photography as a highly mediated practice, it is still culturally perceived as having a testimonial function.

88   Monique LaRue, *La Démarche du crabe* (Montréal: Boréal, 1995).

89   See, for example, Nicole Brossard, 'Le corps du personage', *Tessera. Bodies, Vesture, Ornament/Corps, vêtements, parures*, 19 (Winter 1995): 68.

90   Or, at least, rereading one's own work aloud offers this kind of ventriloquism, although all rereading offers hauntings in the sense of previous readings framing our current one.

91   Ash Amin, and Nigel Thrift, *Cities: Reimagining the Urban*, 3rd edn (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), 23.

92   Tim Edensor, 'Mundane hauntings: commuting through the phantasmagoric working-class spaces of Manchester, England', *Cultural Geographies*, 15 (2008): 313.

93   Edensor, 'Mundane hauntings', 326.

94   Edensor, 'Mundane hauntings', 325.

95   When Thien was asked whether she aimed to make the novel a work of healing as well as an account of trauma (or at least, that is how it is understood in Western contexts), she replied 'I think of it more as a record of existence. Here is a life that was lived, in all its complexity' (Twitter exchange, 10 November 2016).

96   Some audience members at a session to discuss the project during the Blue Met literary festival 2017, asked why the map did not include Montréal fiction in other languages. Such a project would require additional investigators with the necessary expertise and a larger budget than the one secured.

97   Graham Huggan, 'Decolonizing the Map: Post-Colonialism, Post-Structuralism, and the Cartographic Connection', *Ariel*, 20.4 (October 1989).

98   Sara Luchetta, 'Exploring the literary map: An analytical review of online literary mapping projects', *Geography Compass*, 11.1 (2017): 12, doi: 10.1111/gec3.12303. The technological tools available to build the map (cheaply and easily) also implicitly inform and instruct users in particular ways. To access the recordings on 'Fictional Montreal/Montréal fictif', users need to click on icons. These are linked to specific points on the city in a way which imposes a geographical precision on texts' locations which may not be present in the original works of fiction. This is especially the case with Marie-Célie Agnant's *Le Livre d'Emma*, which contains references to views of the Saint Lawrence River, but withholds details of the location of the setting. Agnant agreed to my and Phil's suggestion regarding where to plot her recording. This was made with aesthetic and practical considerations with respect to the overall look and scale of the map. Authors who participated in the project were selected on the basis of their having written Montréal-based fiction and to their willingness to contribute. Not surprisingly for readers/users familiar with the city, several readings cluster around the Plateau and Mile End – both are associated with writers and other cultural producers, even if they were originally working-class neighbourhoods. Phil and I therefore suggested a feasible point for Agnant's extract which would offer some visual variety but not cause the map to zoom out too much.

99   Maddern and Adey, 'Editorial: Spectro-geographies'.

100   Although some scholars do comparative work on literatures in Montréal's – and Québec's – majority languages, such as Sherry Simon, Catherine Leclerc and Lianne Moyes, most critics specialize in one or the other.

101   Dimitri Nasrallah, *Niko* (Montréal: Véhicule Press, 2011).

102   Derrida, *Spectres*, 71.

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The Words Change Everything: Haunting, Contagion and The Stranger in Tony Burgess's *Pontypool*

Evelyn Deshane and R. Travis Morton

Abstract

In 2018, *O Canada*'s lyrics were made gender neutral. This change comes at a time when certain key public figures refuse to use gender neutral language. The linguistic tension and ideological divide within Canada creates a haunted feeling around certain minority groups, leaving everyone feeling out of place. This article examines how viral ideas and word choices spread through media technologies via the 'word virus'. We use the figure of the zombie to show how the word virus becomes bad ideology, one that spreads and takes over certain spaces and enacts the presence of the insider/outsider. To reflect on 'word viruses' gone awry, we borrow and build on scholarship from the emerging field of hauntology made popular by Jacques Derrida and Avery Gordon. Ultimately, we present Tony Burgess's horror novel *Pontypool Changes Everything* turned Canadian horror film *Pontypool* as a speculative case study, since Burgess's texts suggest that what is more infectious than the zombie-outsider is the insider's own language, which identifies and labels the outsider. By positing a possible cure for the word virus within *Pontypool*, the film adaptation suggests that the ways in which we cease becoming infected with bad ideas is not to stop speaking or isolate ourselves through quarantine, but deliberately seek out the stranger in order to challenge and change the meaning of words.

Keywords: hauntology, gender neutral language, transgender, communities, Canadian horror, film adaptation

Introduction

In 2018, *O Canada*'s lyrics were made gender neutral in order to foster and facilitate a more inclusive national image, yet the changes were not entirely well-received by those in government or in the larger public sphere.[1] Similarly, when Bill C-16 was passed in order to prevent discrimination against gender identity on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom, numerous politicians and Canadian figures voiced their dissent quite publicly.[2] The linguistic tension and ideological divide within Canada creates a haunted feeling around certain identity groups, especially that of the transgender or gender nonconforming person who is the assumed subject of much of these policy changes, but these tensions also fracture the national public sphere and leaves everyone inside Canada's borders feeling infected, afflicted, haunted, or merely 'out of place'.[3] Our paper examines the connection between haunting and contagion through the spread of 'word viruses' in certain forms of media and how these viruses attach themselves to specific identity groups, creating a divide between communities. We build on scholarship from the emerging field of 'hauntology'[4] made popular by Jacques Derrida, Avery Gordon and Ann Cvetkovich, and we situate these ideas through an examination of the Canadian horror film *Pontypool*[5] and the novel on which it is based called *Pontypool Changes Everything*.[6] Tony Burgess's novel, and especially the Bruce McDonald film adaptation which Burgess also wrote, changes the locus of infection so common in zombie films from the bodily to the ideological, from the bite of the stranger to the use of a familiar word. In doing so, *Pontypool* suggests that what is more infectious than the zombie-outsider is the insider's language, and how we as a community have labeled the outsider as such. Moreover, by positing a possible cure for the 'word virus' contagion within *Pontypool*, the film adaptation suggests that the ways in which to avoid becoming infected with bad ideas is not to isolate through quarantine or prohibit speech, but instead deliberately seek out the stranger and change the meaning of the word itself. Rather than prohibiting any kind of speech – be it a gender-neutral pronoun or something far more odious – we should attempt a facilitated discussion between groups, identities and those deemed 'out of place'.[7]

The History of Queer Hauntings

Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx* has been the basis for much of the work being done in the field of 'hauntology'.[8] It is his chapter on 'the

conjuring trick' that presents the issue of speech prohibition most suc-
cinctly. Derrida writes that

> [a]n articulation assures the movement of this relentless indictment.
> It gives some play. It plays between the spirit (Geist) and the specter
> (Gespenst), between the spirit on the one hand, the ghost or the rev-
> enant on the other. This articulation often remains inaccessible,
> eclipsed in its turn in shadow, where it moves about and puts one
> off the trail.[9]

In effect, 'the conjuring trick' *is* language. To name a debate creates
a debate, and breeds the haunted ontology of its subjects. Those who feel
represented are reaffirmed as real, while those who are ignored or silenced
perpetuate a ghost story and are removed from the debate. When the
national public sphere, as represented by the Canadian Charter of Rights
and Freedom and Bill C-16, provokes such a change, divisive debates
spring up within its public. Public intellectual Jordan Peterson[10] and Cana-
dian politician Don Plett[11] are examples of those who have criticized the
amendment, and while neither amendment will be changed anytime soon,
everyone in Canada (whether they agree or disagree with these rulings)
begins to feel haunted. It is no longer a personal feeling as if 'time is out
of joint';[12] it is perpetual, never-ending and all-encompassing. Everyone
feels the ghost in this story, which means that no one, and everyone, is in
disagreement. It is those who are in the minority, however, who bear a
more complicated legacy in the field of hauntology.

In Avery Gordon's *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and Sociological Imag-
ination*, she examines 'how paying attention to ghosts can, among other
things, radically change how we know and what we know about state ter-
ror and about slavery and the legacy of American freedom that derives
from it'.[13] One of the many ways she does this is through an examination
of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, a ghost story about slavery, which is Morrison's
attempt to give voice to the 'sixty million and more' who were lost before
the slave trade even began.[14] It is to these lost bodies – those who effec-
tively died during travel, in a liminal state of being not free but not yet a
slave – that Morrison dedicates her novel, and it is these bodies which
represent the cogent out-of-place-ness that a ghost story represents.
To research the ghost story is to also make oneself out-of-place, since
'[f]ollowing the ghosts is about making a contact that changes you and
refashions the social relations in which you are located' and it also queers
a person's sense of time, since they now 'strive to understand the con-
ditions under which a memory was produced in the first place, [then]

toward a countermemory, for the future'.[15] In this way, the ghost story is phenomenological, spiritual, psychological, fictive, and, as Morrison echoes, is a story bound up in trauma, especially that of an entire people that occurred under slavery. Though Gordon is careful to caution that, '[h]aunting is not the same as being exploited, traumatized, or oppressed', there is a definitive correlation in Morrison's *Beloved* where Beloved's presence in the text and her initial death – her time being made out of joint – certainly 'involve[d] these experiences [of being oppressed] or is produced by them'.[16] Furthermore, as Morrison develops in *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and Literary Imagination*, the ghost of slavery as an institution continues to affect the United States through its constant national definition in the concept of freedom, since freedom can only exist with the notion of slavery lurking in the background.[17] Gordon and Morrison both connect the idea of haunting to prohibition, especially the prohibiting of a speech-act or story, and especially if institutions, such as the US government, continue to perpetuate this silencing. By not talking about the past, the past does not cease to exist, but is repressed and made latent – forced 'into the shadows'.[18] 'To write stories concerning exclusions and invisibilities is to write ghost stories' Gordon says, and 'to write ghost stories implies that ghosts are real, that is to say, that they produce material effects'.[19]

In the context of our essay, we wish to examine the 'material effects' left by ghosts as *words*, be they hate speech, identity labels, or pronouns with complicated histories.[20] For Tony Burgess's novel *Pontypool Changes Everything* and Bruce McDonald film adaptation *Pontypool*, the haunted legacies of certain words are transformed into contagious word viruses, which spread throughout a small town in Ontario called Pontypool and to the rest of Canada. It is this change from haunting to contagion which we argue is brought about through new media technology and the dispersion of communities through these technologies. Whether it is an isolated radio room in *Pontypool* where the three main characters are trapped, or the news media misrepresenting the public's outcry to the 1938 *War of the Worlds*' broadcast, or through online communities which Jordan Peterson[21] and his online followers subscribe to, words continue to leave material effects which our article attempts to trace and analyze. By using some words and not others, or by forgetting the legacy associated with certain terms, a haunting persists and changes the way in which a country is shaped, along with the families and communities in that country. Moreover, to even say that the debate surrounding Bill C-16 or the national anthem is simply about pronouns is to misrepresent or misinterpret the complicated legacy of queer hauntings, since the only

pronouns in question are pronouns for bodies that may seem as if they are mismatched – i.e. transgender or gender-nonconforming bodies.

In *An Archive of Feeling: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Publics*, Ann Cvetkovich describes what she calls 'low-level "insidious"' traumas which target the 'everyday sexual lives in which the vulnerability of bodies and psyches is negotiated' in particular.[22] In a way, these are smaller ghosts that are barely seen but always felt, and when compared to public and national trauma, can often be pushed aside; they are thought of as a nuisance, rather than a serious issue, which is precisely what happens to the debate surrounding gender neutral pronouns. To not be read as their gender identity, and then to have their request for that identity rejected through the use of the unrequested pronoun, means that transgender or gender nonconforming students experience 'the everyday life of queer trauma' as Cvetkovich presents it.[23] Their daily lives, names and identities become haunted through repeated and sustained negative interactions, something of which is represented in the community itself through their use of the 'dead name' (sometimes stylized as deadname) as a term.[24] The dead name is the birth name of the trans person; when used after transition (be it social or medical or otherwise) has occurred, it is called being 'deadnamed', 'deadnaming', or simply being called by a 'dead name'.[25] This term best encapsulates the traumatic feeling of being misgendered by a largely cisgender public sphere, according to the trans community, but it also conjures a ghost in the same way that being forcefully misread also does. To conjure this ghost from the past has serious consequences for the everyday existence of the trans person, both theoretically and practically. It can be dangerous for a trans person to be deadnamed since they may not be completely out to those who may hear the former name, and this conjuring could lead to consequences such as violence and/or loss of employment. Theoretically, however, using the term 'dead name' within the community replicates the cisgender public sphere's initial trauma; it sustains the haunting, rather than working towards healing it. Similar to Peterson's refusal to use gender neutral pronouns, calling a person by their dead name conjures a ghost, but so does *calling* it a dead name. These words perpetuate the same discourse; they are all 'conjuring trick[s]'.[26] These words do also not allow the past to become integrated. Instead of the birth name being viewed as a relic, a part of the self that once used to exist but how now changed, the past has been erased and is prohibited from speaking.

These speech-act prohibitions do not alleviate the burden of transphobia, much like Gordon and Morrison note of other prohibitions that do not alleviate the legacy of racism and slavery, so Canada, and especially

the trans people inside of its borders, continue to feel haunted, even in light of these recent changes to the national anthem and Bill C-16. The genderqueer students in Jordan Peterson's classes, for instance, along with trans people who are detained at Canadian borders[27] or who were issued duplicate voting cards in Canada's 2018 election[28] still regularly deal with the everyday life of queer trauma often conjured through their dead names or misuse of pronouns. In the age of new media, these community fractures and hauntings only continue to grow.

Word Viruses

The material effects of words shift from a haunting to a contagion through a mixture of technology and prohibition. Prohibited speech in the name of social cohesion – such as the gender-neutral lyrics for *O Canada* or Bill C-16 – creates a quarantined space where a lack has defined its borders. By claiming that there is no more 'free speech'[29] for someone like himself due to these new amendments, Peterson (and others who may agree with him) perpetuates the idea of speech slavery, a rhetoric which derives its power from the same haunted ontologies that rob transgender and gender nonconforming people of their rights. As this fracture grows, these prohibited words – and the ideological messages attached to them – spread as if they were viruses, effectively turning a haunting into a contagious culture. A 'word virus', then, is how ideology itself is made manifest through certain words and/or phrases, which can then be transferred through the use of a technological advancement to groups of people – sometimes entire communities – which then fuses them together with a sustained belief system they continue to practice through the use of the phrases themselves. Canadian author Tony Burgess's transmission of a zombie virus spread through words (rather than through bodily contact) in *Pontypool* and its novel *Pontypool Changes Everything* is the best example of the word virus in action. While the novel version contains many different protagonists and a far bleaker outlook on how the word virus is spread, the filmic adaptation best represents the fear of an ideologically coded language virus and how this virus can be combated through new meaning-making practices in integrated, diverse communities. In *Pontypool,* DJ Grant Mazzy (Stephen McHattie) and his two coworkers, Laurel-Ann (Georgia Reilly) and Sydney (Lisa Houle), receive messages about an incoming zombie invasion from their traffic-copter reporter, Ken, along with a garbled message broadcasted from a French station, and even from the BBC, but they do not believe it is real. Eventually, Laurel-Ann is infected

and dies from the illness, while Grant and Sydney survive after taking Dr Mendez, a doctor who specializes in the virus, into the studio. It is through Dr Mendez, a stranger-outsider, who realizes the virus is a word virus, and not spread through typical means of contamination. His discovery shifts the tone of the movie from an everyday Southern Ontario Gothic tale of a small town turned ravenous swarm into an intelligent exploration on the ways in which we can use – and abuse – language.

Pontypool's plot closely mirrors – and subsequently inverts – the apocryphal 1938 case of the *War of the Worlds* broadcast. In the novel, H.G. Wells tells a rather straightforward story of a Mars invasion; the storyline was then adapted and presented for a modern American audience in the form of news bulletins.[30] It was this format – as *news*, rather than as a radio play – which confused the population the most, but the numbers of people who were confused or panicked is vastly overestimated.[31] It was the newspaper industry, rather than the population, which created – then propagated – the mass hysteria narrative; the news created and then spread a word virus. By creating an invasive narrative about an invasion, the aliens became an easy metaphor for whatever 'stranger danger' could be felt in the social milieu.[32] Indeed, many subsequent horror films that dealt with contagion or invasion were thinly veiled metaphors for spreading malicious ideas, be they racial inequality (*Night of the Living Dead*),[33] communism (*Invasion of the Body Snatchers*)[34] or technological progress (*The Thing*).[35] Zombies in particular have become synonymous with invasion metaphors, since the zombie represents 'a recognizably human (if not familiar) figure that devours the living'.[36] Furthermore, when zombies swarm, these narratives 'display an explicit fear of a foreign invasion', especially in relation to racial politics in the United States.[37] The zombie as a metaphor represents the tension between who is insider/outsider in a particular community, and the zombie as a horde, swarm, or pack represent the mounting fear of ideological take over especially as time moves on.

In *Pontypool Changes Everything* and *Pontypool*, the figure of the zombie is used to make a direct connection to ideology as infectious, but instead of using the bite or wound to spread the infection, a word or phrase bears the weight of transmission. In the novel and movie, the outbreak is spread through certain words and phrases (not always the same from person to person), which then causes aphasia in the victim, and subsequent death and destruction. Those who perish are usually devoured by others; the zombies are interchangeably called zombies or cannibals in the novel and film. One of the more fascinating parallels in the novel between the zombie-cannibal figure is the evocation of the real life serial killer Ed

Gein[38] who 'redecorated his farmhouse with body parts'.[39] When Les, one of the several oscillating main characters of the novel, discovers that the local high school wants to do a play about Ed Gein (rather than his more traditional favourites), he refers to the 'cannibal thing' as just another problem he has to deal with during the day.[40] Later on, when Les is in a police station, the narrator describes him as being unaware of 'a growing number of people in Ontario [who] are now also giving the OPP murder' along with 'vicious gangs of cannibals [who] are moving on the police, sweeping through like a system of weather, snatching up large parts of the population'.[41] While this last quotation clearly displays the connection to *Pontypool*'s predecessors in the zombie genre, the conflation of the cannibal to the zombie is fascinating in terms of what it means for consumption. Rather than consuming flesh, the cannibals and zombies in Burgess's world are Ed-Gein-like figures who merely 'redecorate'[42] with body parts; they collect and redistribute, rather than consume and infect. Indeed, the gore associated with Ed Gein – one of the main sources of the slasher archetype in cinema[43] – is reduced to a shticky high school play; a 'dramaturgical inevitability as a home-shopping network sketch', thereby rendering all bodies and gore associated with them jokes.[44] Instead it is Burgess's treatment and description of the 'word virus' as the true source of contagion in his text that is truly terrifying to the members of Pontypool and makes both the novel and film stand out amongst the horror genre filled with gore and destruction. In the novel, Burgess describes the word virus as having

> hid silently for decades up in the roofs of adjectives, its little paws growing sensitive, first to the modifications performed there; then, sensing something more concrete pulling at a distance, the virus jumped into paradigms. It was unable to reach the interior workings of the paradigm, however, due to its own disappearance near the core. The viruses bit wildly at the exterior shimmer of the paradigms, jamming selection with pointed double fangs. A terrible squealing ripped beneath the surface of the paradigms as they were destroyed. The shattered structure automatically redistributed its contents along syntagma, smuggling vertical mobiles across horizontal ropes. What was in the air had to travel as ground and the virus sauntered right into these new spaces, taking them over. Radical spaces evolved to compensate. Negative space became a fortune telling device. Positive space arched its back painfully, now pocked horribly by the frenzied migration of vehicles into the ground.[45]

His description is deliberate and invokes precisely that combination of ideology, prohibition and transmission to groups. In this description, words are the virus, but they are also the technological vehicle which are used to spread the ideological message, 'the exterior shimmer of the paradigms'.[46] This is significant since new media technologies – such as the radio station itself – may help facilitate transmission/infection to a broader population, but these technologies can be shut off or ignored without actually eradicating the true source of infection. The solution to the spread of the ideology virus, then, is to break apart the words that bear the full weight of transmission and change their meanings, something which Grant figures out in the final act of the movie. Because of this, we use the film adaptation as a speculative case study in which to examine how the film represents – and then inverts – the typical construction of the insider/outsider, but also for this innovative solution the film presents. Rather than prohibiting speech through quarantine, the main characters realize that they must change the meanings of the words themselves – which means questioning and changing the ideology that binds them.

Pontypool as Case Study

From the very beginning of the film, the audience defines the town Pontypool through sound. The adaptation process from the novel to the film has made the aural focus of the virus transmission process that much more obvious and sonic. Burgess's description of the virus 'in the air' now has to 'travel . . . right into these new spaces, taking them over' and these new spaces of the cinema screen must be dominated by auditory chatter in order to construct Pontypool from 'negative space'.[47] The opening title sequence is a pre-tape Grant Mazzy has done about Mrs French's missing cat, which is played over a screen that gradually spells *Pontypool* out of sequence. The jumbled letters jumble the meaning of the word itself – the first comprehensible word we are given is TYPO – and this disorientation is furthered through Grant's endless chatter over the mic, along with the visual equivalent of what his voice sounds like. The first scene after the title sequence is Grant driving and being accosted by a woman he does not know and who will not answer him (later on, she becomes a zombie in a horde). When Grant shows up at the radio station, he encounters his own pre-taped voice outside. When finally on the air himself in real-time, he continues his own endless monologue, sometimes enticing both Sydney and Laurel-Ann to also contribute to the conversation – until, of

course, the zombie outbreak becomes audible and Sydney refuses to have it on the air.

The tension between silence/prohibition and excessive information/chatter is also made quite clear through the opposing figures of Grant and Sydney. While Grant represents endless chatter in the name of 'full disclosure', Sydney appeals to prohibition in the name of 'professionalism' and peace-keeping. When reports of the zombie invasion become frequent and alarming, Sydney insists that they should not worry the members of the small community unnecessarily with news reports which may not be real; instead she fills the dead-time with weather updates, traffic, school closures, and a previously scheduled performance of *Lawrence of Arabia*. Pontypool has been made through sound, but only what is permitted to become sound. As Sydney remarks, Pontypool is filled with gossip: Mrs French's cat is one of many stories which are reiterated in order to construct a sonic image of Pontypool, since the filmic audience will never actually witness the town itself. When the three workers are informed they are under quarantine, Pontypool as a town and as a movie becomes confined to the radio room itself, and each one becomes a representative member of the community.

It is after the quarantine when the notion of the 'outsider' first appears as a solid concept – or at least, a cogent voice on the phone. Though the three leads hear about the invasion of the medical hospital where Dr Mendez works, and where the first swarm was spotted over the phone, Sydney refuses to play it in its entirety. Similarly, the French message they receive over the air is translated and broadcasted, but then ignored. The BBC newscaster's report on the invasion manages to get on the air, but it is discredited when they bring up 'separatist terror groups'. Sydney writes the report off as an outside country not understanding Canadian politics.[48] Furthermore, the only townsperson from Pontypool giving the radio station information is Ken from his 'traffic copter'. He is discredited when Sydney reveals that Ken is not actually in a helicopter, but in his car and playing sound effects; later on his credibility is eroded even further when Sydney reveals that he was actually a pedophile. This reveal is made after he has died over the phone, and after Laurel-Ann has become infected with the word virus. Though they know that the invasion is real at this point, Sydney continues to distance herself from the validity of the experiences they are having through discrediting of Ken. From the very beginning of *Pontypool*, it is the outside world's interpretation of the emergency happening in Pontypool that's doubted, rather than the radio broadcaster's creation of an invasion that scares the townspeople.

When Dr Mendez climbs in through the window into the radio station, he becomes the perfect symbolic visualization of the outsider/invader and a beacon of 'stranger danger' during this crisis.[49] Mendez is also the only non-white character we have in the film, though his racial identity remains ambiguous in the source text. Dr Mendez is one of the few characters who appears in both the book and the film, but the novel does not give him much physical description. The only insights into Mendez's personality come from Les's internal monologue ('*He's* a bit loony, isn't he?')[50] and from one scene when Dr. Mendez performs 'loose little dances' around the bodies of cadavers so he can distinguish himself as 'not being dead' in the zombie carnage.[51] These small descriptions, in addition to his non-white (or racially ambiguous) surname, code him as a character out of place in the small town setting of Pontypool, something on which the film builds when it depicts him as breaking into the radio station. Since it was also Mendez's clinic which was the focal point for the invasion, he becomes the centre of the swarm and the embodiment of the virus – at least on the surface. While Mendez acts as the alien-outsider, he brings knowledge of the virus. Indeed, it is his status as a body out of place – as the only living survivor in a wreckage of zombie death – which gives him the experience to figure out how the virus is transmitted and spread. The 'stranger danger' of the alien outsider lessens – not because his body or racial ambiguity has been resolved necessarily, but because his 'passport' and credentials have passed the test.[52]

It is at this point in the narrative when we realize that the English language – and whiteness – is symbolic of the invasion. As the woman who first refused to speak to Grant in his car is found in a zombie horde, and as Laurel-Ann's communication breaks down with the virus, the audience's notion of the stranger is summarily revised: the stranger is not those who are bodily different, but those who refused to connect. The stranger also becomes sutured to the State/government itself through Laurel-Ann's depiction, since she was once a soldier overseas and has recently returned. It is also the State/government who places the town under quarantine, and who later destroys the radio station under the guise of protecting the community. The inversion of the alien-outsider is furthered when Grant and Sydney realize a zombie has gotten inside the radio studio and are forced to kill it; the zombie is a child from a previous performance in the radio booth earlier that day of *Lawrence of Arabia*, and the child has been in brown-face for the performance (along with the two adults[53] and other children). The brown-face performance goes uncriticized by the characters in the film, though Grant is highly uncomfortable with their presence in the studio. Since the performance interrupts

the time he could have spent on-air talking about the virus, however, Grant's discomfort could either be a need to speak again, or apprehension about the bad praxis of brown-face. Either way, we view the brown-face performance as a deliberate way to counter and challenge the audience's assumption about the insider/outsider, similar to the introduction of Dr Mendez's character. The audience is primed to see Mendez as a 'body out of place' and as Sara Ahmed notes, these bodies out of place often become conflated with the 'could be terrorist' due to their inability to be integrated into the community.[54] This is not the minority's fault, but rather gestures to these larger ideologies of racism, sexism and nationalism which label certain bodies as belonging and others as not. Mendez's racial identity remains ambiguous in the film, though he is eventually integrated into the community, while the children and adults' brown-face identity remains clearly a (rather off-putting) mask and one that ends up becoming deadly when the child turns zombie. During the performance, the child that later attacks Grant and Sydney showed signs of aphasia by uttering 'par par par'; just before it attacks them, it mimics and repeats what Sydney has just said, thus marking it as infected. The *Lawrence of Arabia* performance then becomes representative of the small-town ethos: whiteness that pretends to be strange and exotic as a way to entertain and feign inclusivity, but they only become infected with these haunted legacies of colonialism, imperialism and racism, and then tries to pass them onto others through new media technology, such as the brown-face radio play.

As Jasbir Puar notes, building on the work of José Esteban Muñoz, there is a narrative of the 'double-agent' or 'terrorist drag' that occurs when gender markers on documentation, such as the passport, do not match the body.[55] The transgender or gender non-conforming body is one that is intensely 'out of place' – especially in a small town.[56] Since small towns, or the 'south' in the horror canon, are typically seen as a place of regression, atavism and 'patriarchy run amok', queerness is often punished or demonized.[57] Leatherface from *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* or the inbred desire of *The Hills Have Eyes* are quintessential examples; the first example of Leatherface also draws its inspiration from the real life source of serial killer Ed Gein.[58] As stated earlier, Gein is evoked as the 'cannibal thing' that is part of the small town life Les (and others) must now deal with, even when it's merely a high school play.[59] In the horror genre, the small town is especially dangerous for the way in which it twists non-normative forms of embodiment into monstrosity, and in the smaller sub-genre of literary horror known as Southern Ontario Gothic, the small town becomes the source of 'cabin fever' for its protagonists.[60] The cabin fever for which Southern Ontario Gothic writers (such as Timothy

Findley, Margaret Atwood, and Alice Munro) are known deliberately hinges the horror on *the lack* of communication; it is 'uncommunicative husbands' or an inability to understand the depths of the wildness which causes 'strange projections and psychological grotesqueries [to] spring up and rapidly grow to unmanageable proportions'.[61] With Tony Burgess's novel and film, the small town is depicted as regressive due to its bad ideology (as made manifest in brown-face), but it does not focus on the body as the point of infection. Instead infection happens through the ways in which language can be used, understood or misunderstood.

Laurel-Ann's infection, among all others, demonstrates the connection between the normative body, invasive ideology, and community bonds the best. Her affliction is invisible until she speaks, and when she does, she is unable to be understood as she breaks down into aphasia. She then follows her non-afflicted coworkers to a sound-proof recording studio where they seek quarantine. While they are safe, she is unable to be heard, recognized or validated. When she is unable to pass on the language virus, she dies vomiting a stream of blood onto the glass in an almost desperate outpouring of inner bodily turmoil. As the film continues, Laurel-Ann's outsider status is further exacerbated as we receive several shots of her twisted, gory mouth – this is the place where bad ideology could not be spread, but desperately wants a community. *Pontypool* also makes a claim that while the zombie horde is definitely a community (one which Laurel-Ann could not join since she did not pass on the virus), it is one that is as sick in the words they use. One of the first messages the radio station receives about the invasion is in French. The translation (by Laurel-Ann), is as follows:

> For your safety, please avoid contact with close family members and restrain from the following: all terms of endearment such as honey or sweetheart, baby-talk with young children, and rhetorical discourse. For greater safety, please avoid the English language. Please do not translate this message.

The message implies that those with whom we are intimate are those most easily infected, since we share discourse communities and common understandings with them. Instead of fearing the stranger, then, *Pontypool* suggests we should learn to revere the stranger since they will force us out of own discourse communities, ideologies and perhaps our prejudices. This point is furthered through the contrast of Mendez's character, the small child, Laurel-Ann, Ken in his traffic copter and the woman from the beginning. We are prone to see Mendez as the stranger right away, but

then he is redeemed precisely because of his strange status and his credentials. In contrast, the others are perceived to be familiar or at least belonging in Pontypool, but they are the ones who are actually violent: the woman hits Grant's car, Ken is a pedophile, Laurel-Ann vomits blood and the child wounds Sydney. It is here – when Sydney becomes infected because of the word 'kill' and not the child's bite – that *Pontypool* changes the standard zombie trope of invasion and makes it into a haunting.

The horror of the movie – voices over the phone, the horde/herd, the warnings – all come through sound, rather than gore. In this way, *Pontypool* positions itself as both a zombie and ghost story. Indeed, it is the sound of the zombies makes them into literal poltergeists, as the term *poltergeist* is from two German words roughly translating into 'noisy spirit'. That 'noise' which disrupts their spirits is precisely ideology, the sticky paradigms and parasitic speech patterns of Tony Burgess's novel adapted to the screen. Even as Laurel-Ann becomes infected and the zombie horde emerges, so much of the horror is conveyed aurally rather than visually. The audience becomes aware that she is infected through her mangling of sentences and alliteration, which marks the beginning of aphasia and the first symptom of the illness. After repeating several iterations of 'Mr. Mazzy's missing' she then mimics a tea kettle, like someone earlier in the film mimicked windshield wipers. When all words fail her, she bangs and taps on the glass trying to be let inside the soundproof booth. Even as Laurel-Ann begins to bleed from her mouth, the horror of her transformation is in the sonic quality of her banging and the sound of her retching. The other zombies are similar: it is their *sound*, not their bodies, which scare the viewers and those trapped inside the radio station. Much of this has to do with the restraint of the filmic scene itself, since almost the entire film is shot in the radio studio. The film's focus of sound is also what turns the mere words into a vehicle for viral transmission. Sound is part of the technology of the word virus, since words written down do not have the same power of infection; words *must be* spoken in order for the virus to pass on.

Sydney's infected word ends up being 'kill', precisely because she has forced many people into silence; she has 'killed' many of Grant's stories before they could be uttered, in effect, killing all sound before it could go on the air. As the film escalates, and especially as Dr Mendez also becomes infected and they cannot maintain a conversation outside of English, Sydney changes her mind about who is outsider/insider, what intimacy means and what speech acts are allowed – as has Grant. Grant once used to espouse 'full disclosure', but his forced silence for the sake of social order leads him – not to a gory ruin like Laurel-Ann or a zombie horde full of

mindless chatter – but towards a solution, a way to 'disinfect' language. In Grant's case, to 'disinfect' the word means to change the ideology behind it, and if 'kill' is what infected Sydney, then Grant must find a way out of this repetitive discourse loop. He goes through a variety of alternative meanings for 'kill' but 'kill is kiss' is the only one that resonates. He turns to Sydney, his counterpoint for most of the film, and closes all distance between them by chanting 'kill is kiss' until they really do embrace. All forms of strangeness are removed in this act; there is no outsider; and for a moment, there is no language.

This cure works. By changing the meaning of the word, Grant enables Sydney to reverse the infection, but it also changes the relationship between the two of them. Instead of remaining on opposing sides, or declaring one of them as correct, they simple change the meaning of the debate and the situation they have been forced into. They broadcast their cure to the rest of the province, though their transmission is eventually stopped by commands from a French officer. They are told to cease what they are doing, since the military believes it is spreading the infection. Grant accuses the disembodied voice shouting commands of 'always killing scared people' and then declares that 'we were never making sense'. His *Network*-esque monologue echoes his discovery, while also making it mundane; this was just an average day in *Pontypool*, where bad ideologies run wild, but where maybe, instead of killing the enemy-outsider, we kiss them instead. While the French military counts down to the final act of quarantine and silencing of Grant and Sydney, however, the audience gets one last kiss between them.

We are, in theory, not supposed to know what happens, though it is heavily implied Grant and Sydney do not live. However, kill does not mean kill anymore, so perhaps – like the end credit sequence of the film implies – Sydney and Grant have run away and fallen in love instead. Either way, Sydney's infection and eventual cure through Grant's gestures represents our final position in this paper, which is that prohibition does not work, nor does constant information (such as we get in the age of new media). Instead we must focus on the words themselves and what messages they carry 'silently for decades up in the roofs of adjectives' in order to remove a legacy of haunted history from our communities.[62]

Conclusion

Near the end of *Pontypool*, the national anthem comes over the loudspeaker. It is a sudden and stark interruption; one that draws the zombies

towards Grant and Sydney, and renders them vulnerable to danger. To stop the imminent attack, they take a hammer to the loudspeaker; they fight the noise, rather than the horde. In this way, the national legacy of Canada has let them down, rather than the population inside the country's borders, even if they are equally infected and afflicted. The scene reminds us of the changing words in the anthem in 2018. While it looks like progress, to some it looks like prohibition, and to others, both look like the same thing. In order to make the places in which we live habitable, Tony Burgess's *Pontypool Changes Everything*, and especially its film adaptation *Pontypool*, suggests we cannot ignore the country's previous haunting, or even the stranger-outsiders who seem afflicted. Instead we must live with the ghosts, zombies and strangers, and learn to speak to them in a language we both understand, in order to bring better ideas alongside the bad.

Notes

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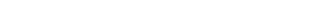
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48 Sydney's reference to the BBC's
    assumption of a separatist terrorist group
    is one way in which *Pontypool* works
    towards a unified version of Canada,
    where Quebec's separatist past is
    ameliorated (or outright forgotten,
    depending on perspective). We see the
    film as positive to Quebec's past. The
    French language is represented as a way
    in which the population can beat the
    language virus, at least temporarily. Even
    when the French officers obliterate
    Pontypool at the end of the film, there is
    no assumption that these officers are
    Quebec separatists: officers are speaking
    French because it is a viable solution to
    the English word virus transmission, and
    because it is one of Canada's official
    languages. A more thorough reading
    could be done juxtaposing the image of
    the terrorist in the film (US vs. Canadian
    perspectives perhaps), but for the most
    part, the 'could be terrorist' as Ahmed
    views it is not a French separatist in this
    film, though outsiders – like the BBC – try
    to interpret it this way.
49 Ahmed, *Queer*, 140–142.
50 Burgess, *Pontypool*, 78.
51 Burgess, *Pontypool*, 131.
52 Ahmed, *Queer*, 140–142.
53 It is important to note that the author,
    Tony Burgess, is one of the adults in
    brown-face. Since he also wrote the
    screenplay, we argue that his presence
    here – of all places – in the film is meant
    to act as a way we are to deconstruct his
    authority as author of the novel. This is
    partly why we focus so much on the film,
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Conflict of Interests

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The Hauntings of Canada in Michael Crummey's *Sweetland*

Vanja Polić

Abstract

In Michael Crummey's novel *Sweetland* (2014), which belongs to the genre of Canadian Gothic, ghosts function as warnings and reminders on a broader cultural and national level. The article analyzes different kinds of hauntings in the novel to show how they emphasize the notions of belonging to a local community and specific location, to alert to the disappearance of the traditional ways of life and the importance of cultural memory for the survival of a comprehensive and diversified Canadian identity. The hauntings include: 'typical' ghosts haunting individual characters; workings of capital and national consolidation, which are shown haunting the local community (serving as a synecdoche of the Newfoundland region); hauntings of disappeared local communities in the impersonal national construct of Canadian culture (cultural mosaic); hauntings which emphasize notions of belonging to and emplacement into Canada's Atlantic region; the haunting of the unrecordable quality of lived experience in such a community; and the inevitability of the book to be a record of absence as well as warning of that absence. The article discusses and postulates hauntings as a strategy of resistance against historical amnesia, but also as testaments to belonging.

Keywords: Michael Crummey, *Sweetland*, Canadian Gothic, haunting, ghosts, belonging, cultural haunting, historical erasure, storied pasts, capital

Michael Crummey's novel *Sweetland* (2014) is teeming with ghosts and haunting. Unlike popular versions of ghost stories, which portray ghosts haunting individuals to cause them psychological and physical distress, Crummey's ghosts function as warnings and reminders on a broader cultural and national level. This article will analyze different kinds of hauntings in the novel to show how they serve to emphasize the notions of belonging to a local community and specific location in order to alert readers to the disappearance of the traditional ways of life and the importance of cultural memory for the survival of a comprehensive and diversified Canadian identity. *Sweetland* revolves around a small island community off the southern coast of Newfoundland that has supported itself with fishing for over two hundred years. Fishing was one of the first reasons for the European interest in what is today known as the Atlantic region of Canada, its subsequent settlement and, in the twenty-first century, its stagnation. Within Canada, the region's outports served their economic purpose as an internal colony[1] until the depletion of the salt fish resources, marked by the cod fishing moratorium in 1992. Crummey's novel traces the aftermath of the moratorium, historicizing the political and economic reasons for the region's flailing status within Canada, and juxtaposing the often a-human workings of capital to the local human history and culture. By situating the novel geographically and economically in the 'ex-centric'[2] part of Canada, Crummey engages in the dialogue of the centre and the margin; offering 'a more sophisticated understanding of the ambivalence of the storied pasts of both the Maritimes and Newfoundland, and a more sophisticated understanding of the economic, political, and cultural dynamics that shape the region's tenuous position within the present neo-liberal order'.[3] Crummey shows that, instead of regarding the concepts of global and local as a binary, where the global is seen as distant and the local as present and 'here', the capital and global forces are 'very closely mapped onto the local',[4] affecting the everyday existence and survival of local communities. Just as the ex-centre cannot operate without the centre as its point of reference, so the local is ineluctably interlinked with the global.

In *Sweetland*, the central storyline follows the village community on the island of Sweetland, which has been declining since the fishing moratorium and which has, in 2012, been offered a resettlement package by the government – one in a line of resettlement initiatives from 1949 onwards, aiming to effectively shut down the island and cut the costs of providing it with infrastructure. In the novel, all but one of the island residents accept the package: the exception is Moses Sweetland, the novel's protagonist and focalizer, and for the large part of the novel, the island's

only living inhabitant. His memories constitute an array of local histories of the island and islanders which intersect the novel's story-now, revealing a present haunted by the past. Moses is also one of the two characters in the novel who sees ghosts and feels their presence. The other character is his grandnephew, Jesse, described by Moses as an 'idiot savant'[5] boy who insists that Moses's dead brother Hollis is his best friend. Unlike Moses, who feels uncanny in the presence of ghosts, to Jesse they are as 'real' as any other living resident on the island. Jesse's equanimity and matter-of-fact acceptance of ghosts underlines his sense of belonging to the island.

In fact, it seems that ghosts of different kinds permeate this novel from its vey opening lines in which Moses, returning from the Newfoundland mainland with a boat-load of wood, comes across Sri Lankan refugees illegally trafficked to North America and abandoned to drift at sea in a rescue boat. The scene is set in Gothic fashion: as Moses travels in thick fog, he hears voices 'so indistinct he thought they might be imaginary. An auditory hallucination, the mind trying to compensate for a sensory lack. The way a solitary man will start talking to furniture, left alone long enough.'[6] He hears 'a murmur that seemed vaguely human . . . a single wordless syllable shouted, like a dog's bark. Spooked him. Miles out on the water and that voice seeming to rise from the ocean itself.'[7] When he finds the courage to respond, 'hoping there was nothing in that blankness to answer him',[8] and hears dozens of voices shouting wildly, he feels as if an invisible hand has protruded from the fog and pushed him. Then he sees '[a] shape slowly taking shape in front of him' and as he tugs the refugees to the island, each time he looks back he is 'startled . . . to see what was following in his wake'.[9] This opening scene introduces two themes that intertwine throughout the novel: the question of displacement, of refugees and exiles who have lost their community and home, and consequently have to relocate to an unknown destination, and the genre of the Gothic to describe this state. These refugees, who are sheltered briefly on the island of Sweetland before taken over by the Coast Guard, serve as harbingers of the destiny that awaits all the island's residents, since they themselves will become internal exiles scattered throughout continental Canada, rootless and without real connections to that other place to which they will relocate. The Sri Lankans also symbolize a threshold, a liminal space of the end of an era where the traditional way of life no longer exists and the future is uncertain and cannot be espied.

The Gothic description of the refugees as ghosts very strongly evokes Cynthia Sugars's and Gerry Turcotte's concept of the postcolonial Gothic, as well as Marlene Goldman's notion of (dis)possession. Sugars

and Turcotte develop the concept in relation to the ' "unhomely" or "spectral" legacies of imperialism and globalization'[10] which in literature take 'the form of ghosts or monsters that "haunt" the nation/subject from without and within'.[11] And while Sugars and Turcotte primarily link the concept of the Gothic to the postcolonial, their arguments can be fittingly applied to Crummey's novel because they translate to the Canadian workings of capitalism, imperialism and national consolidation within its own nation-state. The Canadian state is, so to speak, trimming its edges in order to lower the costs of the colony's maintenance, and it is these 'assimilative dynamics of . . . nationalism which give rise to the Gothic'.[12] The Gothic as a genre, in its turn, 'is preoccupied with the fringes, the unspoken, the peripheral, and the cast aside. It is populated with monsters and outcasts, villains and victims, specters and the living dead.'[13] The Sri Lankan refugees adrift at sea symbolize 'the transnational spectral tropes identified with free-floating capital' which 'exceed the border of the nation-state',[14] mirroring the movements of capital and globalization within Canada, where the island residents will become internal exiles adrift in the spaces of Canada, all of them living ghosts, situated in the in-between space of the displaced, neither here nor there. It is therefore not surprising that the motif of death permeates the novel, since in itself death represents a threshold between the world of the living and the world of the dead. In the novel the motif of death reoccurs both literally and metaphorically; literally since several characters die rather than leave the island – Queenie Coffin, who has not left her house in more than 20 years, dying of a heart attack instead of crossing the threshold of both her house and the island, and Moses's grandnephew, Jesse, dying in an accident after he is told he would have to relocate. The characters' existences are shown as inseparable from the locale, demonstrating Margaret Conrad and James Hiller's observation that the sense of community in the Newfoundland region is marked by 'a deep sense of place that sets Atlantic Canadians apart from many other North Americans'.[15] On a metaphorical level, therefore, the dislocation of islanders from their storied space signifies the death of communal memory and ancestral inheritance.

Ghosts, and the Canadian Gothic[16] as a specific genre, therefore signal a loss, but at the same time, as Sugars argues, can operate as 'a form of cultural sustenance and . . . contestation'[17] since Canadian Gothic authors engage in a dialogue with history in a twofold manner, by trying to trace where one belongs within history, and by investigating how one writes oneself into history (or, as historicity and historicization, respectively).[18] Gothic tropes can perform a strategy of resistance against

the historical oblivion and obsolescence; they 'initiate forms of cultural mourning (signalling a loss of cultural memory/history resulting from colonialism or migration)'[19] but nonetheless drawing attention to that act of disappearance or erasure. They are 'used to convey the way in which the Canadian national project is inherently haunted',[20] and in *Sweetland* the islanders will remain as haunting presences that challenge and subvert the project/construct of Canadian national identity. Death is a silencing, and both the Sri Lankan and the island exiles are shown as disempowered, haunted by the workings of capital interests. However, as Margaret Atwood claims, ghosts '*want* to talk, and they want us to sit down beside them and hear their sad stories'.[21] The ghosts 'don't want to be voiceless; they don't want to be pushed aside, obliterated. They want us to know',[22] and it is from there that the doubleness of the Gothic discourse can be said to emerge. Ghosts guarantee a presence, an inscription into the landscape which reflects a long-standing desire of Canadian writing to write itself into the place and in this way 'lay claim to a Canadian *genius loci* or spirit of the nation'.[23] By creating a traditional community which generates among its members 'trust and feelings of belonging' because it operates 'on a local scale that often assumed face-to-face contact',[24] Crummey challenges the stereotype of Canada's pastlessness as a 'new' country in the New World at the same time as he challenges the overarching construct of national identity as a homogenizing (globalizing) ideology. In this sense Goldman's notion of (dis)possession can be used to describe one of the crucial issues that the novel foregrounds. Goldman defines (dis)possession as the suture of 'the fiction's manifest content of spirit possession to the more shadowy, traumatic, and latent experience of dispossession instigated by clashes between cultures'[25] of marginalized groups 'whose knowledges have been elided and, at times, forcibly repressed by the . . . Canadian nation-state'.[26] The dismantling of the island community, which serves as a synecdoche for the Newfoundland region and its position within the Canadian national project, transforms the Canadian genius loci into 'haunted loci'.[27] The hauntings of capital, political and financial interests that have brought the community into existence will now be the agents of its dismantlement.

However, next to these capital forces which produced a colony, Crummey posits the people who have created the colonial community. These people have imprinted themselves onto the space, primarily through stories and naming. The novel's protagonist, Moses Sweetland, is a reticent and bullheadedly diffident man,[28] but he is also the 'unofficial custodian of the cemetery'[29] and the island's story-keeper, the focal point in which the past and the present meet. This connection between the past

and the present, the people and the locale, the stories and space is most obvious in the island's toponymy: the island sites have names of local significance, places like Vatcher's Meadow or Lunin's Rock, where names were given after a person. Others are quite prosaic, ordinary: King's Seat, Mackerel Cliffs, Devil's Under-jaw, Murdering Hole, Old Chimney, Mad Goat Gulch – all toponyms evocative of the early settlers naming the landscape around them to counter the acute feeling of displacement in a new space. The naming of surroundings signifies emplacement, appropriation and, ultimately, settlement into the space. The very name of the island is eponymous with the protagonist, further strengthening the connection between a person and 'his' place. Moreover, when Moses Sweetland remains alone on the island, after all the residents have relocated to other parts of Canada, he recreates in his mind the map of the island, 'careful to include as much detail as possible, as though the island was slowly fading from the world and only his ritual naming of each nook and cranny kept it from disappearing altogether'.[30] It is through this 'ritual naming' that he maintains and reaffirms his storied connection to the island. However, Moses's fear of the island disappearing is not entirely unfounded, because the island does not, in a manner of speaking, fully exist in the first place: the geographical map of the Newfoundland archipelago that Moses comes across soon after his ritual naming only outlines the island of Sweetland, but does not name it. The contrast between the place to which he belongs and where he has chosen to remain against all odds, versus the impersonal drawing on an official map is described as 'the irregular yellow oblong [of Sweetland] where he had spent almost his entire existence'.[31] What is more, Moses also spends 'a better part of the hour . . . adding missing names along the coastline, drawing in small islands that had been inexplicably left out'[32] from the official map. Moses's subjective narration in the sentence is worth noting, because all the small islands are, in his opinion, 'inexplicably' omitted, whereas they are probably too small (and/or irrelevant) to be included on the map of the Newfoundland archipelago issued by the government. Another discrepancy is shown in this impersonal map which is, nonetheless, titled *Come Home Year*.[33] Moses crosses out the title and writes 'Stay Home Year' instead. The incongruity between the official mapping of the space and Moses's 'reading' of his landscape reiterates the notion of the spectres of the local as haunting the national project. Moses writes the island's name on the map, but that act does not seem to satisfy him, so he continues to re-name other locations on the southern shore of Newfoundland, all after the people he has known, such as Jesse's Head, Priddle's Point and Queenie's Island.[34] In the same way in which the early explorers wanted to leave their trace of having been

there, of leaving their mark for posterity, so does Moses inscribe and emplot the landscape, appropriating it and making sure that some trace of his community is left on it. By imprinting the names of his familiars into the map's landscape and strengthening the connection between the space and the histories that people have traced on it, Moses reveals that he is haunted by the people who have left the island in equal measure in which he is haunted by the people close to him who have died. The trope of haunting here underlines the symbolic traces of individual and communal histories functioning as palimpsests to the larger workings of the Canadian national project.[35]

But Moses is not only the haunted one, he is also the haunter. During his residence alone on the island, he exists in the in-between space of the island's future in which there is no longer a colony of people on the island, and the peopled past which he cannot bring back. He is now haunting the island, and he has used the threshold of death to achieve that: after his grandnephew Jesse's accidental death, Moses fakes his own in order to stay on the island. He links his own death to the death of the island, but at the same time remains on the island, continuing in his way of life which has for everyone else ceased to exist (perhaps in this way presaging that it is only through actual death that he will be able to remain permanently on the island). Thus Moses finds himself on the threshold, and even though he has occasionally felt the presence of ghosts even while the other islanders were still on the island, he has refused to fully accept them, shaking them away as uncanny feelings. He was sceptical of Jesse's claims to communication with Moses's dead brother, Hollis, or of Jesse's insistence on seeing the light in the window of the house of recently deceased Queenie Coffin. However, as Moses remains alone on the island, he himself starts experiencing the presence of ghosts. Not only does he start to see the light in Queenie's window, he also, through that window, notices two simultaneous manifestations of Queenie holding hands – one as a young girl and one as an old woman – who, though not acknowledging him directly, do appear to him. Other ghostly instances include Moses lost at sea in thick fog and hearing music from the bell tower, which guides him safely back to the shore, and ghostly rifle shots fired in celebration of the New Year's Eve. But a central event takes place as Moses walks near the cliffs late one night. Again the scene is described in typical Gothic fashion for, as he walks towards the cliffs, Moses can 'see the light over the rise, an intermittent glim like photographs being taken, away in the distance . . . a calm that felt otherworldly had settled on the night'.[36] Then he sees 'the first of them moving on the rise. Dark figures outlined in flashes against the horizon, heading toward the lighthouse.'[37] Moses Sweetland

stands motionless, watching as the silhouettes pass by one after the other, following the same path. He considers turning away but 'he was afraid to look away, thinking [the ghosts] might disappear if he did. He watched the silent procession swell above him.'[38] As the last of the figures pass, he follows them 'moving slow in the unearthly quiet'.[39] As he comes close to the lighthouse he sees

> hundreds of them standing on the headlands. All clustered close to the cliffs of the Fever Rocks, as many people as ever lived in the cove, he guessed, and not a sound among them. All facing the ocean where the intermittent light stirred the blackness. A pale glow about the unlikely congregation though the moon was down, each figure silhouetted against the night sky. An air of waiting about them so palpable that Sweetland held his breath as he watched.[40]

He feels as if he is spying on a secret ceremony and turns to sneak away when a vaguely familiar form brushes past him, causing him to clutch firmly at his gun with both hands 'to fend off the night'.[41] The procession continues to walk 'down from the rise in a steady trickle . . . their faces blank and unhurried'.[42] Most importantly, they seem to accept him even though he is on the other side of the life-death threshold because '[t]hey went past [him] without showing the slightest concern to have him there. Strangers every one of them, though he felt they knew him. That he was known to them somehow.'[43] And what is more, one of them turns her head towards him as she walks by and smiles at him blankly. He recognizes her as his sweetheart from his younger days. The feeling of recognition and acceptance by the ghosts, though elusive, stays with Moses as he later remembers seeing the 'crowd assemble there in their echoing cathedral silence'.[44] He tries to rationalize the apparitions as '[a] lunatic's vision', but is at the same time comforted by the fact that 'something about it seemed beyond his capacity for fabrication, even drunk as he was'.[45] Moreover, the feeling of at-homeness settles over him because he has a 'sense that he'd known them in another lifetime',[46] even if he cannot clearly recall either their names or their faces.

All three instances of Moses's contact with the ghostly emphasize their presence on the island and Moses's gradual 'initiation' into their world, on the other side of the threshold. Interestingly, these encounters show that it is not they who need to accept him, because apparently they already do, but it is Moses who needs to become accustomed to their presence. What is more, it seems that they have led their existence on the island parallel to the world of the living, and Moses, who has previously

only had an uncanny feeling that testified to their existence, now receives enough evidence of their company. He finds himself increasingly longing for the latter, as their presence assuages his extreme loneliness on the island, loneliness which reflects his status as the last of his kind. Moses's feeling of familiarity with the ghosts can be further explained in terms of 'settled unsettlement',[47] which Sugars defines as 'the sensation of haunting' that 'bolster[s] a sense of belonging'[48] where haunting no longer functions as a threat but as a reaffirmation of emplacement. Moses at this later stage of the novel longs for the uncanniness of haunting because it functions as cultural infusion or, in Moses's case, as a sense that he belongs to the island community.[49] However, his belonging is at this stage in the novel also undergoing a transformation because the living community no longer exists, but he, as a living being, at present still remains on one side of the threshold, in the land of the living, glimpsing across it at the spectral world of the dead.

At the same time, the place which he inhabits is undergoing an uncanny slippage of its own. The gradual transition from the locale of the living to the liminal space of the threshold, and from there to the space of the dead, is well exemplified by the growing discrepancy between the weather forecasts from the CBC radio station and the weather that Moses experiences on the island. He experiences the first inconsistency around New Year when the snow sets in on the island even though the radio predicts 'clear skies and milder than normal temperatures along the south coast'.[50] After that the weather on the island turns 'to its regular schizophrenia'[51] but the forecast is consistent about the mildness of weather conditions. Moses gradually changes his attitude towards this discrepancy: 'It had been comic at first, to see the forecast so far off the mark day after day. But there was something increasingly disturbing in the disconnect. It seemed a sign of a widening fracture in the world.'[52] And in this widening fracture, the island gradually transforms into an in-between space, a heterotopia, a counter-site, 'a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted'.[53] The island, due to the disconnect with the 'real' world represented by the radio forecasts, starts to drift away from the 'reality-level' of the novel, and as such starts resembling a boat, like the free-floating rescue boat with the Sri Lankans from the opening scene from the novel.

This metamorphosis of the island into a boat turns the boat-island into 'a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea'.[54] The island that is functioning independently of the world

around it, in other words, becomes an example of heterotopia, a counter-site to the project of Canadian national identity, its counter-history and a haunting reminder of the importance of cultural memory. As such, it lays bare the notion of 'Canadian culture as a consciously constructed "culture of memory"'[55] and designates 'the tentativeness of the Canadian project since its foundations',[56] emphasizing the contesting sites of production of cultures, knowledges and histories which tend to be subsumed within the national project of the Canadian cultural mosaic. The island, consequently, functions as a site of counter-history, pointing towards 'those experiences and memories that have not been heard and integrated in official histories',[57] but through the use of Gothic discourse they 'mediate forgotten histories'[58] and 'signal an attempt to recover and make use of poorly documented, partially erased cultural history'.[59] The island's Gothic slippage into the threshold of heterotopia can be said to perform a strategy of resistance against the historical oblivion of the disappearing and disappeared world of the Newfoundland region of which the island and Moses (who is experiencing his own slippages) serve as a synecdoche and a metonymy respectively. It is important to note Michel Foucault's notion of counter-history here, which José Medina elaborates on when he claims that the production of counter-histories is 'possible because there are people who remember against the grain, people whose memories do not fit the historical narratives available. Counter-histories feed off such counter-memories and at the same time transform them, revitalizing practices of counter-memory and offering them new discursive resources to draw on.'[60] The Gothic ambiguity is obvious here, as the island's transformation into heterotopia and Moses's frequent encounters with ghosts reaffirm a sense of emplacement, the presence and richness of local cultural memory that morphs itself into the cultural memory of haunting.

As the novel draws to a close, another relevant Gothic episode unfolds, its finale building gradually. Having barely survived the winter on the island, Moses, sick and half-starved, dies at Easter, but this is not the end of the novel. Having died, Moses wakes up, sensing the total quiet of his house: the stove is cold but the light in the kerosene lamp is on. Moses sees the map he scribbled on spread across the kitchen table, and follows his drawings and renamed sites along the southern coast of Newfoundland. But he also notices that '[a]long the entire length of Newfoundland's south coast were the words *Here Be Monsters* with a shaky emoticon happy face drawn beside it. His handwriting, though he couldn't for the life of him remember setting them there.'[61] He traces the coastline where he inscribed the islanders' names but as he glances toward the location where the island of Sweetland should be, he is shocked to find it

missing. 'He had to work up the nerve to look closer, bringing the lamp down across the map for the light. Where he expected to see Sweetland there was nothing but blue water.'[62] The name he had written over the island is gone, 'even the ink outlines the names had been printed over were missing from the map. As if he'd only imagined seeing them there.'[63] It appears that with Moses' death, the island itself stops existing in official history and on the official map. The historical erasure has occurred before his eyes, and Moses is aware that the absence of the island on the map is '[s]o insignificant it would go unnoticed by anyone not looking for it'.[64] What remains in the island's place is the inscription '*Here Be Monsters*' in the blank sea of the map. The inscription directly recalls the maps drawn by the early explorers to North America, which dotted the unmapped land with miniature drawings of fabulous monsters, and sections labelled with the same sentence, all evoking the explorers' early encounters with the unknown, undiscovered lands of the New World. In *Sweetland*, the reverse process occurs as the land that was known, inhabited, storied, and historied for centuries, disappears from the map by the end of the novel, replaced by the old phrase signalling a slipping into the world of the unknown. And while the early explorers imbued the 'empty' landscape with Gothic presence,[65] the reverse process in *Sweetland* enacts a historical erasure.

Having burnt the map, Moses leaves the house and goes towards the headlands 'away from all he'd ever known or wanted or wished for'. As he looks behind him, there is 'nothing below but a featureless black, as if the ocean was rising behind him and had already swallowed the cove and everything in it'.[66] He is looking for the host of figures on the rise and when he sees them 'moving toward the light, all travelling at the same methodical pace, with the same lack of urgency',[67] he falls in with them. The 'walkers so close he could feel the cold rising off their coats, a scoured smell in the air around them, linseed and raw salt and spruce. They didn't acknowledge Sweetland or show the slightest concern that he was there.'[68] He recognizes a woman in the group. At the same time '[h]is companions looked to be numberless in the dark and strangers every one of them. But he was grateful for their presence just the same.'[69] The figures are 'calm and all in silence',[70] and Moses is uncertain whether he should follow them to the cliffs until he sees an apparition of a boy and he follows him instinctively. At the cliffs 'he lined along the headlands beside the others. A press of silent figures with their faces turned to the open sea. They seemed resigned and expectant standing there, their eyes on the fathomless black of the ocean. Sweetland anonymous among that congregation. He felt of a sudden like singing.'[71] The final ghost scene thus completes the circle initiated by the novel's ghostly opening.

As the last living inhabitant of the island dies, the island is now entirely inhabited by monsters or, more precisely, ghosts. The inscription on the map turns out to be ironically accurate. The Gothic has encroached as the living people have disappeared. Cultural haunting[72] has set in: the ghosts in the novel serve as agents of cultural memory because they are inscribed into the place and familiarize it, making it unsettlingly homey. The ghosts, who are *unheimlich* by the very definition of the Gothic genre, underline the paradox of the at-homeness of the island. However, Crummey subverts the concept of home, juxtaposing the notion of traditional and firmly emplaced community with the impersonal, depersonalizing, nationalizing and globalizing impulses which destabilize the traditional communities. Consequently, as Goldman notes, 'home as a constant has become less of a given, as more and more people are unhomed—often forced to exist in a kind of liminal space, traditionally associated with the ghost'.[73] In *Sweetland*, the instability of home is symbolized not only by the Sri Lankan refugees or the resettled island residents, but also by Moses Sweetland himself, who turns into a ghost to find fulfilment in his chosen community. He is, after all, named Moses, but unlike his biblical predecessor, he can enter his promised land. Crummey's novel can therefore be said to start with the notion of unsettled settlement, for the haunting is executed by the government upon the community, and it ends with the settled unsettlement, where haunting reaffirms a sense of belonging and emplacement.

And while Moses has become a member of a community where he feels at home, at the end of the novel, he is left standing and gazing expectantly towards the horizon, perhaps only partly satisfied. The expectancy indicates that there is another threshold outside of the novel at the end of which no one is left alive. The novel itself represents an overlapping, as Moses shares his surname with the island, and both share the name with the novel. The novel's subject matter thus in a feat of *trump l'oeil* transcends its literary boundaries and poses questions about the future of the whole region and the loss of the lore, of people and individual lives which will go unrecorded but were lived and have contributed to the project of Canada. The novel asks how the project of Canadian national identity mitigates and negotiates these small chips of the mosaic. Crummey's novel can be said to emphasize that these local communities are the ones that make up the entirety of the Canadian cultural mosaic, contribute to its diversity, and should not be lost in the globalizing, nationalizing projects of Canada. The local, which is closely woven and influenced by the global, should not lose out. Moses becoming a ghost joins the Gothic in its emphasis of loss, but also of belonging, community, the threshold of expectancy about the

future. To paraphrase Roland Barthes's well-known statement, culture is in the novel represented not as a large impersonal construct, but as a mosaic of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture.[74]

There is another paradox connected to the novel with regard to the question of historicity and historicization, or, in other words, to the question of where one resides within history and how one inscribes one's self or one's community into it. For Crummey, the act of writing poses yet another obstacle or a threshold for, as Goldman claims, the novels of haunting 'often strategically introduce obstacles that arrest the impulse to cross barriers and merge self and other'.[75] Crummey's record of a Newfoundland community becomes a record of absence, because it records a community which cannot recognize itself in the very record of itself. Nonetheless, this record acts culturally, politically and socially because it draws attention to the act of disappearance of the fringe communities within the national project of Canada. Crummey, with regard to his previous novel *Galore*, self-consciously mentions how, in his attempt to capture the disappearing world of these communities, he is paradoxically putting the last nail in the coffin, because he is admitting that that world is gone.[76] The obstacle that prevents the crossing of the threshold between the self and the other is represented by Queenie Coffin, an avid reader of Harlequin romances, who hates reading the novels situated in Newfoundland that her daughter assiduously sends her in an attempt to improve her reading habits, because they in no way resemble, let alone represent, the life lived on the island. The processed reality does not resemble the experienced reality, and as a result, the book becomes a simulacrum, a signifier without a referent, no matter how hard it attempts to record that life. Thus it can be claimed that Crummey's novel is haunted by the unrecordable past of such outports, as is Crummey himself haunted with this disappearing and disappeared world that he constantly returns to in his works. Crummey's book can, therefore, be described as a record of absence, but paradoxically also as 'writing [that] . . . survives its own performance'[77] and as 'a process that leaves a trail, like a series of fossilised footprints',[78] as Atwood argues in connection to the nature of writing which is the only mode of performance that preserves a voice, the essence of a story. Using his novel as a literature of the threshold, and a countersite of memory, cultural memory and cultural haunting, Crummey is trying to instigate 'a form of memorial recuperation',[79] or salvation from oblivion of the disappeared and disappearing world of the traditional Newfoundland communities. In *Sweetland*, he teaches us that one should learn to live with ghosts, since they are a strategy of resistance against historical amnesia, but also testaments to belonging.

Notes

1 This is in line with J.M.S. Careless's hinterland-metropolitan thesis, according to which Central Canada has adopted the British colonial model and applied it internally, the metropolis or the centre exploiting the periphery or hinterland. J.M.S. Careless, 'Frontierism, Metropolitanism, and Canadian History', in *One West, Two Myths II: Essays on Comparison*, eds. Carol Higham and Robert Thacker (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2006), 193–214.

2 Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (New York and London: Routledge, 1988).

3 Herb Wyile, *Anne of Tim Horton's: Globalization and the Reshaping of Atlantic-Canadian Literature* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), 26–27.

4 Harcourt quoted in Diana Brydon and William D. Coleman, 'Globalization, Autonomy, and Community', in *Renegotiating community: Interdisciplinary Perspectives, Global Contexts*, eds. Diana Brydon and William D. Coleman (Vancouver and Toronto: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), 10.

5 Michael Crummey, *Sweetland* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2015), 16.

6 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 3.

7 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 3.

8 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 3.

9 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 4.

10 Cynthia Sugars and Gerry Turcotte, 'Canadian Literature and the Postcolonial Gothic', in *Unsettled Remains: Canadian Literature and the Postcolonial Gothic*, eds. Cynthia Sugars and Gerry Turcotte (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2009), vii.

11 Sugars and Turcotte, 'Canadian Literature and the Postcolonial Gothic', vii.

12 Marlene Goldman, *DisPossession: Haunting in Canadian Fiction* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), 13.

13 Sugars and Turcotte, 'Canadian Literature and the Postcolonial Gothic', xv.

14 Goldman, *DisPossession*, 12.

15 Margaret Conrad and James K. Hiller quoted in Wyile, *Anne of Tim Horton's*, 7.

16 Much has been written and theorized about the history and the present examples of the Canadian Gothic. For comprehensive studies, see for example Sugars (ed.), *Unhomely States*; Sugars, *Canadian Gothic*; Goldman, *DisPossession*; Edwards, *Gothic Canada*. In this article I will, therefore forego a historical survey of the tropes of Canadian Gothic such as Catherine Parr Traill, Susanna Moodie and Earle Birney, and focus instead on the analysis of the uses to which Crummey puts the Gothic in his novel *Sweetland*.

17 Cynthia Sugars, 'Phantom Nation', *Zeitschrift für Kanada-Studien* 31.2 (2011): 59.

18 Sugars, 'Phantom Nation', 60.

19 Sugars and Turcotte, 'Canadian Literature and the Postcolonial Gothic', xv.

20 Sugars and Turcotte, 'Canadian Literature and the Postcolonial Gothic', xv.

21 Margaret Atwood, 'Negotiating with the Dead', in *On Writers and Writing* (London: Virago, 2002), 146; italics in the original.

22 Atwood, 'Negotiating', 146.

23 Goldman, *DisPossession*, 5.

24 Diana Brydon and William D. Coleman, 'Globalization, Autonomy, and Community', in *Renegotiating community: Interdisciplinary Perspectives, Global Contexts*, eds. Diana Brydon and William D. Coleman (Vancouver and Toronto: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), 5.

Speaking of the emplacement of history, Crummey notices that:

> in Newfoundland (I think this is more true in Newfoundland than anywhere else I have been in Canada) history is not schoolbooks. History is where your grandfather lived, what land your grandmother grew vegetables in, where people came from, where they had their summer places. It is still very physically present for people, and people have a real sense of ownership of the history of the place.

(Herb Wylie, *Speaking in the Past Tense: Canadian Novelists on Writing Historical Fiction* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007), 314.

25 Goldman, *DisPossession*, 20.

26 Goldman, *DisPossession*, 20–21.

When discussing (dis)possession, Goldman always speaks of women,

African-Canadian, indigenous and other marginalized groups, but her argument is valid for Crummey's novel because *Sweetland* depicts the imbalance of power between the centre and the margin by focusing on the repression of a local community for the larger interests of federal Canadian interest. That being said, due deference is paid to the differences in status and power/disempowerment of various oppressed groups and the one described in Sweetland within the system of the Canadian nation-state.

27 Goldman*, DisPossession*, 32.
28 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 49.
29 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 203.
30 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 239.
31 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 247–248.
32 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 248.
33 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 248. 'Come Home Year—1966', Memorial University of Newfoundland, http://collections.mun.ca.
   The website explains the map's intention as '[a] welcome to relatives and friends returning to, and tourists visiting, the province in 1966', explaining that 'it was Joey Smallwood's idea to have a Come Home Year'.
34 Michael Crummey, *Sweetland*, 248.
35 I am paraphrasing Goldman, who speaks more broadly of the silencing of histories in colonialism. The argument, however, even though more general in its original context, is very applicable to the specific example of Crummey's novel. Goldman, *DisPossession*, 15.
36 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 263.
37 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 263.
38 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 263.
39 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 264.
40 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 264.
41 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 264.
42 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 264.
43 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 264.
44 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 264.
45 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 273.
46 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 273.
47 Sugars, 'Phantom Nation', 59.
48 Sugars, 'Phantom Nation', 59.
49 I am paraphrasing Sugars's broader discussion on the subject where she discusses the postcolonial Gothic's 'desire for the haunting effect of the uncanny as a form of cultural-historical infusion'. Cynthia Sugars, 'Phantom Nation', 66.
50 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 260.
51 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 269.
52 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 269.
53 Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', in *The Visual Culture Reader*, 2nd edn ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff, trans. Jay Miskowiec (London and New York: Routledge, [1998] 2002), 231.
54 Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', 236.
55 Cynthia Sugars and Eleanor Ty, 'Thinking Beyond Nostalgia: Canadian Literature and Cultural Memory', in *Canadian Culture and Cultural Memory*, eds. Cynthia Sugars and Eleanor Ty (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2014), 5.
56 Sugars and Ty, 'Thinking Beyond Nostalgia', 6.
57 José Medina, 'Toward a Foucaultian Epistemology of Resistance: Counter-Memory, Epistemic Friction, and *Guerrilla* Pluralism', *Foucault Studies* 12 (2011): 12.
58 Sugars and Turcotte, 'Canadian Literature and the Postcolonial Gothic', x–xi.
59 Again, Elizabeth Brogan and Goldman make the argument in relation to the African American narratives whose oppression is of a completely different scale than the one described in Crummey's novel because of the differences of race, histories of settlement, slavery, and present situation of inequality. However, as I will argue later, Crummey through his novel performs an act of resistance, describing the act of erasure from cultural memory of a marginal/ized community. Therefore, on a very general level, and with a lot of caution, and in a different context, I use Brogan's argument as an analogy. Elizabeth Brogan quoted in Goldman, *DisPossession*, 16.
60 José Medina, 'Toward a Foucaultian Epistemology of Resistance', 12.
61 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 316; emphasis in the original.
62 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 316–317.
63 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 316–317.
64 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 317.
65 Sugars, 'Phantom Nation', 60.
66 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 317.
67 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 318.
68 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 318.
69 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 318.
70 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 318.
71 Crummey, *Sweetland*, 318.
72 Elizabeth Brogan quoted in Goldman, *DisPossession*, 17.
73 Goldman, *DisPossession*, 14.
74 Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image Music Text*, selected and

trans. Stephen Heath (London: HarperCollins, 1977), 146.

75 Goldman, *DisPossession*, 35.

76 Wylie, *Speaking in the Past Tense*, 297.

77 Atwood, 'Negotiating with the Dead', 142.

78 Atwood, 'Negotiating with the Dead', 142.

79 Sugars and Ty, 'Thinking Beyond Nostalgia', 9. Even though Sugars and Ty use the term more broadly for postcolonial historical fiction in Canada, it can be well applied in the case of Crummey's novel.
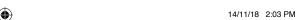
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The author declares that there are no conflicts of interests with this work.

Memorial Traces as Tropes of Postcolonial Hauntings in Robert Lalonde's *Sept Lacs plus au Nord* and Nina Bouraoui's *Mes mauvaises pensées*

Jasmina Bolfek-Radovani

Abstract

This article is a comparative analysis of the language of memory in two auto-fictional narratives by two postcolonial francophone authors of mixed background, belonging to the area of Québec (Robert Lalonde) and Algeria (Nina Bouraoui). It will be argued that both authors seek to deconstruct the binary relationship of the spaces and identities they each belong to (white-Amerindian for Robert Lalonde vs. Franco-Algerian for Nina Bouraoui) through a specific poetics of writing or language of memory. At the same time, they each return cyclically in their writing to the postcolonial spaces, memories and histories of their respective non-Western cultures, as if 'haunted' by these spaces. Using the method of close textual reading in a comparative postcolonial francophone context, the article aims to show how the language of memory is deployed in the two narratives chosen. It demonstrates that both authors use the figure of the memorial trace as a trope of haunting in order to construct that language. It concludes that the figures of memory identified in the two texts analyzed give rise to a series of 'postcolonial hauntings' producing a postcolonial discourse of ambiguity rather than resistance.

Keywords: postcolonial, francophone, space, memory, trope, haunting, White-Amerindian, Franco-Algerian, Robert Lalonde, Nina Bouraoui

Introduction

In the analysis that follows, I will use the method of close textual reading combined with an anthropological and postcolonial perspective to uncover the presence of the memorial traces and the tropes of haunting underpinning the language of memory in two auto-fictional narratives by Robert Lalonde (Québec) and Nina Bouraoui (France-Algeria). Memorial trace is understood here as both absence and presence. It is conceived as a residual presence of the repressed memories capable of returning to the surface of consciousness through the gradual processes of re(-)membering. The trope of haunting is viewed as a literary device, aimed at expressing the recurrent resurgence of these memories. Its meaning can be associated with that of the concept of 'stillness' as defined by the Greek anthropologist Nadia Seremetakis in her conceptualization of sensory memory. I will try to demonstrate in the analysis conducted that the tropes of haunting in the two texts chosen are expressed through a number of recurring figures of memory. One feature that these two authors share in common is that they both cyclically return to their native spaces as if haunted by them. One can claim that in both cases the need for a re-appropriation of identity passes through the need for a re-appropriation of native space (Oka for Lalonde and Algeria for Bouraoui). However, the constant movement in writing between the two poles of identity, with their dual memories and histories, creates a writing position of ambiguity embedded in the contradictions that follow from assuming a mixed identity and heritage. By placing myself within the larger context of postcolonial discourse theory, I am posing the question of whether narratives of 'postcolonial hauntings' can be fully inscribed within a postcolonial discourse of resistance, or whether they can be ascribed to a postcolonial discourse of ambiguity. My article concludes that the tropes of haunting identified in the two chosen texts generate a postcolonial discourse of ambiguity rather than resistance.[1] Whilst Lalonde succeeds in recovering the latent memories of his paternal Amerindian past through a re-inscription or a re-mapping of the Amerindian space of the North, Bouraoui fails to reconcile fully her paternal (Algerian) with her maternal (French) heritage, as she can only do so by a symbolic passage through the (post)colonial space of Paris. Nevertheless, both authors share a propensity towards a cyclical return to the exploration of native space in their writing, something that produces a language of memory punctuated by tropes or sites of haunting. These tropes can be viewed as manifestations of a dynamics of 'return of the repressed' at the level of the narrative in the two texts chosen.

Tropes of haunting in Robert Lalonde's *Sept Lacs Plus au Nord* (1993) and Nina Bouraui's *Mes mauvaises pensées* (2005): the image of the 'Indian' vs. the spectre of Algeria

The concept of the *retour du refoulé* or 'the return of the repressed' is a key concept examined in Pascal Blachard, Nicolas Blanchel and Sandrine Lemaire's work on French colonial memory.[2] It is discussed at length in the context of the authors' discussion on France's colonial memory and nostalgia, notions that were at the centre of France's colonial discourse of the nineteenth century, embedded in the ideological values of the Third Republic.[3] Indeed, the main question posed in Nina Bouraoui's texts with an Algerian theme is how one is to conceptualize the (post)colonial experiences of space, place and spatial loss in the context of Franco-Algerian culturally conflicting, multiple memories and histories.[4] In Bouraoui's novels, the 'return of the repressed' manifests itself through the recurrent appearance of memorial traces as postcolonial hauntings that punctuate all of her texts dealing with Algeria. Algeria becomes a spectre, a haunting absence/presence in her writing, as well as a source of creative inspiration. In other words, Bouraoui's excavatory memories of Algeria, a space that she is haunted by, can be viewed as a symptom of the *retour du refoulé* in the societal, political and cultural contemporary spaces of France, and as analyzed in Blanchard, Bancel and Lemaire's work. Equally, in Robert Lalonde's text, the sudden reappearance of the image of his Indian friend in the news television report symbolizes a moment in which the main character's repressed memory breaks through to the surface of consciousness. These repressed memories come back to haunt the main character in a moment that reawakens his early memories before his return to the native town of Oka. Furthermore, the two texts chosen remind us that it is through awakening of sensory memory in moments of 'stillness' that the re-appropriation of one's own identity or history can really begin to take place and one can start to make sense of one's own fractured past. This concept of stillness is defined by Seremetakis as follows: '*Stillness* is the moment when the buried, the discarded, and the forgotten escape to the social surface of awareness like life-supporting oxygen. It is the moment of exit from historical dust.'[5] It can therefore be advanced that the language of memory examined in the two texts chosen is deployed through the sudden resurgence of forgotten and marginalized (Aboriginal vs. Algerian) memories and histories brought to the surface in a moment (or moments) of 'stillness'. Both narratives show the importance that sensory memory can play in the (de)construction of dual memory and identity

that characterizes authors of mixed heritage. Yet, while Lalonde succeeds in recovering the repressed memories of his paternal Amerindian past through a re-inscription and re-mapping of the Amerindian space of the North, Bouraoui does not fully manage to incorporate her Algerian past and the paternal space of Algeria into her contemporary identity. She fails to reconcile her paternal (Algerian) with her maternal (French) heritage, as she can only do so by a symbolic passage through the (post)colonial space of Paris. Instead, her lesbian and cosmopolitan identity is recovered fully through the appropriation of a third space – the North American space of Provincetown.

In the context of Québec, the case of the Métis author and actor Robert Lalonde, who does not specifically identify himself as being Métis and positions himself as a Québécois author, has particular significance for the issue of cultural memory and how writers with a bilingual/bicultural heritage might explore this question. A quarter Métis, Robert Lalonde was born in the town of Oka in 1947 and graduated from the Montréal Conservatory of Arts and Drama in 1970. An acclaimed writer, actor, playwright and academic, he published his first novel in 1981.[6] Lalonde's writing project, as he himself explains, can be best defined as his quest for a space in which the reconciliation (and not opposition) of his 'deux façons de vivre' (two ways of living) or 'deux façons d'être' (two ways of being) is possible.[7] If his work can be said to alternate between the particular and the universal, the semi-autobiographical text *Sept Lacs plus au Nord* belongs within the suite of texts that can be called an exploration of the theme of *indianité.*[8] In the text, Lalonde explores questions of loss and recovery of Amerindian memory and collective imaginary and reflects on his own Amerindian family heritage.[9] *Sept Lacs plus au Nord* is a semi-autobiographical story of Michel du Bria, a Métis writer living in Montréal, who returns to his native town of Oka a year after the eruption of the Oka crisis and undertakes a voyage with Angèle, his mother, up north. The setting off by car of the two protagonists marks the beginning of Michel's internal spiritual voyage on a path of family and ancestral re(-)membrance that culminates with their arrival at their final destination, Lake Camachigama, situated in the region of Abitibi-Teminscamingue, where Michel's teenage friend and lover, named as 'the Indian', awaits him. The Oka crisis that forms the political backdrop of the novel is a site of contested memories and identities that still resonates in the collective consciousness and memory of both the Québécois and the Canadian population.[10] While the events of the Oka crisis can be said to have galvanized the Canadians' and the Québécois' preoccupation with the question of the status of the Aboriginal people, they also had some

longstanding consequences on the types of collective memory generated within the Mohawk and the white communities in Québec. This has led to the production of an 'excess' of meaning and memory that could be observed in the articles that the Québécois press devoted to the analysis of the conflict surrounding the Oka crisis on the eve of its 20th anniversary (11 July 2010) and the comments posted at that time by its readers on the newspaper's website.[11] Interestingly, although Oka represents the main topic space in *Sept Lacs plus au Nord*, Lalonde only occasionally refers to the events of the Oka crisis in the course of the novel. If this absence can be interpreted as the author's need for assertion of a poetics rather than a politics of identity, it can also be seen as a sign of fragmentation of both personal and collective memory, or a sign of the author-narrator's impossibility to make full sense of the events that took place during the crisis. Indeed, as Lalonde explains in an interview given to the newspaper *Le Devoir* when talking about the book and relaying his own experience of the crisis:

> C'est un *road-book* où j'aborde de biais la crise d'Oka. Cette crise m'a stupéfié tout le temps qu'elle a duré. Tout le monde était à la fois d'un côté et de l'autre et on me disait: s'il y a quelqu'un qui peut dire quelque chose là-dessus c'est toi. Mais, moi, je n'en pensais rien, j'étais bouleversé, mais sans arriver à faire la part des choses.[12]
>
> It's a road novel in which I address the Oka crisis indirectly. This crisis stupefied me during all the time it lasted. Everyone was taking sides on both sides of the conflict and people were telling me: if anyone can say something about it it's you. But, I could not think about it, I was overwhelmed, unable to put things into perspective.[13]

Yet, in a more recent interview, the author does seem to offer a more direct answer to the question of how one can integrate one's own fractured experience of the past in the context of a traumatic event. As Lalonde states: 'Je crois qu'on peut sortir d'un malaise, en retournant géographiquement sur les lieux où la souffrance est née' (I think one can overcome a difficult experience by returning to the original place where the suffering took place).[14] Thus, as Lalonde seems to be saying, the reconciliation of the two opposing poles of identity and the recovery of identity loss can be achieved through the return to the original place of trauma or fracture. A gradual recovery or a rewriting of individual memory can become possible through the activation of the sensory processes of remembrance and the embodied re-experience of the place that has been lost, both physically and symbolically, as will be shown in the analysis of Lalonde's text that

follows. One of the main tropes of haunting, the figure of 'l'Indian' (the Indian) appears at the beginning of *Sept Lacs plus au Nord* as a returning ghost from the narrator's past. At the beginning of the text, the reader learns that Michel briefly sees 'the Indian' in a television news report on the Oka crisis some time before he decides to return to the village of Oka. This pivotal moment sets the narrative in motion and is experienced as a shock by Michel, who was separated from his friend before being sent off to college. The mediatization of the Oka crisis and the demonization of the image of the 'savage' Mohawk Indian (an image that was often exploited by the media during the crisis) stands in contrast to the image of the heroic white soldier:

> Et il y avait l'Indien, bien sûr. Une seule fois, il l'avait aperçu aux nou-velles, à la télévision: adossé au tronc d'un gros pin, il pleurait, sans se cacher le visage, comme autrefois. L'image est passée très vite, tout de suite ils ont montré à nouveau les guerriers masqués, les bar-belés, le soldat blond, héroïque, propre, debout devant son ennemi noir, le Mohawk, le warrior sanguinaire, affrontement de cowboys et de sauvages des vieux films, la drôle de guerre au jour le jour, dans la pinède.[15]

> And then there was the Indian of course. Only once did he see him on the television news: he was leaning against the trunk of a large pine tree, he was crying without hiding his face like in the old days. The image was gone very quickly, straight after they showed again the masked warriors, the barbed wire, the soldier with the blond hair, heroic, clean, standing in front of his black enemy, the Mohawk, the bloodthirsty warrior, a confrontation between cow-boys and savages from old movies, a phoney war unrolling from day to day in the pine wood.

More importantly, this brief moment of visual identification of the suppressed yet never forgotten figure of his friend 'l'Indien' is sufficient to awaken suddenly Michel's teenage experience of a critical transformation that occurred in a crucial moment of self-identification with the Indian after his inclusive use of the pronoun 'us': '"What's wrong with us?" Il avait dit "*with us*", et non "*with them*" et il avait pleuré, pour la première fois' ('What is wrong with us?' He said 'with us', and not 'with them' and he cried for the first time).[16]

As in many other passages throughout the book, it is through sen-sory or corporeal memory that Michel's suppressed, dis-membered mem-ories become re-membered, and that he is able to access self-knowledge

and make sense of the fractured experiences of his past. Lalonde touches here on the important problem of the connection between the political and the poetic, thus posing the question of 'how the political is experienced on the level of the senses', a question that Seremetakis raises in her introduction.[17] In her study of the connection between the political and the poetic in everyday life and the conceptualization of *sensory memory*, Seremetakis argues for the inclusion of the concepts of *perception* and *memory* in the study of (material) culture. She observes that the study of these concepts often remains marginalized by ethnographers and sociologists fixated on the exploitation and study of the literal materiality of artefacts and cultural objects.[18] Departing from the example of the loss of sense of taste and the self-imposed experience of tastelessness in 'cultures that undergo colonial and post-colonial experiences of transformation', Seremetakis advances that the discourse on loss propagated through public culture fulfils an ideological function in order to present a normative, modernist view of the present, and push into the sphere of private experience all knowledge that is no longer publicly accepted by this prevalent ideology. As she explains further, this compartmentalization and scientific rationalization of the senses is particularly characteristic of a culture of modernity, as the senses are 'externalised as utilitarian instruments'. In fact, the study of perception and memory as 'embodied acts and semantically dense objects' can reveal that 'there are substances, spaces and times that can trigger *stillness*'. Seremetakis's idea of stillness as a simultaneous moment of temporary cultural suspension and of 'exit from historical dust' seems particularly relevant to the analysis presented here. Michel's return to his native space, a space of wilderness and recovered corporeality, can be said to embody this space of stillness in the sense that Seremetakis gives it. The feeling of exhilaration and recovered corporeality (previously divided between city and nature) is expressed by Michel in the following passage: 'Un desserrement délicieux, les valves du cœur qui travaillaient formidablement, l'air presque liquide du matin qu'il buvait sans s'étouffer. Il pensait: "Je retrouve mon corps", comme s'il l'avait perdu' (A wonderful feeling of relaxation, the heart valves working perfectly, the almost liquid morning air he was drinking without suffocating. He was thinking: 'I have recovered my body,' as if he had lost it).[19] Michel's suppressed Amerindian nature that is represented symbolically in the figure of 'l'Indian' is tied to his sense of loss of corporeality that can be only recovered through the recovery of Michel's sensory memory. As in the examples cited, Lalonde's novel is permeated by numerous, sometimes ambiguous, references to the Indian that becomes a symbol of Michel's lost Amerindian self coming back to haunt him after 30 years of his absence

from the town of Oka. It has to be noted here that the figure of the Indian appears in Allende's earlier novel *Le Denier Été des Indiens*; it can therefore be interpreted as the first part of *Sept Lacs plus au Nord*.[20] The text of the 1982 novel begins with the words: 'Je ne sais pas pourquoi mais, encore aujourd'hui et les yeux fermés, je continue de le voir' (I don't understand why but, even today if I close my eyes I can still see him). The alternation between the depersonalized use evident in the expression 'the Indian' and the act of referring to him as Kanak, contribute to a sense of ambiguity present in Michel's early experiences of meeting with him and his Amerindian friends. One can conclude from this that a double haunting is at work in *Sept Lacs plus au Nord*; the haunting figure of the Indian takes the form of a symbolic absence, as it has become emptied of its materiality through the later process of narrativization of Michel's experience of (cultural and personal) loss. Hidden behind this symbolic absence however, resides an older, fantasized absence that begins to haunt Michel at the end of *Le Dernier Été des Indiens*. In this context, the absence of any mention of the Indian's name in *Sept Lacs plus au Nord* is significant; he has fully become a symbol, a trace, a haunting ghost of the repressed Amerindian collective past. By omitting to name Kanak in *Sept Lacs plus au Nord*, Lalonde's text installs a discourse of ambiguity at the centre of the novel that can be interpreted as a consequence of his divided or dual identity and heritage.

It is towards the middle of the novel the reader learns that the only material trace that 'l'Indian' leaves behind is a letter addressed to Michel that he handed over to Angèle while in hiding during the Oka crisis. Michel and Angèle travel up north, passing through seven geographic points or lakes located in an imagined space of the North that is neither fully specified nor fixed; instead it becomes fluid, dynamic and relational. The seven geographic locations of the lakes primarily fulfil a symbolic function: they represent the seven physical, mental and spiritual places of Michel's journey through time and space whose progression can be tracked through the material passage of these seven locations. The moment of revelation of the existence of the Indian's letter marks both the physical and the symbolic starting point of the process of Michel's rebirth, compared to Orpheus' return from the world of the dead: 'Il se sentait nettoyé, neuf, transporté facilement dans le paysage, comme Orphée qui serait remonté, impuni, des Enfers' (He was feeling purified, new, transported easily to the landscape as if he was Orpheus returning unpunished from Hell).[21] Lalonde's reference to the figure of Orpheus as the one that comes back from the dead (and possesses transformative and purifying properties) has specific cultural resonances in the Amerindian imaginary. It refers to

an important myth that is prominent in the Iroquois native mythology tradition and that the Mohawk share with the Iroquois peoples (as one of the five tribes belonging to that group). Three main types of myths play an important role in the religion of Aboriginal people in general: the 'creation myths', the 'trickster myths' and the 'transformation myths'.[22] Another type of myth is the 'culture hero myths', reminiscent of the Greek myth of Orpheus. In these Orpheus-type myths, the 'culture hero' makes a dangerous journey to the world of the dead to bring back a deceased loved one. In native mythology, the world of the dead, which is believed to lie at a great distance from the world of the living, can only be reached after a difficult and perilous (spiritual and physical) journey. The resemblance between Michel's journey and that of the figure of the culture hero as developed in Aboriginal native mythology is striking. Michel's quest with his mother, Angele, takes on the form of a difficult spiritual journey that leads him to the symbolic world of the dead (the world of forgotten memories where the Indian resides), bringing back his memories of the Indian – and, by extension, of Amerindian heritage and culture – from the world of the dead into the world of the living. The spatial journey that Michel and his mother undertake to meet 'l'Indian' coincides with Michel's internal journey and return to his suppressed Amerindian origins.

In postcolonial theory, the concept of haunting is often used to emphasize the importance it plays in the recovery of occulted colonial histories and memories, as discussed by Michael F. O'Riley.[23] However, as the author argues, the use of the concept of postcolonial hauntings in postcolonial discourse theory can be problematic from the point of view and position of the postcolonial critic conducting her/his situated reading.[24] Very simply expressed, at the center of O'Riley's argument lies the question of whether a recovery of occulted colonial histories is fully possible, something that becomes problematic because of the way in which both 'place' and the subject's 'position and agency' are defined. If Lalonde's novel reminds us that a reconciliation between Amerindian and non-Amerindian memory in the context of Québec can be realized, the novel *Mes mauvaises pensées* by the Franco-Algerian writer Nina Bouraoui, explores the deconstruction of dual identity in the context of the postcolonial binary pair France-Algeria. The question that is posed here is to what extent Bouraoui seeks to deconstruct the binary relationship France-Maghreb through her search for and engagement with 'third' cultural and geographic spaces (either Mediterranean, as in *Garçon manqué*, or North American, as in *Mes mauvaises pensées*) and if so, why she cyclically returns to the space and imagination of Algeria in her writing. The Franco-Algerian writer Nina Bouraoui was born in 1967 in Rennes, France, of an

Algerian father and a French mother. Between years 1970 and 1980 she lived in Algeria, and at the age of 14 returned to France. She currently resides in Paris where she first became known for her text from 1991, *La Voyeuse Interdite*, a text that promoted her to the label of a *Beur* or second generation immigration writer, a label that can no longer be attributed to her work. *Mes mauvaises pensées* is the author's penultimate novel, belonging to the series of texts that explicitly deal with an 'Algerian theme'.[25] As has been argued by a number of critics, the classification of Nina Bouraoui as a writer within a defined literary space is problematic; although she is a writer whose imagination is deeply rooted in the Algerian imaginary, an imaginary to which she constantly returns, as already stated, she also likes exploring the space of Western culture and its cosmopolitan and urban identities.[26] Similarly to Lalonde, she has developed a style that is classical and lyrical, but also impregnated with sensuality. Throughout Bouraoui's work, one can unveil a discourse on migrant identity in her writing that is reframed within the imagination of the South. Defining herself as a 'sujet sans racines profondes' (a subject without deep roots), the narrator uses her Algerian heritage as the site of an imagined Southern identity that becomes the source of the narrator's 'rêves orientaux' (Oriental dreams) viewed as Oriental hauntings.[27] In this context, the narrator's dual self becomes a literary self, constantly reinvented on the backdrop of the narrator's Algerian paintings or 'tableaux Algériens'.[28] However, her dual identity is not entirely unproblematic, something that leads to the creation of a postcolonial discourse of ambiguity in *Mes mauvaises pensées*. Indeed, already in her 2000 novel, *Garçon manqué*, the young narrator speaks of the complex identity fracture that she experiences when she exclaims: 'Mon corps se compose de deux exils' (My body is born of two exils).[29] This divided position that is part of the experience of possessing a dual or mixed heritage is fundamental to Bouraoui as a writer; she will ultimately seek to deconstruct this dual position in *Mes mauvaises pensées*. The novel is set in the closed, confined space of a psychoanalyst's office in Paris, in which a young Franco-Algerian woman writer works through her childhood and adulthood memories and experiences, after having felt she was being obsessed by 'des mauvaises pensées'. From the first lines of the text, the reader enters the intimate and dark space of the narrator and her confession about the 'bad thoughts' of a foreign, repressed self by which she is possessed. Here, the language of memory is deployed through a multiple layering of the different memorial traces manifested as haunting absences/presences. At the beginning of the text, they appear in the narrator's imagination through the superposition of two mirrored spaces or cities, Nice and Algiers, as seen in the following passage:

> Avant mes mauvaises pensées, il y a cet été à Nice, ces vacances à Castel Plage (. . .) je crois que tout commence là, dans une confusion des lieux, le sud de la France que je découvre, l'Algérie qui revient par superposition d'images: la mer, la baie, les palmiers, les jeunes garçons qui sifflent sur la Promenade (. . .) J'ai retrouvé mon paradis—les bains chauds et profonds, l'odeur des fleurs, la lumière rose—et j'ai retrouvé mon enfer: l'idée d'une force qui étouffe. Je ne suis jamais retournée en Algérie.[30]

> Before my bad thoughts, there is that summer in Nice, the holiday at Castel Plage (. . .) I think that everything starts there, in the mixing of two spaces, the South of France that I then discover and an Algeria that resurfaces through the superposition of images: the sea, the bay, the palm trees, young boys whistling on the Promenade (. . .) I regained my paradise—swimming in the warm and deep sea, the perfume of flowers, the pink light—and I regained my hell: the idea of a force that suffocates me. I have never returned to Algeria.

As in the case for *Sept Lacs plus au Nord,* the awakening of a subject's particular sensory memory becomes the main trigger for the recollection of repressed memories. In *Mes mauvaises pensées,* it is the memory of a lost Algeria – the paternal space of the narrator – that resurfaces as an ambivalent space of paradise and hell in a moment of 'stillness' encountered in the space of the psychoanalyst's office. In this moment of anamnesis, the space of the French South – Nice – immediately evokes images of another space reminiscent of this Mediterranean city – Algiers – that brings to the surface feelings of guilt of never having returned to Algeria. At the same time, it is primarily at that moment of realization of non-return that Algeria stops being a historical or a geographic space for the narrator, becoming instead a haunting memory, but also a prime source of writing. The paternal space of Algeria in *Mes mauvaises pensées* becomes a site of mythical memory that could be described in Lacanian terms as a 'Eurydice deux fois perdue', as it is lost twice: firstly as the childhood space through the narrator's moving to France, and secondly through the fading of memory and the impossibility of experiencing this space again through the sensory experiences of the body.[31] Algeria becomes a utopia, a place of fantasy, of paradise lost, but also the genesis of writing. The origins of these spectral hauntings of Algeria can be found in *Garçon manqué*:

> Ma vie algérienne bat hors de la ville. Elle est à la mer, au désert, sous les montagnes de l'Atlas. Là, je m'efface enfin. Je deviens un

corps sans type, sans langue, sans nationalité. Cette vie est sauvage. Elle est sans voix et sans visage.[32]

My Algerian heart beats outside of the city. It belongs to the sea and the desert at the foot of the Atlas Mountains. Here, my body is erased and becomes unrecognisable. I become a non-descript body, a body without language, without nationality. This life is brutal. It is voiceless and faceless.[33]

As in the novel just cited, in *Mes mauvaises pensées*, Algeria becomes primarily the place of lost sensuality; it is the place of the narrator's first experiences of the beauty of the female body and of her later discovered homosexuality, experiences embodied in the character of the beautiful, rich Madame B., with whom she stays one summer while her mother is being treated in France. Again, a similar relationship between space, memory and the body, as recovered corporeality though the discovery of one's homosexuality, can be found in Lalonde's text, as discussed previously. Likewise, there exists a clear opposition in Bouraoui's novel between the paternal and maternal heritage or the spaces that produce an identity discourse of duality. In the novel, the maternal space of the provincial town of Rennes situated in Northern France stands in opposition to the paternal space of Algeria. Contrasted with the images of the narrator's memories of Algeria associated with the father, the space of the northern French city associated with the narrator's mother is experienced by her as a space of death. The passage between the cultural space of France and the cultural space of Algeria can only be achieved through a symbolic and embodied passage or transformation in the metropolitan space of Paris. It is only through the appropriation of the metropolitan, contemporary space of Paris that the narrator's identity transformation is made possible, something that has been demonstrated elsewhere by applying a semiotic reading to the text.[34] Some critics have argued that one can identify in *Mes mauvaises pensées* a shift from a fractured space of dual identity – as in Bouraoui's earlier novel *Garçon manqué* – into a composite, third space of identity: a shift at the political level from a position of the fractured/colonized subject to a position of a nomadic/postcolonial subject.[35] However, the analysis conducted on Boruaoui's texts relating to her Algerian heritage shows that she does not ultimately fully manage to deconstruct the binary relationship France–Algeria. From that perspective, a reconciliation of identity in Bouraoui's earlier novel *Garçon manqué* is only apparent. Both Algiers and Rennes reemerge as spaces of the divided or fractured self in *Mes mauvaises pensées*, something that indicates that the feeling of reconciliation of identity described in *Garçon manqué* was temporary.

Fundamentally, it is the narrator's real, imagined and symbolic paternal and maternal spaces of Algeria and France that are being deconstructed in the novel: 'je vous dis, tout de suite, je suis de mère française et de père algérien, comme si mes phobies venaient de ce mariage' (I am telling you now my mother is French and my father is Algerian, it's as if my phobias were born from this marriage).[36] Then, towards the end of the novel, after evoking a scene in which she recalls her and her mother in the *appartement de la rue X,* the narrator concludes that she is inevitably torn between two spaces and an in-between space that she will need to cross: 'Alors se superposent nos deux lieux, l'Algérie sur la France puis la France sur l'Algérie' (Then there is a superposition of the two places, of Algeria over France, and of France over Algeria).[37]

The narrator's childhood memories are called to the surface again in a moment of 'stillness'. At the end of Bouraoui's novel, the narrator's family memory is reawakened in another scene in which sensory memory is provoked; while walking through the street of Roi-de-Sicile in Paris and passing by an Oriental bakery, the narrator suddenly accedes to the space of corporeal memory below the level of consciousness, concluding that her body remembers the thing she thought she had lost when she exclaims, 'mon corps a la mémoire que j'ai perdu' (my body possesses a memory I have lost).[38] The question, however, remains open as to how to piece these memories together again, as shown in the following passage: 'Je ne me souviens pas de mon père entre ses deux parents, je devrais superposer les maisons de Rennes et de Jijel. Je devrais mélanger les deux jardins de mon enfance' (I don't remember my father between his own parents, I would have to merge the houses of Rennes and of Jijel. I would have to mix together the two gardens of my childhood). Neither in Paris nor in Nice can the narrator reclaim her cosmopolitan and lesbian identity. Instead, she regains her full identity in the North American town of Provincetown, where she is able to liberate herself from the dual Franco-Algerian heritage and is free to embrace her (homo)sexuality: 'Je ne confonds rien à Provincetown, je sais ce que je suis, je sais ce que je désire', asserts the narrator (Everything is clear to me in Provincetown, I know what I am, I know what I desire).[39]

Conclusion

I have used the example of Bouraoui's and Lalonde's postcolonial writing about native space in order to try and offer a comparative analysis of the language of memory and its construction through the trope of haunting

in the postcolonial francophone context in the case of two authors of mixed heritage. I have argued that in both of the auto-fictional narratives analyzed, this language is generated by a series of memorial traces expressed as ghostly presences/absences recovered from and through the repressed memories of the authors' native spaces in moments of 'stillness'. Both Lalonde's and Bouraoui's text reminds us that it is through this type of awakening of sensory memory in moments of 'stillness' that the re-appropriation of one's own identity or history can really begin to take place and one can start to make sense of one's own fractured past. As in Lalonde's case, Bouraoui's text *Mes mauvaises pensées* shows the importance that sensory memory can play in the (de)construction of dual memory and identity that characterizes authors of mixed heritage. More specifically, Bouraoui's excavatory memories of Algeria, a space that she is haunted by, can be viewed as a symptom of 'the return of the repressed'; a similar dynamic is at play in Lalonde's text. Where in Lalonde's text, it is embodied in the image of the Indian, in Bouraoui's novel, it manifests itself through the recurrent appearance of memorial traces as postcolonial hauntings that punctuate all of her texts dealing with Algeria. Algeria becomes a spectre, a haunting absence/presence in her writing, as well as a source of creative inspiration. Ultimately, whilst Lalonde succeeds in recovering the repressed memories of his paternal Amerindian past through a re-inscription and re-mapping of the Amerindian space of the North, Bouraoui does not fully manage to incorporate her Algerian past and the paternal space of Algeria into her contemporary identity. She fails to reconcile her paternal (Algerian) with her maternal (French) heritage, as she can only do so by a symbolic passage through the (post)colonial space of Paris. Instead, her lesbian and cosmopolitan identity is recovered fully through the appropriation of a third space – the North American space of Provincetown. Finally, although they both produce a postcolonial discourse of ambiguity, the two texts selected testify to the creative and regenerative powers of haunting in the literary context.

Notes

1   The notion of postcolonial ambiguity over postcolonial resistance in francophone postcolonial writing is discussed at length in Jasmina Bolfek-Radovani, *Geo/graphies of Loss: Space, Place and Spatial Loss in North African and Canadian Writing in French* (Erlangen: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2015), where I analyze a number of texts belonging to North African and Canadian writing in French.

2   Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel, Sandrine Lemaire, *La Fracture coloniale: La Société française au prisme de l'héritage colonial* (Paris: La Découverte/Poche, 2006; 1st ed. 2005), 10.

3   As Blanchard, Bancel and Lemaire argue in the introduction to their work, the year 2005 (and the years preceding it) saw an unprecedented level of 'politicisation of memory' around the question of colonial history in France. The high number of studies on colonial history coming from intellectual elites and university circles, the flourishing interest in this question in the print and broadcast media, as well as the 2005 French colonialism law known as 'la loi du 23 février 2005' and the ensuing protests and debates, were not coincidental; instead, they should be viewed as a sign of France's institutionalized colonial discourse and *nostalgie coloniale*, and as symptoms of a *retour du refoulé* that are a consequence of the country's occultation of its own colonial past. Indeed, this 'institutionalised forgetting' of colonial history has not only resulted in the formation and confrontation of competing and contesting memories, it has also shaped France's collective identity and the way in which it constructs its narrative on national history.

4   The case of Albert Camus and the controversy surrounding his views on the Algerian War of Independence testify to the complexity of the construction of multiple Franco-Algerian histories and memories. Camus was born in Algeria as a *pied-noir* and some postcolonial critics regard his work as belonging to French colonial writing. Nina Bouraoui refers to Camus's work in her novel, indirectly reclaiming his writing as postcolonial.

5   Nadia Seremetakis, ed., *The Senses Still: Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 12.

6   Robert Lalonde, *La Belle Épouvante* (Montréal: Les Quinze éditeur, 1981).

7   'Rencontre with Lalonde', *Radio-France Canada*, https://ici.radio-canada.ca.

8   Lalonde's texts that explore the theme of Amerindian identity are: *Le Dernier Été des Indiens* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1982); *Le Fou du père* (Montréal: Editions du Boréal, 1988); *Sept Lacs plus au Nord* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1993); *Iotékha* (Montréal: Editions du Boréal, 2004).

9   Lalonde's father is a Métis of Mohawk lineage. The Mohawk are a tribe of the Iroquois confederacy (consisting of five tribes) and are mainly located in southwest Québec and south Ontario. Their native language is Kanien'kéha

(Latin script is used) and it belongs to the Iroquoian group of Amerindian languages.

10 See, for example, the film by Alanis Obomsawn from 1993: *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*, http://www.nfb.ca/film/kanehsatake_270_years_of_resistance/. Anglophone Aboriginal writers have also covered the Oka crisis: Lee Marade, *Sundogs*; Jeannette Armstrong, *Indian Summer*; Beth Cuthand, *Seven Songs for Uncle Louis*. Eva-Marie Kröller, ed., *Cambridge Companion to Canadian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2017), 43.

11 See, for example, the articles published on *Le Devoir* website at the time of the 20th anniversary of the Oka crisis.

12 Robert Lalonde, interview with Marie-Claire Girard, *Le Devoir*, January 16, 1993.

13 All English translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

14 Lalonde, interview with Sylvie Saint-Jacques, *La Presse*, April 15, 2007.

15 Lalonde, *Sept Lacs plus au Nord* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1993), 15.

16 Lalonde, *Sept Lacs plus au Nord*, 15.

17 Seremetakis, ed., *The Senses Still*, 14.

18 Seremetakis, ed., *The Senses Still*, 1–19.

19 Lalonde, *Sept Lacs plus au Nord*, 23.

20 A similar thematic connection is implied in Sandra Hobbs's article, 'L'Autochtone dans *Le Dernier Été des Indiens* de Robert Lalonde: ou comment passer de la grande à la petite noirceur', *International Journal of Canadian Studies 41* (2010): 248, doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.7202/044169ar.

21 Lalonde, *Sept Lacs plus au Nord*, 90.

22 Zach Parrott, 'Indigenous People: Religion and Spirituality', *The Canadian Encyclopedia Online* (2015), http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/religion-of-aboriginal-people/.

23 Michael F. O'Riley, 'Postcolonial Haunting: Anxiety, Affect, and the Situated Encounter', *Postcolonial Text* 3:4 (2007): 1, http://postcolonial.org/index.php/pct/article/view/728/496.

24 According to the author: 'while the turn to place frequently enables a recording of history, it often produces complex dilemmas for those choosing to evoke occulted colonial histories'. O'Riley, 'Postcolonial Haunting', 2.

25 Nina Bouraoui's texts dealing with the Algerian theme are: *La Voyeuse interdite* (Paris: Flammarion, 1991); *Le Jour du séisme* (Paris: Stock, 1999); *Garçon*

manqué (Paris: Stock, 2000); *Mes mauvaises pensées* (Paris: Stock, 2005); *Sauvage* (Paris: Stock, 2011).

26   Rosalia Bivona, 'Nina Bouraoui: une écriture migrante en quête de lieu', *Littérature des Immigrations, 2, Exils croisés, Perspectives Comparatistes* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1995), 125–136.

27   Bouraoui, *Mes mauvaises pensées* (Paris: Stock, 2005), 143.

28   Bouraoui, *Mes mauvaises pensées*, 200.

29   Nina Bouraoui, *Garçon manqué* (Paris: Stock, 2005), 20. English translation taken from *Tomboy*, translated by Marjorie Attignol Salvodon and Jehanne-Marie Gavarini, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2007, 11.

30   Bouraoui, *Mes mauvaises pensées*, 13–14.

31   Jacques Lacan, *Les Quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1973), 33–34.

32   Bouraoui, *Garçon manqué*, 9.

33   Nina Bouraoui, *Tomboy*, translated by translated by Marjorie Attignol Salvodon and Jehanne-Marie Gavarini, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2007, 4.

34   Jasmina Bolfek-Radovani, *Geo/graphies of Loss: Space, Place and Spatial Loss in North African and Canadian Writing in French* (Erlangen: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2015).

35   See Helena Vassallo, 'La mémoire dans la peau: Memory, identity and trauma in Nina Bouraoui's *Garcon manqué*' (paper presented at the Society for French Studies' *48th Annual Conference*, Birmingham, United Kingdom, July 2–4, 2007). The relationship between 'life narrative', postcolonial memory and the body is discussed in Helen Vassallo, 'Wounded Storyteller: Illness as Life Narrative in Nina Bouraoui's *Garçon manqué*', *Forum for Modern Language Studies 43:1* (2007): 46–56, https://academic.oup.com/fmls/article/43/1/46/552934.

36   Bouraoui, *Mes mauvaises pensées*, (Paris: Stock, 2005), 18.

37   Bouraoui, *Mes mauvaises pensées*, 254–255.

38   Bouraoui, *Mes mauvaises pensées*, 255.

39   Bouraoui, *Mes mauvaises pensées*, 190. Provincetown, Massachusetts, is a coastal resort town and a popular vacation destination with gay men and lesbians.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interests with this work.