INTIMATE ENCOUNTERS WITH VIOLENCE: MEDIA AND TRAUMA IN THE WORK OF PHYLLIS WEBB AND DAPHNE MARLATT

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Abstract

This dissertation looks at the work of Phyllis Webb and Daphne Marlatt, two West Coast Canadian poets who explored questions of media technologies and trauma violence in their work during the latter half of the twentieth century. This thesis takes up contemporary phenomenological and feminist analyses of the connections between media technologies and trauma, especially war violence, in relation to both the creative and practical careers of these two writers. Research into the histories of media technologies such as the letter, radio, photography, and television shows how these technologies have shaped our experience of violence both globally and locally, from nineteenth-century colonial garrisons in Canada to the internment of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War to the 1991 Gulf War. Ultimately, this dissertation suggests that these two poets offer new phenomenological interpretations of the ways in which media technologies shape our perception of historical, hidden traumas.

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Introduction: Can Media Speak?

It is the contention of this thesis that media not only make perceptual demands on us, on how we process and understand violence in our world, but they also make ethical demands. In other words, the perceptual possibilities and constrictions that come with each medium also harbour ethical responsibilities and consequences. In *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger argues that the invention of the camera disrupted how we look: "The camera isolated momentary appearances and in so doing destroyed the idea that images were timeless [. . .] It was no longer possible to imagine everything converging on the human eye as on the vanishing point of infinity [. . .] The invention of the camera changed the way men saw. The visible came to mean something different to them" (16). As Berger does here, many scholars of media trace the correspondence between a specific media technology and the emergence of a new form of perception. Berger insightfully notes that the photograph was mistakenly thought to "capture" a scene; however, what it truly represented was a scene *at a specific moment in time*, that is, a photograph actually captures both a *where* and a *when*. Thus, the invention of the photograph as a medium reveals that all sight is always time-dependent, always at the mercy of the moment.

Berger links this fracturing of the timeless observer to modernist and postmodernist ideas about the decentering of perspective and a skepticism toward transcendental truth. He suggests that the medium of the camera produces a new fundamental relationship to looking that seems to simultaneously usher in and reflect these changes in twentieth-century Western philosophy. The camera, for instance, challenges the idea of an omniscient "God's eye" perspective by emphasizing how sight—corresponding to Enlightenment knowledge—changes radically based on

perspective. What is more, for Berger, the new relationship to reality that the camera provides is tied up with questions of power and how we understand, or "see," the past. What this ultimately means, then, is that the camera technology, via the new conditions of perception that it provides, enables alternative (in this case fractured, destabilized) relations to power, or, put another way, the camera enables new ethical potentials. This thesis follows a similar trajectory to Berger's analysis, but it looks at contemporary theories of violence rather than modernist and postmodernist theories of truth. I ask instead how certain media technologies—the letter, the radio, the photograph, and television news—shape and are shaped by feminist and phenomenological philosophies of trauma and violence. To investigate sensitive ethical responses to the proliferation of media and violence in the twentieth century, this thesis looks at the work of Phyllis Webb and Daphne Marlatt, two Canadian poets who are deeply concerned with media and the ways in which our intimate relations with each other speak to our obligations toward global histories of pain, including war, imprisonment, and suicide.

In a 2016 interview with Laura Moss and Gillian Jerome, Daphne Marlatt discusses her experiments with the long line or the run-on sentence that appear in *Rings* (1971), *Vancouver Poems* (1972), and *Steveston* (1974). A new form of the poetic line for Marlatt enables a new kind of perception, which she explains as "the doubleness of how we're situated, both in the present moment and in our harking back to the past (history included) or anticipating the future" (260). Marlatt's poetry shows this sensitivity toward the situatedness of perception not only as an aesthetic quality but also as a radical reformulation of the ethical obligations of creative work, specifically in the ways in which the shifting perspectives of the long line counter narrative authority as a reification of

patriarchal Western art. But the "doubleness" of perspective, the resonance between the particularities of our context and the historical past, the shifting, uncertain vantage point, all also correspond to the fundamental changes in perception and their attending ethical implications that Berger notes in reference to the widespread use of camera technology. Indeed, one could argue (as the third chapter of this dissertation does) that Marlatt's work is particularly *camera-like*, especially in the ways that its alternative forms of perception work to forge new relationships to the world and those around us, creating new ethical possibilities.

This thesis takes poetry, and specifically the work of two West Coast Canadian poets, Phyllis Webb and Daphne Marlatt, as a sort of "proving ground" for the ways that media technologies (such as the letter, radio, photography, and television) articulate, reframe, misrecognize, and interrupt how we perceive violence and trauma in our world. Part of the dovetailing of poetry with media is due to the poets' own interests and subject matter. For instance, as the first chapter, "Intimations of Grief: Mourning, the Letter, and *Wilson's Bowl*," explains, Phyllis Webb's 1980 book of poetry, *Wilson's Bowl*, revolves around an intimate exchange through the medium of the letter between two friends in the few years before their suicides. Webb herself worked in the medium of public radio for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) from the 1950s to the 1970s. She served as an executive producer during the conception of the CBC Radio program *Ideas* in the 1960s and continued to write and voice radio broadcasts for various CBC programs. The second chapter, "Radio in the Dark: Phyllis Webb's Late Work and the CBC," covers Webb's work in public broadcasting. As the third chapter details, Daphne Marlatt in *Steveston* expanded the boundaries of poetry by collaborating with the photographer

Robert Minden in order to create a text that is intimately tied to a place (Steveston, a Japanese Canadian fishing village south of Vancouver) by combining Marlatt's poetic voice with Minden's camera-eye. Marlatt's later war novel, *Taken* (1996), derives its title from the metaphor of "capturing" that is performed both by the camera and by military bodies. This novel explores both the 1941 Japanese invasion of Malaya and the spectacle of television news that covered the 1990–1991 Gulf War, and it is examined in the fourth chapter, "Daphne Marlatt's *Taken*, Intimacy, Clarity." Each chapter focuses on the perceptual and ethical implications of particular media that make their appearance as points of investigation in the poets' work.

On what grounds, one may ask, should these poets be considered together? If we were to recover a tradition of women's poetry in Canada, the lack of which seemed to loom like a shadow over Webb's early work, we would find again and again surprising confluences between Webb and Marlatt. They both, of course, are considered regional poets of British Columbia since they spent formative years and much of their adult lives in the province. Likewise, they both studied at the University of British Columbia and were key figures in the consolidation of the anti-nationalist (regionalist), postmodern, white-Anglo Canadian literary scene of the '70s and '80s. They are probably most significant for the ways that they compelled Canadian literary circles to face questions of gender and queer ways of being, thus providing the groundwork for the emerging landscape of queer and feminist literatures in Canada that has flourished since the '90s and the early years of the new millennium.

The poets themselves admit a conscious relationship of mutual inspiration. Webb begins 1990's *Hanging Fire* with two epigraphs, one from herself and one from Marlatt's

"Musing with Mothertongue," where Marlatt frames the poetic process as "not rational but erotic" since it is "a drawing, a pulling toward. A 'liking'" (54). Webb again dedicates the uncollected poem "Following" to Marlatt—the poles of this relationship, then, are staged as both "a pulling toward," an attraction, as well as a mutual "following." The two in fact discuss Webb's dedication of "Following" to Marlatt in an exchange of letters published in a special issue of *West Coast Line* that focuses on Webb ("Phyllis Webb and Daphne Marlatt: A Selected Correspondence"). The utter cordiality, hesitations, and goodwill between the two make the exchange somewhat of a comedy of errors, with Webb first probing as to whether Marlatt might feel uncomfortable with the dedication. The question is asked so softly that Marlatt at first seems to think that Webb had eventually decided against the dedication, but finally Webb admits: "I was really sounding you out on whether you would want that," yet also apologizing, since she considers it "not a very strong poem compared to" another that she sent along (93–94). This brief exchange positions the act of dedication as an offering, but also as a question: they both seem to be navigating and diffusing the responsibilities that an offering implies toward the receiver. A decade later Marlatt would return the favour in her 1992 poem "locative, for Phyllis" (*Intertidal* 542), which revisits Webb's *Hanging Fire* (that originally quoted Marlatt) for another offered line: "The proper response to a poem is another poem" (*Peacock Blue* 405). And so the trading of dedications, like the long line that they discuss in their correspondence as a potential form of women's expression,[1] is not a tallied exchange, but a free and fragile offering, inviting but not demanding another

[1] "For me," says Marlatt, "the long line has much more to do with the body than the ego, the way a body moves, its sinuosities" ("Phyllis Webb and Daphne Marlatt: A Selected Correspondence" 91).

response. The mechanics of this exchange, an offering that is both an invitation to response and a question ("have I given enough?" p. 91), resembles the way that letter writing itself unfolds as a medium, which the first chapter of this dissertation further explores. In any event, the correspondence of their writing careers goes further than simply both being active members in shared Canadian literary circles in the last decades of the twentieth century. Through the development of their styles as well as through their discussions and interviews, we can trace a conscious and explicit mutual influence, especially in their shared search for a distinct women's poetics.

The dovetailing of their careers, styles, and values has resulted in several other critics analyzing the pair in tandem. Laurie Ricou's "Phyllis Webb, Daphne Marlatt and Simultitude: Journal Entries from a Capitalist Bourgeois Patriarchal Anglo-Saxon Mainstream Critic" (1986) refers to a graduate seminar that he led which focused on Webb and Marlatt as emblematic voices of a women's aesthetic, or syntax, in Canadian poetry. What is interesting is that Webb's and Marlatt's sprawling lines, experiments with—or rejections of—punctuation, their halting language, dissolutions of rational semantics, all of these qualities seem to indicate for Ricou a particularly feminine or feminist style beyond what he considers mere theme or subject matter. Susan Drodge also found Webb and Marlatt suitable to consider together, along with the poets Betsy Warland and Lola Lemire Tostevin, in a 1996 doctoral thesis titled *The Feminist Romantic: The Revisionary Rhetoric of* Double Negative, Naked Poems, *and* Gyno-Text. Drodge supports the idea that these four writers share what Marlatt herself called a "doubleness" toward the literary past and, in particular, the high British Romantic poets. Drodge notes that their writing seems inextricably tied to this tradition, yet it also

reinterprets and, in some cases, iconoclastically transforms the legacy of the Romantics in light of new developments in feminist historiography. Again, the connection here is predicated on their shared sensibilities in regard to a feminist politics as well as a shared aesthetic toward a writing through and of the body.

In a 2006 dissertation titled *Alter/Nations—Long(ing) Poems: Reconfiguration of the Nation-Discourse in Experimental Canadian Poetry (1960s–1980s)* by Alessandra Capperdoni, the two are again brought together, this time along with Roy Kiyooka and George Bowering, as poets of the avant-garde who disturb or unsettle a supposedly straightforward sense of nationalism and nationality in Canada, Webb particularly for her expressions of a queer poetics and Marlatt for her immigrant-outsider perspective. For Capperdoni, the queer and the migrant represent two alterities that rupture the dominant conception of the national body. However, these two categories, the queer and the migrant (or, *the colonial* in all of its trappings) are generative in experimental writing of or against the nation only insofar as they emerge out of a more essential feminist landscape: the idea of a "space" for women and women's desire in Webb, and a thinking-through of colonial structures by way of various configurations of women's relationships in Marlatt. The feminist sensibilities expressed through their formal experimentalism again show the similarities in their writing practices. In these many studies we can also see the proliferation of feminist analyses of Webb and Marlatt, striking, perhaps, in light of the fact that Webb has been skeptical of the scholarly position that her work represents the early days of a stable feminist tradition in Canadian poetry. Webb frequently points out that in the early parts of her career she did not have a coherent term like "feminism" through which she could articulate her experience of marginalization. Thus, in her view,

"feminist" may be anachronistic since the term did not form a large part of her conscious lexicon and writing practice. However, when attempting to reconstruct a feminist literary history, the unthought or the silenced experience of that marginalization should be expected rather than considered an aberration from the norm. That is, that very feminist history must necessarily be formed out of those fragments and silences that make up the experience of alterity. Thus, this study looks to complicate the scholarly narrative that Webb is a career feminist writer by suggesting that gender marginalization is a primary referent even for Webb's early work insofar as that experience of marginalization is part of the half-thought, silenced fabric of her poetry and her professional work with the CBC.

Phyllis Webb's own personal history begins in Victoria, BC, where she was born in 1927. She attended the University of British Columbia where she studied English and Philosophy. At 22 she ran, though unsuccessfully, as a candidate for the provincial Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF),[2] one of a number of labour and social-democrat parties in BC in 1949 (Wachtel 9–11). Stephen Collis in his 2007 book, *Phyllis Webb and the Common Good: Poetry/Anarchy/Abstraction*, argues that Webb's professional, creative, and personal lives are marked by the oscillations into and out of the public sphere that are typified in her entrance into politics as the youngest candidate at that time. Her sense of outward duty, the commitment to the "public good" that Collis argues underpins much of her professional and creative labour, is hinted at when Webb says, in an interview with Anne Munton, that her "one ambition as a teenager was to get off the island" and enter the public sphere; however, she mentions with irony that "by half way through my life my ambition was to get back on an island" (qtd. in Munton 6–7).

[2] The CCF would eventually be succeeded by the New Democratic Party in 1961.

John Hulcoop in his introduction to *Peacock Blue: The Collected Poems of Phyllis Webb* considers this pull back toward the West Coast as both a rooted regionalism and as an aspect of a creative vulnerability that animates her work (3). In 1964 she began to work on the program *University of the Air* for the CBC, and in the following year she collaborated with William Young to produce the program *The Best Ideas You'll Hear Tonight*, which would eventually simply be known as *Ideas*, a program that continues to be familiar to daily listeners of CBC Radio One today. She spent time over the years travelling abroad, sometimes by way of national awards funding for the arts, to Britain, Paris, and San Francisco, though she also lived in Edmonton, Montreal, and Toronto before she returned to live in Salt Spring Island, BC (Hulcoop 3–6).

This image of Webb, endlessly navigating the intersection between being an engaged political poet and a private poet-in-crisis, has been put forward in recent Webb scholarship by writers like Pauline Butling and Stephen Collis who have convincingly depicted Webb beyond the limited set of concerns that ruled early Webb scholarship. This early scholarship began with John Hulcoop's and Helen W. Sonthoff's formalist and bibliographic work in the 1960s and 1970s. Hulcoop provides an informative introduction to Webb's *Selected Poems, 1954-1965*, in which he outlines a biography of Webb's life until that point and grapples with her difficulties, pessimisms, and disillusionments. In the introduction, he remarks that the emergent "world-view" of her poetry "is much bleaker [. . .] and more consistently pessimistic" (n.p.) than the views analyzed in his and Sonthoff's earlier critical articles. These earlier studies provide interesting formalist readings of her poetry's images and contradictions, and they lay the foundations for approaching Webb's aesthetics of pessimism and her modernist existentialism. However, looking back from

the end of Webb's long writing career, her recent critics demonstrate the rich possibilities offered by Webb's poetry that are not taken up in these early studies. Even Sonthoff's "The Structure of Loss: The Poetry of Phyllis Webb" remarks that "the woman 'weighed down by the race of man'" takes on "the shape of fertility and eternity only as it loses, must lose, its singular form" (22): in describing the structures of constraint, Sonthoff does not connect the images of fertility with a particularly feminist (or even *feminine*) struggle against the "singular form" of lyric subjectivity. This strain of discourse continues even recently in Gary Geddes' *70 Canadian Poets* (2014): in providing an introduction to Webb, Geddes remarks, "whatever its ostensible content, good poetry is an affirmation of the human spirit, of the power of the imagination to confront and reshape reality" (82). Webb's work, as an instance of this prescribed version of "good poetry," gets stripped of its "ostensible content," that content being the particularities of her voice, the queer, the gendered, the white, in order to equalize it with the normative identities of canonized writers. The other face of this existentialist vision of Webb is what Stephen Collis caricatures as "The distraught, borderline suicidal Sapphic woman poet" (7); in other words, this strain of Webb criticism focuses primarily on the aesthetics of modernist/postmodernist self-annihilation, and Webb as a key figure who births, as it were, Canadian poetry into the new global landscape of postmodern art that was taking hold in the mid- to latter-twentieth century. From this perspective, the main concerns of interest in Webb's work are the problems of personal expression, the instability of personal identity or the poetic ego, and the afterlife of mythopoeic art.

In 1997, Pauline Butling's *Seeing in the Dark: The Poetry of Phyllis Webb* distilled a budding dissatisfaction in the scholarship with the inherited conception of

Webb that had begun to emerge in studies by writers such as Smaro Kamboureli, Susan Glickman, Lorna Knight, Liza Potvin, and Stephen Scobie. Butling's approach shares an attention to Webb's aesthetics with the earlier formalist readings, but she deftly argues that it is mistaken to read these aesthetics as politically neutral. Webb has spoken frequently in interviews about the fact that through most of her writing life she lacked a conscious language to consider both a recovered canon of women's writing as well as simply feminist concerns in general. However, *Seeing in the Dark*, as the title suggests, reterritorializes Webb's aesthetics of dark enlightenment, absence, and alienation, not simply as the marginalization of the creative spirit from human activity (an anti-industrialism familiar to the earlier humanist readings of Webb). Instead, Butling argues that Webb's darknesses and absences are an expression of marginalization from gendered structures of power even if that marginalization is buried, especially in Webb's earlier work. The new wave of Webb scholarship that has now followed Butling's landmark study articulates a vision of Webb not as a solipsist, but as politically and socially engaged, with a sensitivity, inspired by Butling's methodology, to the fractured and indirect ways that her poetry approaches the public world. Furthermore, Butling reads the notion of "*Seeing*" in relation to Enlightenment knowledge, the poetic observer, and the political recognition of marginalization, but not as it pertains to media technologies or phenomenological sense-experience. So, although my study intersects with Butling's in their shared attention to sight, we locate its resonances in Webb's work in quite different places.

The next landmark study in Webb criticism comes a decade after Butling's and takes up her reconfiguration of Webb as socially and politically oriented: Stephen Collis's

Phyllis Webb and the Common Good: Poetry/Anarchy/Abstraction (2007) reads Webb's "dissolution of the lyric 'I'" (17), a main concern in the earlier formalist scholarship, and her turn to abstraction as an expression of anarchist political impulses and not only as existential alienation. He argues that her turns inward and her permeable lyric subjects are not turns *away* from political engagement but are instead turns *toward* a new kind of anarchist way of being that is unstable and ruptures the dominant categories of the self and the world as inherited from mainstream philosophies like Western enlightenment and liberal humanism. He also recovers the strain in her work of what he calls a "Poetics of Response," or, her participation in the dialogic qualities of poetry as a communion with other writers in other places and at other times, countering the notion of Webb as a solitary and disconnected poet.

Webb scholarship following Butling's and Collis's studies has become increasingly diversified and increasingly outward-looking to her social, literary, and political contexts. For instance, Butling has also authored what is perhaps an even more compelling study of Webb's historical and social contexts than *Seeing in the Dark* in a 2009 paper titled "Phyllis Webb as Public Intellectual," which situates her avant-gardism in relation to the competing nationalist and internationalist impulses of her work with CBC Radio in the '60s and '70s. From the perspective of the newer ilk of Webb scholarship, including Laura Cameron's, Alessandra Capperdoni's, and Katherine McLeod's investigations into the question of the archives and nationalist canons in relation to Webb, it seems almost incredible that she was ever considered a poet outside of the public spotlight. Part of why the early scholarship minimized her public engagement is that it incorrectly conflated her poetry's themes of a desire for privacy with

the actual realization of that desire, i.e., a disengagement from the public world. Instead, a more sensitive reading would note that the desire for privacy emerges out of her over-engagement with the public world. This contradiction between her public engagement and her private self was a paradox that even she remarked on. For instance, in the Foreword to her collection of essays and radio broadcast scripts titled *Talking* (1982), Webb explains, "I have always thought of myself as a quiet person, not much of a talker [. . .] but when I was putting these radio talks and essays together I realized just how much talking I have done in my life. In fact, I have for the most part earned my living by talking" (7). Webb appears, then, to be a reluctant public voice, but a public voice that nonetheless intimately shaped the landscape of Canadian intellectualism in the '60s and '70s.

It is appropriate, therefore, to consider Webb as a poet always just on the edge of the spotlight, her interviews and book reviews for the CBC helping to bolster the reputations of more widely known mid-century poets including P.K. Page, Irving Layton, Miriam Waddington, Al Purdy, Gwendolyn MacEwen, bpNichol, and Leonard Cohen. I am often reminded of a line in Anne-Marie MacDonald's *Fall on Your Knees*, which speaks about the renown of a lesser-known female jazz pianist, Doc Rose, in the age of jazz's decline: "Rock 'n' roll reigns and there are fewer gigs now. She has attained that thankless high status, to wit: Doc Rose is the jazz pianist most often cited by famous jazz pianists as their favourite jazz pianist" (562). Webb, I think, inhabits a similar position, being much esteemed by her contemporaries, but never a large figure in the public eye and certainly shrinking in the intervening years. She is sometimes considered among the other once-UBC-undergraduate poets dedicated to BC regionalism and inspired by Black Mountain poets such as Charles Olson and Robert Duncan, but always as an outsider

looking in to the more well-known voices like George Bowering, Frank Davey, Fred Wah, and even someone like Marlatt, who has her own tenuous connection to the other poets of the short-lived *TISH* magazine.

But then again, Webb slightly preceded this group, with her inclusion in a book titled *Trio* with Gael Turnbull and Eli Mandel in 1954, followed shortly after in 1956 with *Even Your Right Eye*. These earlier works have mostly been passed over by critics as the first experiments of a developing voice still wrapped in the already-aging garments of modernism. 1962's *The Sea Is Also a Garden* begins to develop her fragile and emerging sense of her connection to a gendered literary canon with its explicit invocation of William Carlos Williams and an oblique reference to H. D. It ends with the much-anthologized poem "Poetics against the Angel of Death," which looks to create a new, long, unrestrained line outside of the stifling inheritance of Wordsworth's grand Romantic posturing. This search for a new non-masculinist line came to a peak with the publication of her 1965 *Naked Poems*, sometimes said to be one of the first depictions of queer women's love in Canadian poetry. The fragility and openness of the lines in *Naked Poems* still reads, I think, as radical, and its resonance can be detected in the work of Daphne Marlatt, certainly, as well as later writers like Lisa Robertson and Jan Zwicky. Though Webb would not publish another book until *Wilson's Bowl* in 1980, Laura Cameron argues that this fifteen-year gap was a period of fruitful gestation rather than one of withdrawal. She spent most of this time working as a broadcaster and as executive producer of *Ideas*, though she also received a grant to begin writing what she imagined to be a new, grand, outward-looking book that would focus on the Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin. Webb considered the original vision of this book to have "failed," though this

process of failure served as the anchoring point for *Wilson's Bowl*. Webb's lack of mainstream recognition, being 'your favourite poet's favourite poet,' was put on full display when *Wilson's Bowl* failed to even be shortlisted for the 1980 Governor General's Award for English poetry. bpNichol, Margaret Atwood, and Michael Ondaatje collaborated to provide what Frank Davey calls a kind of "peoples [sic] poet" award for the perceived snubbing of *Wilson's Bowl* (the idea coming from an award given to Milton Acorn a decade earlier). A number of other poets pitched in for the fund, including the winner of the actual 1980 award, Stephen Scobie (who apparently apologized "magnanimously" for having won the award over Webb; Davey 235). Strangely, though, this repeated alienation from the spotlight seems to be almost an aesthetic for Webb's appeal, as her selected poems titled *Vision Tree* would finally win the 1982 Governor General's Award. She would go on to experiment with the Arabic form of the *ghazal* in *Water and Light: Ghazals and Anti Ghazals* (1984), perhaps searching for expression beyond her inherited Anglo-Western tradition. She finally would experiment even further in 1990's *Hanging Fire* with *ghazals*, prose, and concrete poetry, which Stephen Collis considers as a move toward abstraction and the ultimate anarchist self-sacrifice of poetry altogether: silence. Punctuated between and after these major works were of course Webb's minor publications, often for celebratory occasions or activist groups, such as "Prison Report" which was written for Amnesty International in 1982, as well as prose volumes such as *Talking* (1982) and *Nothing but Brush Strokes: Selected Prose* (1995).

Unlike Webb, Daphne Marlatt was not originally born on Canada's west coast. Instead, she followed a winding road of displacement during her childhood years that eventually took her to Vancouver; these migrations would colour her tentative connection

to Canadian identity as she grew up. She was born in Melbourne, Australia, in 1942 to an English family, but from ages three to nine they lived in Penang, at the time still a British colony, in what was then known as the Federation of Malaya. After this, the family moved to another coastal island, Vancouver, where she navigated growing up as something of an outsider in Canada (Marlatt, "Entering In: The Immigrant Imagination"). Like Webb, she attended UBC, where she earned a BA in 1964, and was a part of the budding Vancouver literary scene that developed with the 1963 Vancouver Poetry Conference and the *TISH* literary magazine, though she has also been involved with other literary publications, including *periodics*, *Tessera*, *Island*, *West Coast Review*, and *Capilano Review*. She received an M.A. in comparative literature from Indiana University in 1968, and over the course of her career she has continued to make an impact in the academic worlds of literature and feminism in addition to her creative work. This acumen for high scholarship informs the developments of and experimentations in her creative work, and perhaps contributes in part to why her work has received so much critical attention.

Marlatt first published a novella in 1962 titled *The Sea Haven*, followed by 1968's *Frames of a Story*, an experimental verse retelling of Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale "The Snow Queen." We can already see in these early works some of the primary references that continue to define much of her creative work throughout her career, mainly the attraction to pelagic metaphors as well as the uncertain blending of forms, rupturing the dichotomies between poetry and prose. Susan Holbrook notes that in *Frames of a Story* "the frames of form and genre start to flex" as poetry blends into prose, as introspection mixes with narrative (3). Marlatt then published the minimalist and short-

lined *leaf leaf/s* in 1969, followed by the billowing prose-poem *Rings* in 1971, which recounts her struggles during childbirth and as a mother, themes that would crop up again in her landmark experimental novel *Ana Historic* in 1988. In the interim she published a number of widely acclaimed collections, such as *Vancouver Poems* (1972), *Steveston* (1974), which is the focus of this dissertation's third chapter, *How Hug a Stone* (1983), and *Touch to My Tongue* (1984), among several others. She also collaborated on two aural history projects, *Steveston Recollected: A Japanese-Canadian History* and *Opening Doors: Vancouver's East End* in 1975 and 1979, respectively, the first of which served as a point of departure for her poetic exploration of the town in *Steveston*.

In addition to the blending of form, Marlatt also blurs the idea of authorship in her various collaborations, which can be read as a feminist reconfiguration of literary ownership and community. For instance, the poems in *Steveston* also resonate with photographs by Robert Minden, who was part of the team that created the aural history book *Steveston Recollected*. Her historical collaboration continued with her co-editing of *Opening Doors* with Carole Itter. She also worked in a reciprocal relationship of translation with the French Canadian poet Nicole Broussard in *Mauve* (1985) and *Character/Jeu de lettres* (1986). Marlatt would go on to push the boundaries of intimate collaboration with Betsy Warland in 1988's *Double Negative* and 1994's *Two Women in a Birth*. *Double Negative* is truly collaborative for the fact that it utterly ruptures any critical attempt to distribute specific authorship, so much so that this blurring resulted in its absence from *Intertidal*, an anthology of Marlatt's early poetry.

Marlatt's somewhat more recent engagements with the novel show her continued commitment to formal experimentalism and the confusion of boundaries. The

aforementioned *Ana Historic* combines prose poem elements with a disjointed narrative of mother-daughter lineage all set on the backdrop of a feminist recontextualization of how we come to know historical data. *Taken*, a novel published in 1996, leans more explicitly on conventional prose, yet it still displays the lyric acuteness of the prose poem. It explores the resonances between sites of violence over time and over vast distances, from the 1941 Japanese invasion of Malaya to the 1991 Gulf War. The fourth chapter of this dissertation investigates *Taken* and its exploration of media during wartime in detail. Marlatt's *The Given* from 2008 picks up on the unfolding of a non-linear novelistic narrative in prose verse that she developed in *Ana Historic* and to a lesser extent in *Taken*. Critics must, though, take into account the deliberate deconstruction of the demarcation between poetry and prose in Marlatt's fiction. In the end, it may be altogether misleading to imagine Marlatt as engaging in two distinct modes of creative work. One may find that *Ana Historic* looks a lot more like *Rings* than it does *Taken*.

In terms of critical research dedicated to Marlatt's work, the discipline is simply overflowing with perspectives, much different from what we find in Webb scholarship. Many readings, particularly those in the 1970s to 1990s, consider Marlatt's poetry in terms of regional expression, the Black Mountain concept of the proprioceptive, her relationship to the other *TISH* poets, and her curious formal expression of a self-in-process. The focus of scholarship from the '90s and on has been her emerging and shifting feminisms and queer poetics, with some attention to her environmentalism as an extension of her feminist politics. Since these innumerable critical perspectives would not receive fruitful and just attention *in toto* in these pages, I will mainly focus on the strain of scholarship that accounts for the question of phenomenology in her work, since my

analysis of media begins with phenomenology's understanding of perception, a concept necessary to this dissertation's readings of *Steveston* and *Taken*.

Phenomenology has long been considered a guiding reference point for Marlatt's work, especially in scholarship on her early poetry, the influence of Charles Olson, and her envisioning of the proprioceptive (a poetic style that emphasizes the perspective of a consciousness at the centre of a moving world). For instance, in Frank Davey's *From There to Here* (1974), he says that "The phenomenological method of *Frames* results in some extraordinarily elaborate and detailed evocations of consciousness," and that *leaf leaf/s* "similarly emphasizes the pre-reflective aspects of consciousness" (194). According to this conception, Marlatt's work instantiates the attentive eye of the poet, universal in the sensitivity of its gaze (it is, after all, "pre-reflective"), yet highly local in its devotion to regionalism and the politics of place. Similarly, Douglas Barbour in "The Phenomenological I: Daphne Marlatt's *Steveston*" (1978) calls this "the post-modern, phenomenological thrust of *Steveston*, that it not only shows process but makes of the poetic act and the act of reading the poem processes of engagement with the lived world of Steveston as it stands" (187). Barbour does mention the political dimensions of *Steveston*, insofar as the phenomenological perceiver is involved with and constitutes the material world that it encounters. He says, "It is, in a non-didactic sense, a political poem, but its politics naturally emerge from the processes it records" (183). The ethics of phenomenology in this characterization of Marlatt's early work seem Heideggerian in that they emerge out of the primary demand to attend to the world as it is, the "processes of engagement with the lived world." Thus, her poetry becomes both a vessel for that

primary duty of the artist, to attend to the world, as well as a treatise on our obligation to attend carefully to the world in this way.

However, Lorraine Weir in "Daphne Marlatt's 'Ecology of Language'" (1989) makes a convincing case not only that critics have overstated the extent to which Marlatt's work is primarily phenomenological but also that this categorization is coterminous with a misrecognition of the queer feminist politics and poetics that steadily crystallized over the course of Marlatt's early career. As Weir puts it, "To assume that pre-1984 Marlatt [before *Touch to My Tongue*] is 'lyrical' and ideologically neutral is to subscribe to the colonizing hypothesis of those who have attempted to typecast Marlatt as a 'phenomenologist,' and to relegate her to the role of bright observer of man's world" (63). Although the early scholarship on Marlatt as a phenomenologist does offer some ways in which this "bright observer" is engaged in the ethical responsibilities of the artist to attend to the world, Weir urges us to consider feminist and queer politics as primary (if less explicit) referents even of the pre-1984 period. Weir points out, crucially, that traditional phenomenology tends to universalize both the poet and the subject matter. This dissertation explores the possibility of reinterpreting phenomenology in light of these feminist critiques in order to recover a way of reading media that does not universalize—and thus dilute—the queer feminist politics of the text.

Weir's argument seems to anticipate the critiques that recent materialist feminists have broadly levelled at phenomenology. Claire Colebrook, for instance, argues that phenomenology tends to reduce gender difference to alterity in general, and thus should be abandoned in favour of a materialist approach that asserts the irreducibility of gender difference. However, this dissertation follows Anne van Leeuwen's key re-readings of

Simone de Beauvoir and Luce Irigaray. She suggests that feminist phenomenology may be able to undergo a similar turn as materialism in order to recognize the unassailability of gender difference not as one instance of alterity among many but as a distinct "horizon of sense" (478). In re-reading Irigaray, van Leeuwen suggests that our sense-making capacities are not composed before what she calls *sexuate difference*, but are instead mutually conditioned by that difference: "rather than a foundationalist appeal to sexuate difference, I will suggest that what is at stake in [Irigaray's] text is the attempt to think the appearance of sexuate difference as coextensive with the disclosure of a *world that is not one*" (480; original emphasis). The "*world that is not one*" radically departs from traditional phenomenology, which asserts that an attention to the processes of our encounter with the world can reveal universal truths regarding the structures of our perception. Instead, van Leeuwen argues that gender difference emerges as an irreducible form of inquiry *as soon as* one recognizes "the otherness of the other" (480). The irreducible ambiguity of gender difference means that a universal phenomenological observer cannot exist, and that we live not in a singular world but many worlds, each constructed by the senses—or gazes—conditioned by various alterities. Marlatt's *Steveston* and *Taken*, for example, measure and refract these many, ambiguous gazes against each other: the gaze of the colonizer, the gaze of the displaced, the gaze of the photograph and the photographer, and more. What van Leeuwen's articulation of feminist phenomenology provides is a way of reading how these gazes work to constrict and constrain an Other, and what kinds of encounters other gazes—queer, feminist, motherly—can offer. Thus, I argue that new turns in materialist feminisms, which reconfigure the essential grounds of phenomenology, are necessary to account for

Marlatt's work as phenomenologically inflected without falling victim to the errors that Weir points out, since Marlatt is, in the end, not a traditional phenomenologist.

This dissertation's methodologies were chosen in order to distill the connections among trauma, war, media technologies, and the histories of violence in Canada. This thesis begins within the prevailing methodologies of phenomenology, namely Emmanuel Levinas's ethics of the Other, because it provides a hinge point between media—extensions of the senses—and ethics. Levinas argues that the most basic condition of our existence is not the Cartesian ego but instead the relationship between the self and the Other and its attendant ethical responsibilities. The first chapters begin by reading violence within the framework of Levinas's ethics, which calls us to care for the Other because of the mediated gaze between the self and the Other, a gaze that brings both compassion and radical alterity. In teasing out Webb's and Marlatt's articulations of intimacy and care, this dissertation eventually finds that the terms of Levinas's traditional phenomenology, which have been so fundamental for theorists of violence and ethics like Judith Butler, may be untenable for a full apprehension of the material experience of trauma. The fourth chapter, then, provides a prolonged argument that attempts to show how feminist materialist criticisms can be incorporated into a new feminist phenomenology. The dissertation ends by exploring the relationship between feminist phenomenology and Webb's and Marlatt's articulations of hurt, ultimately finding that feminist phenomenology may help us to see more intimately the violences of the past. In order to make use of methodologies that are themselves the subject of contestation and scrutiny, this dissertation takes up an interdisciplinary approach, thinking through the philosophy alongside the poetry.

In terms of trauma studies, if we can even speak about a coherent and proper discipline at all, this dissertation takes a skewed rather than a traditional approach—since oblique and unlikely connections are at the heart of trauma's unfolding, perhaps we should expect a critical discourse to match. Broadly speaking, trauma studies traces its roots to a set of supposedly canonical texts written around the 1990s by scholars such as Cathy Caruth, Dominick LaCapra, Shoshana Felman, Dori Laub, and Judith Herman. These early canonical theorists generally take as paradigmatic the case of the Holocaust in conjunction with Sigmund Freud's study of the unfillable void of loss in their theorization of the mechanics of trauma. We can see these two poles—the Holocaust and Freud—defining many of these texts: Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience* begins with an analysis of trauma in Freud's *Moses and Monotheism*; LaCapra's "Trauma, Absence, Loss" compares post-apartheid South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission to Germany after the Holocaust; and Herman's *Trauma and Recovery* transforms Freudian psychoanalytic concepts of melancholy and loss into contemporary medicalized and psychiatric discourse. These early conceptualizations of trauma include a number of ideas about trauma that have since come under scrutiny, including the central figure of the cataclysmic and singular event, the fragmentations of the psyche, the ensuing period of silence, and the eventual bearing of witness.

Two early studies near the tail end of this formative period seem to anticipate the recent calls for a rethinking of trauma studies, Kalí Tal's *Worlds of Hurt* and Felman's *The Juridical Unconscious*. Both texts, surprisingly or not, begin with Holocaust memorialization, but their analyses focus on the ways in which the Holocaust has been remade into the paradigmatic Ur-trauma, what Tal calls the "mythologization" of the

Holocaust (6), a process that serves not only to stage all knowledge of trauma around a specific event but also to evacuate that event of its historical particularities and its ongoing afterlife. Furthermore, both texts call for a reassessment of how we understand gendered violence in relation to trauma in general, and Tal makes the point that gendered violence—especially domestic violence in American families—is often a manifestation of intergenerational war trauma (particularly in the families of former U.S. soldiers deployed in Vietnam); thus, instances of gendered violence are not exceptions to—or minor forms of—the paradigmatic case of the PTSD war veteran, who stands in as the prototypical trauma victim in U.S. cultural consciousness (156–60). Both texts begin, much like the canonical works, with a grappling with the Holocaust, but only to critique its cultural misuse and its primacy in popular conceptions of trauma. Felman's book is especially informative for my project, since in its thinking about public dramatizations of trauma and the law (the Nuremberg trials, the Eichmann trial, and the O.J. Simpson trial), the text uncannily finds itself contending with media studies and television broadcasts. This dissertation attempts to trace out a web of surprising confluences among its core theorists, and Tal and Felman are two scholars who offer a bridge between foundational trauma studies and the newer attention to gendered and colonial trauma.

In recent years there has been widespread agreement among the most innovative trauma scholars that the early "canonical" studies suffer from Western biases in their readings of trauma.[3] Succinctly articulating this growing dissatisfaction with early trauma studies, Stef Craps describes the problem as an unrecognized conflation of Western and

[3] See scholars such as Jill Bennet, Rosanne Kennedy, Richard Crownshaw, Michael Rothberg, Stef Craps, and Sonya Andermahr.

modernist values with a wider psychological experience: "they tend to take for granted the universal validity of definitions of trauma and recovery that developed out of the history of Western modernity, [and] they often favour or even prescribe a modernist aesthetic of fragmentation and aporia as uniquely suited to the task of bearing witness to trauma" in addition to focusing almost exclusively on traumas experienced by majority cultures in the West (2). Thus, if one were to look for typical trauma readings in the pages of this thesis—such as psychoanalysis or the schema of the witness, the perpetrator, and the survivor—one may come away disappointed. I look to articulations of fragility and loss outside of these canonical modes in an attempt to meet the urgent challenge to do away with the Eurocentric, universalized conceptions of trauma. Inspired by Tal's and Felman's insights, this thesis attempts to trace out connections between trauma and its closest companion-disciplines, feminism and media studies.

Consequently, this thesis also draws on communications and media studies. Since each chapter analyzes a particular media technology—from the letter to radio, photography, television, and back to the novel—scholars of specific media technologies and histories of media, such as Kym Brindle and Jason Loviglio, were necessary. Additionally, broader media studies scholars such as Marshall McLuhan, Susan Sontag, Mona Oikawa, and Paul Virilio were chosen in order to inform how the inherent "gazes" of particular media technologies impact our encounter with others and with violence. Furthermore, in order to account for historical traumas, such as the third chapter's focus on Japanese internment in Canada, I make use of scholars of historiography, such as John Michael and Hayden White, to suggest that the inherited modes of encountering history may very well close off certain kinds of ethical responses.

The dissertation begins with Webb, whose writing career starts and ends earlier than Marlatt's. The first chapter, titled "Intimations of Grief: Mourning, the Letter, and *Wilson's Bowl*," analyzes Webb's preoccupation with the form of the letter and argues that it provides a structure for intimate, dialogic poetic response. It places Webb's explorations of grief in *Wilson's Bowl* as well as some uncollected poems into conversation with Levinas's theory of the vulnerability of the Other. This chapter lays some foundations for understanding the connection between media studies and phenomenology: it argues that a phenomenological reading of media demands that we account for the ethical responsibilities that are placed on us as soon as we encounter the Other, and that that encounter is always mediated. However, that mediation, whether through the letter, the radio, or the slot in a prison cell, may more or less severely inhibit the potential for our full encounter with the Other. This mediation of our perceptions can be tracked especially in *Wilson's Bowl* since it attempts to think through the connection between her friends' suicides and global atrocities.

The second chapter, "Radio in the Dark: Phyllis Webb's Late Work and the CBC," looks at Webb's involvement with the CBC, from being an executive producer on the radio program *Ideas* to writing and conducting reviews about and interviews with intellectuals and Canadian literary celebrities on CBC Radio. It puts her radical intellectual work in context with the nationalizing influence of radio in the mid-twentieth century in Canada, and then turns to the ways that this jostling between impulses toward and away from the nation as a site of colonial influence appears in her later work, especially *Water and Light*. It considers the historical confluence of radio and colonialism

in Canada, and it reflects on the afterlife of this history as it relates to the later period of her work.

The third chapter, titled "Labour and the Lyric Camera: (Re)viewing Robert Minden's Photographs in *Steveston* with Daphne Marlatt," examines Minden's photographs in the collaborative book *Steveston*. It argues that the camera lens offers various ways of viewing its so-called "subjects," with some of those ways housing the potential to recommit historical traumas, particularly the internment of Japanese communities in Canada during the Second World War. However, the chapter suggests that some photographs bear a lyrical style of perceiving the Other, which results in an alternative way of apprehending the traumas of the past outside of dominant narratives of memorialization. Thus, a particular kind of photographic perception, one that depends on Marlatt's lyrical eye in *Steveston,* enables a reinvigorated encounter with the Other that is not otherwise possible.

The final chapter, "Daphne Marlatt's *Taken,* Intimacy, Clarity," returns to the question of phenomenology in regard to the novel's exploration of photography and television news as they pertain to family histories and the spectacle of the 1991 Gulf War. It argues that the novel affirms new potentials for an encounter with the Other; these potentials are predicated on women's relationships, both between mothers and daughters and between queer lovers. Thus, the chapter finds, especially in light of new developments in materialist feminisms, that the received logic of phenomenology is inadequate to register these new forms of ethical responsibility.

The dissertation discovers, then, that among the noise and distractions of media, *Taken* points toward a signal for apprehending global violence that emerges out of our

most intimate encounters with those closest to us. This study attempts to develop a grammar of mediation that can articulate when media work to confound that signal, especially as a reproduction of colonial violence, and when they can clarify our obligations to those most vulnerable in our world. In the end, this thesis explores new ethical potentials in Webb's and Marlatt's work which are outside the bounds of Levinas's phenomenology due to developments in the intervening years both of media technologies and of feminist theory.

Chapter 1: Intimations of Grief: Mourning, the Letter, and *Wilson's Bowl*

Although Phyllis Webb's 1980 book *Wilson's Bowl* was originally conceived as a "beautiful anarchist dream poem" dedicated to Peter Kropotkin (9), it would eventually become a memorial to personal and global loss. In an essay titled "A Correspondence,"[4] Webb discusses the people on whom *Wilson's Bowl* is based. Webb remembers her friend Lilo Berliner through Berliner's letters to Wilson Duff, an anthropologist who studied Indigenous art of the West Coast. Berliner would eventually name the Haida rock bowl after Duff, and this rock bowl would go on to serve as the title and the guiding symbol of Webb's *Wilson's Bowl*. From 1973 to 1975, Berliner and Duff kept up a correspondence about the connection between Indigenous myths and art, moving in their dialogue between the psychoanalytic, the poetic, the transcendental, and the personal. From initial letters between two mutually interested students of art who had never met, their exchange developed into an intimate dialogue, both requiring and giving "'All my love'" (*Talking* 146); to quote Berliner's last letter, "'writing to you is my best Christmas present to myself'" (147). Although their correspondence became unflinchingly affectionate, and despite the fact that Berliner attended Duff's exhibitions, the two never met in person. In fact, when their letters ceased, their last form of communication came not in writing but in the material actions that Berliner took when she learned that, in August, 1976, Wilson Duff had shot himself in his office at the University of British Columbia. After Berliner dedicated the rock bowl to Duff and left all of his letters on Webb's doorstep, as Webb recalls, "In January, 1977, thinking of the bowl, of Wilson, 'my twin,' and having plotted with the full moon, she walked into the sea" (131).

[4] This essay is collected in the volume *Talking* (1982).

Why, if Berliner and Duff shared such a profound intimacy as well as a professional interest, did they never meet? What is it about the medium of the letter that allows such strangers to, paradoxically, collapse social and personal distances in addition to geographic ones? How and why does loss make itself felt in such a tender way through the mediation of the letter, and how does this felt register—loss, mediated—overwrite Webb's original "anarchist dream poem" to turn it into something that approaches an elegy?

Wilson's Bowl originally came out of a research grant that Webb proposed in 1967 in order to study and complete a book of poetry about the Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin. As Webb recounts in the Foreword to *Wilson's Bowl*, she originally planned for the collection to draw together "the 'body politic' and 'love's body' as interchangeable polymorphous analogues in an ideal world" (9). After the diminutive and minimalist *Naked Poems* in 1965, it seems that Webb felt her next project failed due to its *excess*: she calls it "Too grand and too designed" and "perhaps too big and too weak for me" (9). In characteristic Webb fashion, that prepositional phrase, "for me," does more than reveal her failures. It also posits that "The Kropotkin Poems" exist in a Platonic, ideal plane as she first imagined them; she was simply unable to access and write them, since she was too small, too muddled, and not up to the task of bearing—or baring—their weaknesses. "For me" indicates that there may be another, grander (or simply more self-assured) poet who could serve as medium to write "The Kropotkin Poems." The issue at stake here seems to be her inability to translate the ideal of "The Kropotkin Poems" onto the page, that is, to mediate between the imaginative world and the material one. As the first section of this chapter will argue, the fundamental gap between the ideal and the

immanent, which is to say, the ethical problem of mediation, expresses itself in *Wilson's Bowl* as loss.

In the following pages, I want to develop the connection between media theory and the moral philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. Levinas's philosophy has been instrumental for trauma theorists like Butler because it allows us to have compassion for an unknowable Other, such as, for instance, someone whom violence has rendered unrecognizable. Since we can perceive nothing about the Other except for the possibility of its loss, Levinas says that in this vulnerability we are compelled to care for the Other. This section argues, first, that all perception is always mediated, and, second, that mediation always enters us into an ethical relationship. This argument then returns to *Wilson's Bowl* via the mediation of letter writing. The frame narrative of Webb's book, the intimacy between Berliner and Duff that becomes an intimacy with the poet, depends upon the mediated relationship of letter writing. This epistolary conversation compels the recipient: it compels a response, a correspondence; it compels an affect, an identification with the voice of the letter; and, as I will argue, it compels a moral response, an ethics of letter reading. Furthermore, as *Wilson's Bowl* oscillates between the intensely personal and the global, as letter writing becomes poetry, this ethical relationship of mediation serves as a First Principle upon which the book builds a vision of global care.

In *Phyllis Webb and the Common Good*, Stephen Collis first connected Levinas's ethics to the social commitments of Webb's poetry, what he calls her "poetics of response" (27). This chapter reinterprets Webb's connection to Levinas and arrives at a different conclusion regarding how she is situated in relation to the modernist preoccupation with allusion. Collis argues that, at the heart of her work, Webb writes

"Because there are others—there are poems because there are other poems—and poetry is a responsibility for and toward the other, a responsibility *to respond*" (31; original emphasis). For Collis, the literary *response* maps onto the ethical *responsibility*. In Collis's analysis of Webb, writing is essentially a moral task in that it is guided toward an Other to whom we are compelled to respond. Collis conceives of Webb's theory of writing as a *writing-with* that is also a *being-with* others. *Writing-with*, Collis suggests, begins for Webb as "the response of modernist allusion and quotation" (20). *Writing-with* then becomes a conversation, what he terms "the response capacities of poem-to-poem" (20). Finally, it is a response in the abstract, "to the very otherness of language itself" (20). Collis understands Webb's writing career to have moved from the uprooted traditions of modernism into the "play" of postmodernism, with a final gesture toward abstraction and silence. In a sense, this chapter will be "*writing-with*" Collis's abstract reading of Levinas in Webb's work. As a departure from Collis's focus, I would instead like to re-read Levinas's ethics and ground it in media theory in order to demonstrate that *Wilson's Bowl* repudiates the *writing-with* of the modernist tradition. This chapter suggests that, from the dialogic properties of the letter itself, a more bounded and personal *being-with* arises.

Webb's poem "Prison Report," which features a political inmate who struggles to *be with* another, typifies the connection between violence, Levinas's ethics, and perception in her poetry of the 1970s and 1980s. It was published independently in 1982 (and contemporaneous to *Wilson's Bowl*). "Prison Report" was written in an awareness effort for the non-governmental organization, Amnesty International, and focuses on Jacobo Timerman, a journalist of Lithuanian Jewish descent who was imprisoned in 1977

by the Argentinian military junta for reporting on missing and imprisoned persons in Argentina (Rein and Davidi 2). Timerman's crime was that he gave voice to the people who were silenced by the military's violence, so the regime turned the same muzzling violence back onto him. Although Timerman was freed and subsequently exiled to Israel by the time the poem was published, the poem allows the reader to *be with* him in solitary confinement, and, by extension, to *be with* the countless others in extra-judicial prisons whom as a journalist Timerman nevertheless attempted to recount.

In solitary confinement, Jacobo Timerman sees another prisoner being held captive:

> The eye of Jacobo Timerman looks through the hole and sees
> another eye looking through a hole.
>
> These holes are cut into steel doors in prison cells in Argentina.
>
> Both eyes are wary.
> They disappear.
>
> Timerman rests his cheek on the icy door,
> amazed at the sense of space he feels – the joy.
>
> He looks again: the other's eye is there,
> then vanishes like a spider.

Comes back, goes, comes back.

This is a game of hide-and-seek.

This is intelligence with a sense of humour.

("Prison Report" ll. 1–12)

This poem has Webb at her characteristic playfulness, the mixing of the, as she puts it, "dark" (l. 29) situation of the prison with the very human game of hide-and-seek. The poem offers the prisoners some recovery of a human connection even in solitary confinement. That connection, however, seems fundamentally ambiguous: the false starts, the muffled dialogue, the restricted vision all suggest *failures* to communicate, yet the poem ends hopefully, "saying, / I am with you" (ll. 31–32). We are left to wonder: does their mutual hope stem from the other? Or does it emerge primarily from their connection to the game itself? And what is the nature of the game, which seems only to function as a result of their bodily deconstruction, an eye, a nose, "parts of bodies, parts of speech" (ll. 29–30)? What kind of ethical relationship emerges out of their restricted vision, this parody of the blazon?

The structure of "Prison Report" moves from the material conditions of Timerman's isolation to a final pronouncement of intimacy: "I am with you" (l. 32). The game seems to allow Timerman to transcend the immanent conditions of his imprisonment. As I have discussed, the Foreword to *Wilson's Bowl* hangs on a distinction between an ideal poetic vision and its immanent artistic representation. I would like to characterize this tension between the ideal and the material in Webb's work as a problem of mediation. The transcendent movement in "Prison Report" out of the material and

toward an ideal intimacy emerges out of this game of looking, this restricted encounter between two prisoners. As I will later argue, the intimacy in "Prison Report" does not happen *despite* their restricted gaze, but *because of* it. Just like the fated connection between Lilo and Duff, restricted only to letter-writing, I am suggesting ways in which mediation opens new forms of connection, intimacy, and ethics in Webb's poetry.

This understanding of mediation is rooted in Emmanuel Levinas's phenomenological analysis of one's encounter with another person. Levinas's ethics understand the emergence of phenomenology as a philosophical embodiment of the movement from the transcendent to the concrete. Before coming to Levinas's departure, it is necessary to spend some time tracing a cursory history of phenomenology in order to clarify the landscape out of which Levinas's—and consequently Webb's—new ethics of mediation emerge.

Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1787) proposes that our encounter with the empirical world depends on the structures of our senses and cognitions, and those structures correspond to the empirical world. Thus, it is possible to understand the empirical world not only by engaging with the actual data of the world, but also by reading the structures of the rational world. Kant calls this correspondence between the empirical world and the rational world the "Transcendental Aesthetic" (SS9), which, in part, takes philosophy out of both the purely empirical world and the purely rational one. Edmund Husserl in *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* (1931) likewise develops a method for understanding the structures through which we experience the world. He theorizes a "transcendental consciousness" through which we may analyze the

"pure" structures of experience: "Thus we fix our eyes steadily upon the sphere of Consciousness and study what it is that we find immanent in it" (S33).

For Levinas and Martin Heidegger, this tradition of German Idealism shores up truth into the mind, which makes rationality both the form and content of knowledge. In *Being and Time* (1953), Heidegger proposes instead to interrogate the fundamental proposition on which truth rests: what it *is* to be, or what is "*is-ness*." Heidegger calls this question a "fundamental ontology" (186): the interrogation folds back on itself and asks what is at stake in the "*is*." Levinas understands Heidegger to have taken philosophy away from both the Idealist world of the rational mind as well as the particulars of the empirical world, and to thrust us back into the first nature of existence. In *Ethics and Infinity* (1982), a conversation between Levinas and Philippe Nemo, Levinas credits Heidegger for showing him the possibility of a turn away from Idealism, saying that "While Husserl still proposed—or seemed to propose—a transcendental program for philosophy, Heidegger clearly defined philosophy in relation to other forms of knowledge as 'fundamental ontology'" (38). Within Heidegger's project of giving voice to Being, Levinas finds two radical turns in philosophy. The first is a turn away from the thinking mind as the condition of knowledge, both that which makes cognition possible and that which limits or structures it. Heidegger instead finds a structure of thinking in the voice of Being. The second is a reduction to First Principles, a radical interrogation of what constitutes existence in the first place. Heidegger proposes that the essential question of existence is the condition of the question itself: what is "is." Instead, Levinas searches for a First Principle through ethics rather than ontology.

Levinas's turn to ethics comes as a critique of the primacy Heidegger's work gives to the voice of Being. In the introduction to Levinas's *Ethics and Infinity*, Richard A. Cohen notes that, in rejecting metaphysics and traditional morality in favour of "fundamental ontology," Heidegger actually supplants ethics onto Being: "Ontology becomes indebtedness to what is, a quiet listening vigilant against its own interference, cautious of its own interventions, careful not to disturb. In a word, thinking becomes a lovingkindness" (2). That is, Being destabilizes traditional morality, yet, in that ethical void, attention to Being becomes a compulsion. Heidegger's ontology marries description and ethics: the question of Being is fundamental to understanding our world, and Heidegger suggests that moral duty comes after a description of that world. Indeed, we are at our most moral when we sharpen our understanding of the world.

In opposition to Heidegger, Levinas proposes that our thinking should begin with ethics rather than ontology as its First Principle. In Heidegger's position, we interrogate what it is "to be" through understanding our relationship with Being and our attention to the voice of Being. In the philosophy of the "face," Levinas suggests that how we relate to other people, the duties we have to those around us, must come before the question of Being if we want to move the world in an ethical direction. If ontology is essentially descriptive, an answer to the question "what is" (it "to be"), then any ethics arising out of ontology will lack the compulsion to change how we are in the world, or, what "ought to be." Thus, he presents a new First Principle, our irreducible encounter with the face of the Other:

> I wonder if one can speak of a look turned toward the face, for the look is knowledge, perception. I think rather that access to the face is straightaway

> ethical. You turn yourself toward the Other as toward an object when you see a nose, eyes, a forehead, a chin, and you can describe them. The best way of encountering the Other is not even to notice the color of his eyes! When one observes the color of the eyes one is not in social relationship with the Other. (*Ethics and Infinity* 85)

Levinas describes an encounter with a face that is not a look, an encounter which is before perception. One meets the face without, or beside, seeing "it" (as an object). Counterintuitively, Levinas distinguishes *looking at the eyes* of the Other from *seeing their face*. He suggests that *looking at the eyes* belongs to the realm of ontology, asking, "what constitutes the face of the Other?" Attention to the parts of the face, if they dominate how we encounter the face, reduces it to an object in the world. Levinas argues that we must alter and restrict how we look at the face; we should not look in a way that describes the face, and instead we should *see* in a way that offers ourselves up to the face through our responsibility toward the Other. In "Prison Report," we can see a similar process in which the structure of the prison attempts to reduce prisoners to mere parts: an eye, an ear, a nose.

This philosophy refuses to describe what the face "is" and thus refuses an ontology of the face. Rather, it asks not what the face "is," but what the face "means," that is, what it compels in us. He goes on to say that "The relation with the face can surely be dominated by perception, but what is specifically the face is what cannot be reduced to that" (85–86). The face's irreducibility, its demand not to be described, constitutes it as a First Principle for Levinas's philosophy. As Kant first looks to the ways in which we come to know the world before looking at the world itself, so too does Levinas look at our

relationship with the face before looking at the face itself. If Kant's interrogation into our ways of knowing the world survives a skepticism of the empirical world, then Levinas's interrogation into our responsibility toward the face survives our (in)ability to know the face of the Other. Indeed, his rejection of the phenomenology of the face indicates that our responsibility toward the Other derives from the impossibility of knowing the Other. If we reject ontology, reject our ability to "know" the face, then we reject a mere description of the world *as it is*. And in this void we are left instead to attend to the world as it *should be*: an ethical compulsion.

What is it that the face calls to in us? Levinas notes that "there is an essential poverty in the face" and that "The face is exposed, menaced, as if inviting us to an act of violence. At the same time, the face is what forbids us to kill" (86). The economic metaphor, the "poverty of the face," suggests that the naked face lacks both value and security. The face, so "exposed," cannot supply what is essentially valuable in ethics, that is, an ability to speak for itself or to demand its own justice. The face's inability to speak for itself causes an ethical vacuum, and Levinas says that, in that vacuum, we feel compelled to act toward the face, perhaps even "inviting us to an act of violence." Encountered in its poverty, the face is not meaningful due to its material contents (a nose, and eyes). Instead, the mere fact of the face's bare existence calls us to respond ethically.

These ethical responses appear at first to contradict each other: the "poverty" or vulnerability of the face seems to be "inviting us to an act of violence," yet this vulnerability should also lead to a relationship of care with the Other. In *Precarious Life*, Judith Butler suggests that this call to violence arises out of a mutual vulnerability that becomes apparent when we encounter the face. Within the exposed, impoverished face of

the Other, the subject sees her own vulnerable face reflected back: "I could put an end to my fear of my own death by obliterating the Other, although I would have to keep obliterating, especially if there are four hundred men behind him, and they all have families and friends" (Butler 137). In Butler's reading, the impulse to hurt the Other stems from our own vulnerability, so we spare the Other as if we are sparing ourselves. Since in this reading the void left by the bare face is filled by the reflection of our own vulnerability, we never encounter the radical irreducibility of the face.

Yet, to transform the Other's face into one's own would be to claim to know the face, that is, to be confident in its ontology.[5] Levinas, though, is searching for an ethical principle that precedes knowing the face. As he says, "Stripped of its form, the face is chilled to the bone in its nakedness. It is a desolation" (*Humanism of the Other* 32). The encounter with the bare face removes the condition necessary in order to identify its material components, including the condition of identifying it as one's own. Perhaps Levinas suggests that the naked face, the face that is "a desolation," its abstract form, is essentially violent. Its weakness, its potential for suffering, calls up the violence that grants it that weakness. Thus, by encountering the face, by stripping it of its empirical matter, we are already in a fundamentally violent relationship with the Other; the face of the Other reminds us of the possibility of violence that permeates the world. In *Homo Sacer*, Giorgio Agamben suggests that the State follows through on this very impulse to extinguish the bare life of the Other. By following through on this impulse, the State

[5] Recent materialist feminists argue that traditional phenomenology, as outlined here, has not properly accounted for the problem of universalizing the self's experience onto the Other. See chapter four for a lengthy argument in favour of a feminist reinterpretation of phenomenology that attempts to solve the problem of universalism.

consolidates its power by proving its utter authority over life and death. This can be seen as a radical assertion of the ontology of the State: by taking up the face's offer that it can so easily be killed, the State declares that things are as they are (and not likely to change).

Levinas instead claims that the vulnerability of the face begs for another response. "The nakedness of the face," Levinas says, "is destitution and already supplication in the rectitude that sights me. But this supplication is an obligation" (*Humanism of the Other* 32). Within the face's vulnerability is its call for us to recognize our power to commit violence against the Other. It supplicates; it demands that we refuse to do violence: "the face imposes on me and I cannot stay deaf to its appeal, or forget it, what I mean is I cannot stop being responsible for its desolation" (32). If we are "responsible" for the desolation of the face, it seems that we have already committed violence on the Other, whether that violence comes from our reduction of the face into an abstract form or from the very relationship we have with the face in the first place. In contrast to the State's response of radical ontology (for the violence, already done, to be done again), Levinas offers us the possibility for ethics, for things to be not as they are but as they ought to be. This is an undoing of the original violence already done to the Other, and thus an undoing of power and a refusal of ontology. Levinas claims that "free thinking," transcendent rationality, "*stays the Same*," or doubles down on its ontology, whereas the ethical relationship attempts to change the world from how it is to how it ought to be (32). This ethics, derived from First Principles, does away with transcendent rationality: "Consciousness loses its first place" in favour of ethics (32).

To return to Webb's "Prison Report," we can see the broad strokes of Levinas's ethics of the face at work. The poem deconstructs an inmate's encounter with the face of

an Other while they are both held in solitary confinement. The oscillation between the solitariness of the cell and the solidarity of our *being-with* the prisoner becomes the central drama around which the poem is staged: "The eye of Jacobo Timerman looks through the hole and sees / another eye looking through a hole" (ll. 1–2). In contrast to Heidegger's sense of *being-with* others, a philosophy of radical presence, we can understand the eye/I of Timerman as being alone and *alone-with* that other, unidentifiable eye/I. Although geographically Timerman is quite close to his fellow inmates, the mediation of the prison doors radically protracts that distance even while the hole in the door permits a partial form of intimacy. In terms of the phenomenological experience of solitary confinement, this extreme form of being alone ruptures an inmate's connection to *being-with*; this ontological quality of the human, that we are fundamentally connected to each other, becomes conditional in the prison cell. The poem, thus, suggests that Timerman and the other inmate are not connected by their presence, but by their mutual state of being radically alone.

The poem forges their connection through perception. If Timerman and the other prisoner are mirrors of each other, they are fractured mirrors: Timerman *himself* does not look through the hole, rather, his *eye* specifically looks through, and sees another eye. The hole, too small to fit a face, shrinks their perception of each other down to the essential data: the most that they can perceive of each other is the bare fact that there *is* an Other. Their speech fails: "My name is Jacobo, one eye says. / Other eye says something, but Jacobo can't quite catch it" (ll. 18–19). The sheer smallness of the hole empties their encounter of content, and they cannot identify themselves to each other. The encounter is reduced to the basic form of two faces within (partial) sight of each other.

In this bare fact of the presence of the Other, they both are aware of the inherent danger of this encounter: "Both eyes are wary. / They disappear" (ll. 4–5). Instead of the comfort we might expect from two prisoners being *alone-with* each other, they recognize the fundamental responsibility they will bear onto each other simply by acknowledging the presence of the Other. That danger, though, becomes the essential content of their "game":

> He looks again: the other's eye is there,
> then vanishes like a spider.
>
> Comes back, goes, comes back.
>
> This is a game of hide-and-seek.
> This is intelligence with a sense of humour.
> Timerman joins the game. (ll. 8–13)

The game is both "spider" and "love" (l. 15), which indicates that their playing does not evade the danger of the encounter. And what is it about this absurd game of hide-and-seek that is so intelligent and so funny? The appearance of the eye establishes the *being-with* or *alone-with* that forms the basis of their encounter. By hiding the eye, they are play-acting the utter solitariness that seemed to be their plight before they encountered each other. The movement from presence to absence, from *alone-with* to merely *alone*, reveals to them the simple fact of their own bare existence, another fundamental ontology that signifies that they themselves are not dead (yet). However, the hiding of the eye is also a temporary escape from the responsibility toward the Other that arises out of their

encounter, an escape from the danger and violence endemic to one's *being-with* an Other. The thrill, then, is being thrust between isolation and danger, confinement and the *being-with* at the heart of the ethical encounter.

Finally, each prisoner offers to the sight of the other the constituent parts of their face:

> An eye, a nose, a cheek resting against a steel door
> in the middle of the dark night.
> These are parts of bodies, parts of speech,
> saying,
> I am with you. (ll. 28–32)

Levinas warns that the empirical matter of the face breaks us off from the ethical encounter, saying, "You turn yourself toward the Other as toward an object when you see a nose, eyes, a forehead, a chin, and you can describe them" (*Ethics and Infinity* 85). Yet, the hole in the steel door limits perception in such a way that the eye, nose, and cheek cannot enter into a totality, cannot describe a particular face. The "parts," if whole, could constitute a body that then could be reducible as an object. However, the "parts" themselves have already been reduced from the totality of the face, thus each prisoner encounters only the form of the face in the Other rather than any specific face. In the utter reduction of the face to its bare form, the face speaks in a way not permitted to the mouth, "saying, / I am with you." The parts of the face, the eye, the nose, the cheek, refuse objectification by moving beyond into the world of language as "parts of speech." Rather than merely existing, the parts of the face command and compel the prisoners into a mutual relationship.

On the one hand, the form of the encounter, looking through a hole, makes objectification of the face impossible since the face cannot be described in its totality. On the other, the poem implies that the hole is a form of mediation like a camera's aperture. "These holes," the poem says, are not accidental breaches in the prison, but instead "are cut into steel doors in prison cells in Argentina" (l. 3). The encounter, then, is not *in spite of* the prison, rather, it is fundamental to the architecture of the prison. The holes compel the prisoners to look at each other, to become both proximate to and isolated from each other. The mandate of the prison is to provide a territory on which the prisoner can be exiled even within the homeland. The limited size of the holes creates a perceptual problem where the holes do not overcome this exile: the faces cannot be heard, touched, or even seen as a whole.

The connection between sight and the prison has a long history, most notably in Michel Foucault's analysis of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon. In speaking about the architecture that makes the Panopticon possible, Foucault says:

> By the effect of backlighting, one can observe from the tower, standing precisely against the light, the small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery. They are like so many cages, so many small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized and constantly visible. The panoptic mechanism arranges spatial unities that make it possible to see constantly and to recognize immediately. (*Discipline and Punish* 200)

The ability of the guard to be so vigilant and to watch so carefully relies on backlighting. Part of what backlighting does is that it erases difference between prisoners: they no longer have individual bodies, individual faces, or, indeed, faces at all. They become

indistinct masses that are permitted only a small variety of recognizable movements, which is to say, nothing suspect. Not only are the private behaviours of the prisoners made visible, but the very nature of their private identities and private bodies becomes exposed and policed. To be sure, this is not the private self being made public, a generalized fear that certainly haunts much of Webb's work, underwriting, for instance, the Foreword to *Wilson's Bowl* ("my desire for privacy"). The prison is decidedly not a public space; both the Panopticon and Timerman's prison in Argentina attempt to prevent any kind of community or public to develop within their walls. There seems even to be a contradiction in the dichotomy between private and public spaces that is fundamental to the structure of the prison and, in particular, solitary confinement. The prison subjects the private lives of inmates to scrutiny—their perpetual surveillance, the body searches, the room searches, the screening of letters—so that their most intimate selves are understood as the locations of potential new crimes. And the prisoners are made visible not to the public, but to an institutional body that works by accumulating knowledge and hiding it from public view. The prison is designed to tuck inmates away from the public, to separate and hide them from the larger community. They become simultaneously exposed and hidden.

In the prison, as Foucault notes, "Visibility is a trap" (*Discipline and Punish* 200). One's private body becomes open to the prison so that they can be closed away from the public. In "Prison Report," Timerman and the other inmate have no private selves to recover. Their faces and voices do not become constituted to each other after being dissected by the prison: they remain "parts of bodies, parts of speech" (l. 30). The final pronouncement of the poem, the recovery of a human connection, is that "I am with you"

(l. 32). Rather than a reassertion of the prisoners' individuality or identities, the poem suggests that their intimacy and communion happen both *in spite of* and *because of* their lack of individuation. This is, again, due to the fact that they can only see each other through holes in the cell doors. Since they cannot see each other as totalities, which is to say that they are not individuated in front of each other, they escape the "trap" of visibility. Thus, as Levinas agrees, their forms of care for each other follow from their ways of seeing differently.

Evading the "trap" of visibility seems to be at the heart of Levinas's encounter, and seeing differently is a main preoccupation of Webb's work. In *Seeing in the Dark: The Poetry of Phyllis Webb*, Butling suggests that Webb offers a way of seeing the "'dark' of Western (Patriarchal) thought," the eclipsed "otherness" suppressed under the weight of the Western literary tradition, the sub-rational and unconscious thought-patterns that Webb reclaims as feminist modes of being (1). Butling links the kinds of "seeing" that Webb's poetry performs with Webb's ability to "see" and, crucially, to speak to a hitherto hidden legacy of writers outside the dominant Western intellectual tradition. "Seeing," according to Butling, is the first step toward speaking, a communion. It is curious that both Butling's and Collis's projects dissolve into analyses of intertextuality. That Webb is fundamentally a poet of response, as Collis says, "writing-with" (20) her contemporaries and predecessors, is certainly well-demonstrated in these two monographs. In contradistinction, I would like to pursue the idea of "seeing," or, not seeing, in its historical function in media, rather than in its relationship to a literary tradition.

What bearing do vision and "seeing" have on the letter? Butling reads Webb's "seeing" as intertextuality, arguing that her work "uses the full palette of imitation, theft, translation, allusion, parody, paraphrase, pastiche, direct and indirect quotation, and naming" (90). Certainly, some theories of the letter pick up on the effect of pastiche, especially in multimedia works. For instance, Kym Brindle's *Epistolary Encounters in Neo-Victorian Fiction* reads the fictional use of the letter also as pastiche, claiming that this pastiche allows the texts to engage "with the past as a metacritical relationship" (4). These fictional letters seem embedded with an authorship outside of the text, and Brindle suggests that this patchwork complex of authorship allows the texts to interrogate history. In *Negotiating with the Dead*, Margaret Atwood discusses her own theory of writing with the past, being herself a Neo-Victorian novelist who makes use of the letter in novels like *Alias Grace* (1996). She says, "all must go from here to there; all must descend to where the stories are kept; all must take care not to be captured and held immobile by the past" (178). The emergence of the past for Atwood is a digging up of the bones of history, complete with its requisite dangers. The container of those bones, the proof that digging took place, seems to be, curiously enough, the letter. For Atwood and Brindle, the letter seems to keep something of the original writer for us, not to commune with, but to encounter. The letter from history is itself an Othered object: we cannot apprehend the letter, and it retains its vulnerability and danger. Brindle argues that the unresolved nature of the letter allows writers to interrogate historiography even while they, as Atwood puts it, "negotiat[e] with the dead." "Negotiate" indicates the unresolved nature of the encounter with the dead, the simultaneous claim that history also has on us. Thus, the dead, in the form of the letter, are never fully apprehended, or "seen."

What, then, of the non-fictional, the personal letter? In *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, Marshall McLuhan conceptualizes the new form of media, the telegraph, which overtook the letter as the medium of distributing news, as the reification of our neurological processes: "For with the telegraph, man had initiated that outering or extension of his central nervous system that is now approaching an extension of consciousness with satellite broadcasting," ushering in what he calls the "Age of Anxiety" (273–74). McLuhan sees in the instantaneous form of communication engendered in the telegraph the substantiation of our moment-to-moment problems, events, and worries. In the letter, the transmission of news needs to be relevant beyond the actual travel-time of the document. Furthermore, the telegraph places a burden on lengthy communication. Thus, the telegraph constrains the possibilities of communication to only that which can be compressed into its clipped syntax, while it can transmit news that is relevant for briefer and briefer timeframes. McLuhan uses the metaphor of the central nervous system to characterize this abundance of felt pains and annoyances, registered but not contemplated. The telegraph, then, reveals what the letter as a form of news media is not: it is not quick to inform or quick to correct, it is not necessarily brief, and its technological form (ink, paper, and couriers) does not defy basic comprehension.

Whereas the telegraph, according to McLuhan's metaphor, reproduces our biological selves in its mystifying technological processes, the letter, especially in the age of electronic media, provides a mode of registering feeling and meaning beyond the pains and pleasures of the skin. These possibilities of the letter are not only a consequence of its longform genre, giving the letter enough space to contain familiar rhetorical styles and to develop a prosody. They also come from the demand that the value of the letter must have

a long duration, since the processes of delivering letters are not instantaneous and are subject to delay, trouble, and forgetfulness. Brindle notes that the epistolary genre is riddled with dropped letters, found letters, last wills, and mistaken recipients. She notes that the contents of the letters have a narrative veracity, so that a letter may contain a kind of truth or factuality that would not be accessible to the characters in another mode of communication. Indeed, for us as readers, letters from the dead seem to bear (or complicate) historical truths. In addition to this analysis, I would add that letters almost resist contextualization, even as they signify and verify historical time. That is, a misplaced letter that explains and vindicates one character's actions actually accumulates value and importance as the narrative goes on. A personal letter from a nineteen-year-old boy stationed in Albert, France to his mother back home in Ontario may have been quite routine and, in 1916, relevant to scarcely more than his immediate family. But, in 2015, that letter is put on display in Ottawa, within view of the parliament buildings and the war memorial, becoming a nationalist symbol for current efforts in Great War commemoration. In contrast, telegraph communication is valuable insofar as its information remains relevant to a particular moment. Light speed communication like the telegraph makes possible (and thus demands) the exchange of information that emerges and disintegrates quickly. The technological processes of the type of media, physical delivery versus instantaneous transmission, define the temporal duration of a message's value.

Thus, years after the last letter was written between Berliner and Duff in 1975, these letters seem to gain significance for Webb, first in her 1977 article, "A Correspondence," and later materializing in her 1980 book *Wilson's Bowl*. The meaning

of the letters accumulates as time goes on, grounding and, it could be said, redeeming her failed text "The Kropotkin Poems" in *Wilson's Bowl*. My focus on this seemingly excursive correspondence may also be demonstrative of the letter's ability to gather meaning over time.

The consequences of the form of the letter, the delayed response, the persistence of meaning, the nonphysical and non-aural encounter, all come together to allow the letter to take on the properties of literature. Webb notes that Berliner "used to say that her letters to Wilson were automatic writing, or that she was sleepwalking on the typewriter keys" and that Berliner's "replies were often provocatively non-linear, associative and dream-like, but I am sure Wilson detected the inner logic and enjoyed the casual, absurdist, at times abandoned approach" (*Talking* 136–37). Webb is taken up by Berliner's style, which, for Webb, mimics experimental modernist literature, possibly seeing in Berliner something of Webb's hidden fascination with Hilda Doolittle. The bulk of their correspondence revolved around making a structural analysis of Haida myths, uncovering their inner logic as a kind of mystical-academic practice. As their discussion drew on, the form of Berliner's interrogations began to mirror the content of their analyses, so that her language, too, took on paradoxes, non-linearity, and structural complementarities. In the letter, Berliner is able to try on and perform linguistic and literary masks. And Duff's correspondence slides even more naturally into literature: "But in 1974 he began to send poems, his own and those of a young Indian woman from the Tlingit region, and his letters, as such, decreased" (131). Webb's inclusion of the short phrase "as such" leaves open the possibility of reading the poems he sent to Berliner as

letters of a different sort, or as natural extensions of the gradual shift in their style closer and closer to the source material of the myths themselves.

What kind of encounter do Berliner and Duff, or any other personal correspondents, find within the letter? In Levinas's terms, do Berliner and Duff discover in the Other an inscrutable, unknowable face? The shifts in their style between a more typical communicative prose register and a high literary mode reveal that the linguistic "faces" that each of them wear can change. In one sense, these morphing linguistic appearances are similar to Timerman's "game" in "Prison Report," concealing and renewing partial visions of the face. As in Timerman's game, there is something thrilling and dangerous in the repeated revelations of mixed up, unclear faces. These linguistic faces, though, do not seem totally unknowable to Berliner and Duff, despite the fact that they never actually met face to face, as it were. The ways in which the letter persists outside of time, in a kind of eternal present of the writing, recalls Stephen Collis's conception of Webb's intertextual poetry as a "writing-with." The letter repudiates both the temporal delay between it being written and it being received as well as the geographic distance between writer and reader, and this fact is endemic to the medium rather than being a by-product or coincidence. Since time and distance are both collapsed in the letter, the two correspondents engage in a much more immanent form of "writing-with" than what Collis has in mind with intertextual literature. The eternal present of the reading and the writing is subject only to the linearity of prose-time, of, in other words, the fact that one letter responds to another, and is followed by a third letter, and so on. This eternal present as well as the resemblances between the letter and literature demonstrate that the letter does not mimic physical speech-acts in the way that, say,

telephones or instant messages do. Thus, I think it is not simply idealism (or, techno-idealism and perhaps futurism) to claim that the letter collapses geographic and temporal distance in order for the correspondents to encounter each other in a familiar "writing-with" rather than in the inscrutable otherness of the face, even as it plays a game of encounter. If we can read the modality of the letter, it might not be inappropriate to characterize the message in the medium as, like Timerman's game, saying, "I am with you" ("Prison Report" l. 32).

The collapse of temporal and geographic distances here seems to be a productive feature of the ethical encounter in the letter. However, wartime, looming over "The Kropotkin Poems" and *Wilson's Bowl*, also features a collapse of both time and distance. In *War at a Distance: Romanticism and the Making of Modern Wartime*, Mary A. Favret analyzes the long history of poetic responses to wartime from the Romantics to contemporaneity. She identifies a number of affects particular to modern wartime, including the threat of physical and existential violence, a sense of a never-ending wartime, the fears of a war in such excess that it nullifies or obliterates history, and she shows how these affects rear their heads in the most unexpected places. Favret begins her project by taking us to one of these unexpected places, the hearth, long thought to be a place of safety, warmth, and meditation. She discovers hearth poems by writers as distant as Samuel Taylor Coleridge and C.K. Williams who find in the hearth, surprisingly, not the comfort of home but their fears of ever-expanding war: "something from the superstitious, premodern past survives to call forth an unsure future. Home and hearth are invaded by strange worlds and other times and the poet is pressed to prophecy" (Favret 4). Favret's study analyzes how established personal spaces—the homefront, the

breakfast table, the hearth—are nevertheless invaded by distant wars fought over seas and on other continents.

Wilson's Bowl has a hearth poem of its own in its opening section, "Poems of Failure," which serves as the collection's "preface," or entry point:

> Away from everything, alone with a road
> map of Salt Spring Island
> I drive spitting dust with a map
> of the U.S.S.R. in my head. Too big
> for my head. Too big to remember how many
> independent republics, airline routes, rivers,
> mountain ranges, lakes, and all named places.
> I speed on covering the highspots up to the
> north end back to my southeast Beaver Point.
> Back home in front of the fireplace I wonder
> Russia, Suicide, or France? I am aware.
> Darkness pulls over the islands.
> Russia, Suicide, or France. Islands, places
> on a map. Nowhere. ("v.")

The poem pits three places of the personal, the speaker's "head," her car interior, and her "fireplace" toward which she drives, or is driven, against both the obliterating affect (uncountable dread) of the distant cold war and her grief over the deaths of her friends, Berliner and Duff. The documentary (the categorical map of "named places" in the USSR and the other map of Salt Spring Island) invades the poem only as a nullifying influence:

its static, pervasive, and demanding facts, names, and locations fill up and spill out of the speaker's head, which closes off her potential for a more sensitive thinking and poetics.

"Beaver point" sticks up like a beacon amid all the "named places": it seems to be a safe place, a home place. However, on Salt Spring Island, it is off the coast of North America, gesturing toward mainland Asia and the USSR. Furthermore, her brief moment of respite "in front of the fireplace" is invaded by multiple symbols of grief, longing, and death. The first symbol, "Russia," is the site of international conflict with Western superpowers (the very structures of orientation, East vs. West, and influence, super vs. average state power, with which we speak about that conflict erases the disempowered, the in between). Russia also points to the late anarchist hero Peter Kropotkin. The second symbol, "Suicide," recalls the series of deaths that drew Webb together with Lilo Berliner and Wilson Duff in the first place, though it also brings up the possibility of her own suicide (a literal manifestation of nullification). Finally, "France" becomes a final possible destination of escape. Names become unnamed, places misplaced, as griefs both personal and public invade and shuck open the speaker's inner, enclosed world, and leave her both poetically and psychically "Nowhere."

However, I read the state of being "Nowhere," or, the state of being stateless, not as (or only as) a static defeat, or a place where the speaker's ability to choose ("Russia, Suicide, or France?") is stagnated. Rather, being stateless and existing between nations (and ontological states—suicide or somewhere else) permits the speaker to exist outside of a narrowly confined psychic and subjective space: she is neither simply a *national* body (a Canadian on a defined Canadian island) nor an ontologically *certain* body (since she teeters between life and death). Thus, she expands out of the hearth and beyond a

global politics that makes violence primary and quashes alternative ideological modes, namely, the statelessness inherent in Kropotkin's anarchy.

In "Crimes," the middle section of *Wilson's Bowl,* the blows to justice that Kropotkin's imprisonments and exiles represent repeat themselves symbolically in the Second World War. However, instead of the body of Kropotkin standing in for the ideal of anarchism, the "Crimes" in the Second World War do damage to the concept of the body itself. The poem "Treblinka Gas Chamber" depicts a Holocaust concentration camp scene based on Joseph Hyams's historical novel *A Field of Buttercups* (1968). In the novel, the Stars of David, snipped from the children's clothes, look like buttercups on the ground. In the poem, the industrial method of killing robs the victims even of their individual deaths. It reads:

the prisoners

the children

falling

in heaps

on one another

they go down (ll. 7-12)

Wilson's Bowl insists that the body generates meaning, and the falling bodies in "Treblinka Gas Chamber" demonstrate this point. The poem moves from the inarticulate bodies to the breakdown of articulate poetic language itself: the lines fall down the page like bodies as the "metaphor" crumbles. It ends:

David’s

‘a field of

buttercups’

a metaphor

where all that’s

left lies down (ll. 21-26)

The poem here attempts to put to rest, or, make “lie down,” all meanings aside from the poem’s framing trope, the Stars of David. However, the poem botches even the trope itself. It reads: “David’s / ‘a field of buttercups,’” yet, they are actually Stars of David, and it should read, Joseph Hyams’ “a field of buttercups.” So, even the basic unit of poetic meaning, the metaphor, is disrupted.

“Treblinka Gas Chamber” is one of two explicitly war-themed poems in *Wilson’s Bowl*. The other is a sound poem called “Still There Are Wars and Crimes of War.” This poem is meant to be chanted, and it features interweaving repetitions: “war crimes war crimes war cries cries war” (l. 1). The poem picks up on an ambiguity in the phrase “war cry,” which could be a rallying cry, or, as it is used here, a lament. These two war poems are also the most linguistically and structurally disjointed in the whole collection. Stephen Collis, Pauline Butling, and other critics contend that the personal and the individual are in flux in Webb’s poetry, though her lyrics maintain an intimate speaking voice even in crisis. These poems not only differ from Webb’s established poetic styles, but they also register a collective speaking voice as opposed to the “I-in-crisis” found in the rest of *Wilson’s Bowl* and Webb’s other poetry. “Treblinka Gas Chamber” is something akin to a

found poem based on a biofictional text, which is a genre that already tells a hybrid story. "Still There Are Wars" is meant to be chanted, and thus emulates the multivocal choral line found in Greek theatre. These two poems are surely laments for the dead, and politically engaged insofar as any call to mourn the war dead has some commentary on war itself, whether that be a call-to-arms or a call to peace. Yet these two poems are striking in *Wilson's Bowl* because they are so depersonalized and the speaker is so vacant. If we recall Collis's argument that Webb needs to be primarily understood as an anarchist poet, we typically find her anarchism in her radical interrogations of selfhood and not through the adoption of a public (or choral) voice. So, the experimental chanting of "Still There Are Wars" sticks out as a direction not often explored by Webb, remarkable both for the bluntness of its articulation (total grammatical breakdown) as well as the bluntness of its politics. Perhaps the overloading or deadening effect of wartime (Favret 10) can only be expressed with an equally dead aesthetic or linguistic construction. The beautiful tragedy entailed by the personal death of a friend like Berliner is, the collection seems to say, decidedly not the emotional register upon which war horrors take place.

In Paul Fussel's *Wartime: Understanding and Behaviour in the Second World War* (1989), he distinguishes the two "World Wars" by claiming that the Great War killed the meaning of Heroism, while the Second World War killed meaning itself; Fussel calls this destruction of meaning "The Ideological Vacuum" (129-30). At first glance, *Wilson's Bowl* seems to follow the same structure: it begins with the Russian Revolutions and the hubris to take on the theme of Power writ-large in the twentieth century. However, as the book moves through the Second World War, the text's discovery of absolute power over even ways of dying challenges that hubris, and it "fails" to live up to its grand posturing.

We are left in 1976 with the collection's failure to comprehend and contextualize Webb's friend's suicide. Of course, *Wilson's Bowl* insists that the failure of comprehension is the only adequate way of mourning such an intimate loss.

At the same time, this gesturing to the Second World War as an allegory for the horrors of war in general does not take place in a political vacuum. During the Vietnam War in the previous decades, anti-War and anti-American State sentiments developed. In Canada at least, these anti-War sentiments attached themselves to the more general Canadian nationalist impulse that feared American cultural domination over Canadian art, literature and media. For Canadian nationalists, America's cultural imperialism and the American State's policy of military imperialism in South East Asia looked like a single threat. Therefore, as Robert Lecker notes in *Keepers of the Code*, to the Canadian anthology makers at the time, "There was a sense in which putting Canada on the map was an act of political resistance" (218). Lecker picks up on the military rhetoric of this brand of cultural nationalism, noting that they felt "the very act of anthologizing Canadian literature is a form of defending the country" (238). Thus, for these young, highly political Canadian academics, the texture of their nationalism was one that mixed a certain kind of anti-State resistance politics, that is, anti-American State, with a militarized language of defence. Alan Knight, writing before Lecker, agrees that Canadian post-WWII canon-making has been forged in military rhetoric. In Knight's introduction to the proceedings of the Long-Liner's conference, cleverly titled "Taking the Balls Out of the Can(n)on," which is both the single "n" literary canon as well as the double "n" ballistic weapon, he argues that both the literary canon-makers and the cannonball-makers, the military, police the boundaries of the canon or the State ostensibly

to maintain a sensible order. It is highly ironic, then, that these politically resistant academics and artists would rally around an anti-American-Military agenda while they reproduce its symbols and structures in their attempt to forge new Canadian national identities through the literary canon.

Webb herself was one of these young, politically engaged (and perhaps reluctant) canon-makers, as the next chapter of this thesis develops in more detail. In the late ’60s and ‘70s she hosted and organized interviews and readings of a number of Canadian poets on various CBC Radio and Television programs. For instance, the long-running CBC Radio program *Ideas*, which she co-created with William A. Young, featured Earle Birney in one of its very first airings, and Webb also interviewed Leonard Cohen in a stretch of broadcasts on Canadian novelists hosted by Timothy Findley. she interviewed a number of established and growing poets, including F.R. Scott, Raymond Souster, and Irving Layton, on. In 1967 she hosted a television program called *Extension* (also known by the series title, *Modern Canadian Poetry*), where she interviewed over twenty poets, some, like F.R. Scott and Irving Layton, from the incumbent generation of established heavy-hitters, and others, like bpNichol and Michael Ondaatje, who represented the new, emerging generation of poets like herself. This program aimed to inform the public about the landscape of poets that emerged in the new postwar era of Canadian literature and to connect this living history with the new transformations in Canadian poetry in 1967 (McLeod 75). Interestingly, as Katherine McLeod points out, the nationalism of the program is embedded in its very financial and institutional structure: *Extension* was funded only as a part of the CBC’s Centennial efforts, and was discontinued thereafter (89–91). Even Webb herself was featured more than once on Robert Weaver’s

conspicuously titled program *Anthology*, which shows her dual role as both a producer of and participant in the developing postwar literary scene. Although Webb and the other poets and organizers involved in these various radio and television broadcasts may have had their own personal misgivings toward nationalism, the programs nevertheless had the simultaneous effect of establishing for the listeners the sense of a shared national literary identity. Even when local literary scenes were expounded on, such as Montreal and Vancouver, the shows still produced an atomized simultaneity of local literatures within the larger group of "Canadian literature."

These two poems, "Treblinka Gas Chamber" and "Still There Are Wars and Crimes of War," read differently in *Wilson's Bowl* in light of this historical context. They may seem to be critical commentaries on the destructive powers of the State and a call to mourn those who were erased by war. However, they also participate in fairly widespread nationalist impulses. As I mentioned, these two poems disrupt *Wilson's Bowl*. Part of the disruption is formal, in that the structures and voices of these two poems are distinct from the rest of the collection. And here the disruption proves also to be thematic. Webb's original plan for "The Kropotkin Poems," which was to explore the powers of the State and radical politics, collapses at the moment of these two poems, where anti-War politics also show themselves to reinforce Canadian nationalism.

Nationalism presents a very real problem for Webb. Collis argues that Webb's poetry operates under concrete, radical anarchist politics, and in several interviews Webb notes that this is true in her working life as well. In 1949 she was involved with F.R. Scott and the provincial branch of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, for which she ran unsuccessfully as a candidate. She later left the party when she thought that their

political ideals were sacrificed due to compromise and infighting. However, she continued throughout her life to be involved in local activism and, as mentioned previously, Amnesty International. It is somewhat bizarre, then, for a radical anarchist, whose intellectual and poetic roots lie abroad as much as at home, to participate in the postwar nation building of the new canon-makers, especially when "The Kropotkin Poems" began as interrogations of possible cosmopolitan or transnational identities. The next chapter explores in more detail the paradox of anti-national nationalism in Webb's radio work with the CBC, ultimately finding that public radio is marred by the unresolvable contradictions of settler-colonialism in Canada.

I read this tension found in "Treblinka Gas Chamber" and "Still There Are Wars" alongside another tension in *Wilson's Bowl*, this one feminist instead of nationalist. The previous section of *Wilson's Bowl* titled "Portraits" explores the roots of Webb's personal intellectual and literary canon, with portraits including Socrates, her father, and Ezra Pound, with the portrait of Margaret Atwood being the only one of a woman. In the Foreword to *Wilson's Bowl*, Webb says these portraits "signify the domination of a male power culture in my educational and emotional formation so overpowering that I have, up to now, been denied access to inspiration from the female figures of my intellectual life, my heart, my imagination." She goes on to say that Atwood, whom the speaker addresses as "Peggy" in the poem, appears only because she was explicitly asked to write about women.

Webb's relationship to a literary tradition overshadowed by male writers is more complicated than a lack of women writer's inclusion in the canon. For example, in her 1962 volume of poetry, she explicitly credits the title, *The Sea Is Also a Garden*, to a

quotation from William Carlos Williams. Beneath this explicit intertextual reference lies an even deeper and unacknowledged influence. This time the reference is to the female modernist H. D. and her volume *Sea Garden*. Webb's text, *The Sea Is Also a Garden*, bears a much stronger formal and thematic affinity to H. D.'s book than to Williams's, and yet, in the logic of hidden, hesitant feminine spheres that appears again in *Wilson's Bowl*, it is Williams whose influence is credited in the opening pages, and H. D.'s which is silent.

Both of these tensions, the nationalist and the feminist, go unresolved in *Wilson's Bowl*. The collection, then, can be considered a process text, and not only within specific poems, some of which perform their hesitancies and revisions. The organization of the poems itself shows process. The Foreword tells us that Webb was aware of the problem that the male portraits pose to her burgeoning feminist awareness, and yet they, like the war poems, persist as they are, with their contradictions, and in the midst of this crucial turning point in *Wilson's Bowl*, where the original text, "The Kropotkin Poems," collapses into the personal lament for her friend. As the speaker wonders in "Letters to Margaret Atwood," "If you can tolerate both ideas at once, then, like me, you eat meat and, as knife and fork are raised in benediction, amazed eyes at the slaughterhouse follow you, and you taste a quick stun on a shining place" (38).

Wilson's Bowl asks us to tolerate both ideas at once, such as the idea to interrogate war and power or gender and power in the twentieth century, and to let that interrogation persist in the poetry through its own deconstruction. The collection's logic, where the political is personal and the personal is political, asks us to consider intimate grief—and the intimate address of the letter—not as a solipsistic turning inward and away from

global politics. The way that the letter mediates conversation—slowing time, collapsing distance, breaking down social proprieties—makes it possible for a fragile voice and a delicate sense of care to stretch out over vast distances without being lost in the signal noise. Moreover, the letter's mediation may allow one to recapture Levinas's sense of the encounter with the Other even in far-away places and in distant times; the visual perception of the face simply becomes reconstituted by the mediated perception of the letter.

The letter, though, is far from the only media technology that allows the projection of a seemingly personal voice across large distances. The following chapter considers the various registers of radio, from the commanding public address of the Prime Minister to the educating voice of radio intellectualism to the commercial day-time soap opera. In radio's many quasi-conversational dialects, however, my analysis discovers not the extension of intimate care found in the letter but the organization of listeners into nationalist and anti-nationalist publics which are ultimately instantiations of colonial life on the land—and in the airwaves—that make up Canada.

For the time being, Levinas's phenomenology of the face adequately allows us to think through the many perceptions that are endemic to different media technologies. The underlying structure of that phenomenology—our encounter with alterity through the structures of our senses—will continue to inform the next two chapters' readings of radio, photography, and historical narratives. The final chapter finds in Marlatt's *Taken* a similar forging of intimate desires and griefs stretched out across the globe as *Wilson's Bowl* and Berliner and Duff's letters suggest. However, *Taken* also maps this intimacy across the body itself in its articulation of women's queer desire, which demands an apprehension of

feminist materialism—an apprehension that Levinas's traditional phenomenology cannot account for. Thus, in order to fully understand the stretching of intimate affects across global distances, this dissertation eventually looks to a new feminist phenomenology that integrates Levinas's essential otherness with the attention to bodily and perceptual difference in feminist materialism.

Wilson's Bowl asks us to keep so many ideas in our heads: the celebration and mourning of Kropotkin, the countless violences of the Holocaust, Berliner and Duff's long-distance friendship, their fateful suicides, Webb's existential anxieties, and her anarchist dreams for the future. All of these ideas seem, as the poet says, "Too big / for my head" ("V." ll. 4–5), but the collection asks if in the excess of violence and mourning we can drive our senses of intimate care out beyond the edges of our personal "Islands, places on a map" (ll. 13–14) to the unstable cartographies of global trauma. Deeply skeptical of whose deaths are seen, whose are hidden, and whose are subsumed into nationalist identities, *Wilson's Bowl* finally insists that no mourning is neutral.[6]

[6] See Dionne Brand's *No Language Is Neutral* (1990) for an intensified take on the anti-colonial potentials of queer poetry.

Chapter 2: Radio in the Dark: Phyllis Webb's Late Work and the CBC

In 1964, Phyllis Webb, along with William A. Young, helped to combine two adult education programs on CBC Radio, *University of the Air* and *The Learning Stage*, in order to form *The Best Ideas You'll Hear Tonight*, which later came to be known simply as *Ideas* (Butling, "Phyllis Webb as Public Intellectual" 237–38). The origins of *Ideas* as well as Webb's own authored broadcasts, many of which are transcribed in *Talking*, harbour competing impulses: an imagined public duty for continuing education, a responsibility toward high modernist aesthetics and intellectualism, and the obligations of a national broadcasting corporation. Pauline Butling, Peggy Lynn Kelly, and Jody Berland have shown the ambivalent and contradictory nature of public broadcasting in the postwar period, and this chapter aims to explore how these contradictions also connect to wider concerns with the concept of Canadian literature as a national, and potentially violent, discourse. This chapter's analysis of the creation and consolidation of public radio broadcasting in Canada demonstrates the ways in which the history of settler-colonialism remains embedded in the technological structures of public radio.

Part of the contradictions in the *Ideas* programming and Webb's own broadcasts lay in the collaborative nature of radio, including all of the following: the CBC's mandate, the ideologies of the producers, and the political positions of the writers themselves. In analyzing radio broadcasts, Paddy Scannell reminds us to pay careful attention to what she calls "the moment of policy" (6). He considers "the moment of policy" to be "the juncture when institutional motives are considered: Will it make money, will it do us good, and will we run into trouble if we do this" (6). However, he claims that although these policy reasons explain why "programs do or do not get made,"

ultimately analyses of broadcasts limited to policy "do not constitute the meaningfulness of programs" (6–7). Thus, in radio we have two spheres of critical inquiry, which do not necessarily intersect. The first sphere analyzes the broadcast as a literary text, but the "meaningfulness" of the program extends beyond the verbal script and into the consequences of radio as a media technology. The second sphere, however, forces us to confront competing notions, in both popular and intellectual circles of discourse, about the relevance and responsibilities of public media.

Many of Webb's authored broadcasts through the 1970s are reproduced in the aptly named *Talking* from 1982, which anthologized her prose pieces in order to show Webb's more conversational side in contrast to her volumes of poetry. As previously mentioned, Webb says in the Foreword to *Talking*, "when I was putting these radio talks and essays together I realized just how much talking I have done in my life. In fact, I have for the most part earned my living by talking" (7). In a sense, Webb expresses that *Talking* revealed to her how un-solipsistic the majority of her work has been. She expands on the contradictory tension further by saying, "As a poet I find writing prose a very different and much more difficult process—forced labour compared with the labour of love that is the poem" (8). The supposedly reclusive poet Webb here admits both that the bulk of her "earned living" has been made through prose and that prose represents for her a kind of alien, "forced" medium, admissions that she herself seemed not to recognize before she was made to confront them in *Talking*.

Webb as a public rather than solipsistic writer seems to agree with Stephen Collis's previously mentioned project in *Phyllis Webb and the Common Good* which begins with "bracket[ing] out" the "cartoon biographical version of Webb" as a "reclusive

artist," a "distraught, borderline suicidal Sapphic woman poet," or a "lonely Canadian in the wilderness" in favour of a more holistic view of Webb as a "public and engaged" poet who has from the beginning been invested in what Collis calls the "common good" (7). Collis argues that the emphasis on Webb as a silent, solipsistic artist is simply a misapprehension of the anarchist and collectivist implications of the poetic ego—an ego especially characterized by its own disintegration or instability. Thus, his book demonstrates a kind of transformative paradox in the poetic ego, both gesturing toward an Other and collapsing in on itself, which forms the basis of her social and political engagement, and he convincingly argues that Webb scholars need to correct the record on her solipsism. However, Webb's comments on her own surprise at realizing just how much "talking" she has done in her career suggest that perhaps the confusion between her outward engagement and inward exploration is actually a feature of her reserved way of talking, poetically and otherwise. That is to say that the correction of the "record" must continue to be dramatized when we engage with her prose and her politics—that we must continue to balk at and be surprised by the extent of her public engagement. This point seems only more conspicuous when we consider that biographical and scholarly accounts of Webb's life that seek to establish and, in a sense, mythologize her as an understated pioneer of Canadian intellectual life all begin by recounting her collaboration on the still-surviving program *Ideas*, while Webb herself claims that during this period where she served as executive producer of *Ideas* she "stopped talking—on air, for a time, at least" (*Talking* 7). So, what is treated as the pinnacle of Webb's contribution to the public and popular life of Canadian culture is characterized also by a unique period of her own silence, both her most public—and most quiet—time.

Perhaps, then, we can conceive of her radio voice not as a repudiation of her quietness but within this matrix of contradiction—the ever-present voice that seems, bizarrely, unremarked or inaudible, a kind of background noise in the arena of Canadian public intellectualism. We need, first, to read the "meaningfulness" of her radio broadcasts as Scannell suggests, not simply as scripts or as the manifestation of institutional desires, but as an ontological being, the consequences of radio as a media technology. In some sense, then, *Talking* as a volume is not fully up to the task, since the translation from sound waves to print, from ear to eye, occludes the contingencies unique to broadcast radio. Webb first nearly apologizes for the inconsistencies of the volume, conceding that the scripts are constrained by the demands of the genre and the expectations for public radio: "One avoids the passive voice; one avoids 'one.' *I* speak to *you*. Very simple. Very direct. I may jest, I may be ironic, I may be bawdy but not obscene, daring only within limits. I should not preach, but I may teach" (7). She seems to suggest that the "voice" of the broadcast almost takes on a life of its own, that radio itself generates a "personality": "because another of the arts of radio is the projection of personality, my own voice may at times be more brash or judgmental or less subtle than it might be if I were writing for print. Not only must the broadcaster not bore, she must do a bit of entertaining" (8). Webb's characterization of the radio personality seems marked both by cultural demands toward public intellectual discourse and by Scannell's "moment of policy." On the first hand, the "must" that the broadcaster is subjected to seems to be the expectations of the radio audience, to be entertained even as they are enlightened (but never *instructed*). The broadcaster must, as the word itself implies, cast her voice for a broad audience, at once "brash," that is, digestible and amusing, but not proselytizing.

She must be "judgmental" without, finally, making conclusive judgements. On the other hand, the obligations that Webb expresses also indicate the institutional desires contained within the "moment of policy" that led to the airing of intellectual programs like *Ideas* or *Critics on Air*. The radio personality, then, also carries the voice of the institutional executives and their ideas about what responsibilities radio has to their conception of the public good, and, of course, how programs may remain popular to listening audiences.

Radio's status as a servant for the "public good" extends back to some of its earliest constitutions in the English-speaking world. In an article from 1946, the American Robert J. Landry argued that more people who seriously critique radio are needed, and especially those that actually love the craft and are not simply snobs. Landry goes so far as to claim that not only radio but also *radio criticism* is necessary to the public good: "It is criticism of the living broadcast that is the great social need as I see it" ("The Improbability of Radio Criticism" 70). His language here of the "living broadcast" seems to foreshadow Scannell's conception of the "meaningfulness" of the radio broadcast extending beyond the mere script behind the program. Landry, then, connects serious analysis of the broadcast, the so-called "meaningfulness of programs," with his idea of "social need," or the public good, via the "living broadcast." This is to say that some of the very features that distinguish the "living broadcast" from the written script hinge on how the broadcast relates to the public in ways that written text cannot. In an earlier piece titled "Wanted: Radio Critics," Landry further expresses that this relationship between the broadcast and the public must be carefully guarded: "the radio channels are so important to democracy that as a nation we would be much better off to have, rather than not have, a widespread corps of professional radio watchmen" (n.p.).

The function of the critic, then, is both as a guardian of social morality and as a type of police, staving off the ostensible enemies of American democracy (including fascism, communism, and anarchy).[7] For Landry and other critics, broadcasters, and public intellectuals in the 1940s and after, it is almost as if radio grants and preserves Western democracy by virtue of its very existence, provided, of course, that the programs themselves are not suspect.

In "The Revolt Against Radio" Victor Pickard outlines a few ways in which American radio in the postwar period in particular was seen to have failed the high ideals that radio seemed to offer. Pickard suggests that the main culprits of the so-called degradation of American radio were the corporatization and commercialization of the radio waves, a problem that the national broadcasting strategies in Canada and Britain sought to prevent, though American radio waves certainly made their way north to Canadian receivers. Pickard recounts a 1947 scathing attack on American radio by Lee de Forest, one of the early pioneers of radio: "What have you gentlemen done with my child? He was conceived as a potent instrumentality for culture, fine music, the uplifting of America's mass intelligence. You have debased the child . . . the curse of your commercials has grown consistently more cursed, year by year" (38). Lee de Forest seems to conceive of radio as a kind of gentrifying technology, to "uplift" the "mass intelligence" of the American nation. His insistence upon "culture" and "fine music"

[7] In A.J.M. Smith's pertinent essay, "Wanted—Canadian Criticism" (1928), he too casts the critic as a military figure responsible for the public good—a figure that Canadian intellectual life sorely lacks. First, he quips that "Without a body of critical opinion to hearten and direct them canadian [sic] writers are like a leaderless army" (601). Later, he says, "But the work must be done. The critic-militant is required for this, not a very engaging fellow, perhaps, but a hard worker, a crusader, and useful withal" (601).

suggests that the powers of radio for democracy depend on its capacity to facilitate social mobility in the mind of the average American. Ironically, it is that very "average" American, now subsumed into the "masses," that denigrates radio's potential when it demands low-cultural, easily digestible programs, such as daytime dramas. The origin of the term "soap opera," indicating a daytime drama sponsored by a soap company that relentlessly and intrusively advertises its products in the midst of the program, demonstrates too the gendered ideas of proper radio content. The disdain for the frivolity of the soap opera is doubled for the fact that it not only stages radio content primarily around the commercial sale of material products but also largely targets women who work in the home, providing, in the critics' eyes, not much more than a simple distraction from daily chores. Landry's conception, then, of the critic as "watchman" takes on a further dimension if we consider its practical relationship to discourses surrounding the gendered division of wartime participation, between the brutal and honourable world of male soldiers and the fragile world of women on the homefront. The "watchman" critic, then, is charged with defending the masses, formed primarily by the undereducated and women in the domestic sphere, from themselves and their own corrupt desires for materialism and frivolous distraction. However, this problem seemed somewhat unique to American radio, since Pickard points out that the most widespread broadcasting corporations in the United States were dominated by private advertising in comparison to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), whose public-radio structure was imitated by the CBC (44). The CBC in the postwar period, then, could be considered part of the vanguard that warded off the threats to democracy and the public good that American commercial radio began to typify.

As critics of the CBC have argued, the question of gender in relation to postwar radio is not collapsible simply to wider sexist labour practices in Canada, the United States, or Britain in the mid- to latter-twentieth century. In Peggy Lynn Kelly's study, "Dorothy Livesay and CBC Radio," she does point out that part of Livesay's struggles with the CBC are connected to the fact that, "Like all federal government institutions in the first half of the twentieth century, the CBC adopted discriminatory employment practices," recalling that, "From 1921, married Canadian women were not permitted to work full-time in Canadian government institutions" (220). Although this mandate was abandoned federally in 1955, but not in the CBC until 1961, soft forms of discriminatory hiring practices persisted. However, Kelly also demonstrates how gender discrimination was written into the very programming of the CBC itself. For instance, a late 1940s program entitled *A Life of My Own* was ostensibly created "to show postwar women how to make time for personal development," but this purpose "is contradicted by gender role assumptions" within the program (220). While the program seemed to encourage women, conceptualized as homemakers, to find time to pursue personal, creative, and spiritual enrichment, that "time" was always considered in relation to the primary responsibility of domestic upkeep. Kelly articulates this contradiction as the ability of the program "to interpellate women into the entrenchment of patriarchal social structures" (221) and adds that this is also a "question of class: patronization of the uneducated housewife by the professional woman" (232). What this program reveals is not so much the actual landscape of radio listeners as the imagined public-in-crisis. That is, the CBC executives in their "moment of policy" are not only considering *who* makes up their listening audience, but, of the audience, *who is in need of* the so-called uplifting powers of radio. In

the example that Kelly describes, the CBC again acts as a kind of vanguard, at once both attacking and defending the imagined undereducated, lower-class women who make up their listening public. In this practical sense, questions of gender necessarily inflect our reading of the "meaningfulness of programs" at least insofar as part of that meaningfulness is constituted by a real or imagined listening audience, and how corporate ideas regarding the duties of public broadcasting revolve around the wartime notion of domesticity and protection.

In part, the programming choices of the CBC relied on this unresolvable ambiguity between the threat and the groups in need of protection from that threat. In turn, this ambiguity stems from the connection between the concept of the "masses" and national identity: are the "masses" simply a sum of "average Canadians," or does the "average Canadian" itself need to be refined by careful education from the conglomerate of the "masses?" And, radio's "mass" audience seemed to be a unique opportunity for national education on a broad scale, but anxieties over mass culture, consumerism, and the "mass" appeal of lowbrow entertainment continued to dictate how CBC programs interacted with its large listening audience. The "threat," then, that public radio must ward against seems to be both external and internal, guarding the *group* of Canadians against the *mass*. Therefore, we need to ask how radio constructs or conceptualizes national identity in contrast to the "masses."

In Jason Loviglio's book *Radio's Intimate Public*, he outlines how Franklin Roosevelt used a series of broadcasts they called "Fireside Chats" for speaking, ostensibly, "directly" into the homes and living rooms of Americans in the 1930s and 1940s. Loviglio argues that the Fireside Chats combined mass address in an intimate

forum in order to draw a kind of tightly knit community of "Americans" around Roosevelt's political motives, especially in regard to the New Deal. The Fireside Chats seemed to provide new avenues for citizens to engage politically and socially in the United States: "Representing the public was the kind of cultural work that changed one's status, conferring on even 'humble citizens' the new social mobility made available by speaking in the intimate public arena opened up by the Fireside Chats" (24). The conversational tone and the weight of the issues in the Fireside Chats offered a counterpoint to the commercialism that would continue to expand in American radio in the following decades, and these Chats seem much closer to the kinds of programming that the CBC was interested in, especially in the 1950s and 1960s. The Fireside Chats, curiously enough, seemed to represent a dovetailing of public and commercial interests: while they aimed to create and uplift an American listening public regardless of profits (not unlike the CBC's intentions), they were so widely popular that they were broadcast across the major commercial networks. At the onset of the Fireside Chats, Americans responded to the construction of radio programming as a device of social mobility, imagining at once, impossibly, that they uniquely had been lifted by the Fireside Chats and simultaneously that they were taking part in a much grander experience of political consciousness and American unity than their own. Loviglio argues, though, that Roosevelt's Fireside Chats were careful to demarcate the lines between his intimate, but not small, community of politically enlightened listeners, and the "masses" of uncouth, threatening others:

> Many of these listeners picked up on Roosevelt's rhetoric, extolling national unity while pitting 'true Americans' against the selfish, the corrupt, the inarticulate, the

> hysterical, and the foreign . . . it appears that listeners have learned well from Roosevelt's contradictory rhetoric: appeals to national unity became the occasion for a reimposition of distinctions and hierarchies policing the boundaries of the national public. (24)

The Fireside Chats, and the various responses from its attentive listeners,[8] provide an explicit articulation of the politics that underpin the intellectual broadcasts of the CBC, the kind that Webb wrote and produced. The rhetoric of the Fireside Chats demonstrates clearly the separation of groups into national communities on the one hand, those committed to the public good, and part of (or on their way toward becoming) the social and intellectual elite, and the masses on the other, who are selfish, uneducated, and foreign. What is so key, though, in the difference between the intimate presidential addresses and CBC's critical or educational programming is that, for the Fireside Chats, the listeners constitute a national community in opposition to an external "mass." In the case of the CBC broadcasts, the struggle between the good Canadian and the masses occurs within the landscape of the individual listener. They are at once invited into the Canadian community even as they are purged of (and, in the case of programs like *A Life of My Own*, ultimately reconstituted by) the very qualities that make up the masses.

The "threat" that the vanguard programming protects against is purportedly external, directed toward those others who are a part of the masses, uneducated, anti-Canadian, foreign, or lowbrow. However, the executives' ideas that the broadcasts will

[8] For instance, Loviglio recalls a letter that praised Roosevelt for raising the seemingly uncouth common-man into the folds of national unity: "You talked to *them*—not over their heads—in direct simple words. A change came over them—a feeling of confidence, of hope, *we* all belonged, if you know what I mean" (22).

uplift or educate the listeners reveal the dimension of the threat that is internal to the audience. Peggy Lynne Kelly demonstrates the extent to which CBC program executives, as well as contributors like Dorothy Livesay, recognized the opportunity for public radio to generate and construct a Canadian national community, especially through cultural programming that focused on Canadian literature: "Literature has always been seen by nationalists as central to the development of a national identity, and the rise of CBC Radio in the first half of the twentieth century was understood to be a means to that end" (228). Kelly also describes how Livesay and other CBC executives in the early days of public radio paved the way for Webb and the self-consciously literary broadcasts of the later twentieth century. In Loviglio's terms, however, we can read the interpellation of the CBC's cultural programming not simply as a utopian call for the celebration of Canadian culture, literature, and identity, but also as a means of forming a national identity through differentiation, that is, the ones who can identify with and appreciate Canadian highbrow culture and those who cannot. This is not even to speak of the stranglehold of the Anglo-British tradition on what was considered "Canadian literature" by CBC executives and officers, but Kelly likewise details how Canadian regionalism *even within* the Anglo-British tradition was suppressed by systemic institutional forces: "the CBC was centralized in Toronto in 1939, as a wartime cost-cutting measure, and all CBC Radio stations had to wait for approval from headquarters before producing or broadcasting a show locally or regionally" (223). The result was that programs and writers with significant local appeal would not see airtime if the central offices in Toronto failed to recognize the regional importance of the work. Kelly outlines Livesay's struggle to have her long poem on Japanese internment in Canada, titled "Call My People Home,"

broadcast due to varying beliefs that internment was a local issue to British Columbia on the one hand, or too politically provocative and divisive on the other; it was ultimately CBC executives in Toronto who upheld both positions—that it was too local and too contentious—in their resistance to Livesay's poem (224–26). We can see the impulse both to unify broadcast identities into a pan-Canadian experience and to erase political friction and dissent from national programming even in what the executives considered to be the flagship highbrow, cutting-edge radio shows hosted by CBC Radio.

The CBC executives' efforts to construct and contain Romantic national identities was not the only impulse that shaped radio programming in the mid-century. In order to understand fully the moments of policy behind the highly intellectual broadcasts that Webb wrote and produced in the 1960s and 1970s, we also need to account for the competing, contradictory impulses of modernist politics in national radio. Jody Berland argues that these contradictory impulses were unique to postwar Canada, whereas "the war created a very different response in Europe, where there was a widespread retreat from nationalist politics and a move toward articulating new ideas of the social" (16). Instead, she remarks, "How paradoxical, then, that Canadians seeking to advance the collective interests of Canadian artists should come to embrace this forward-looking modernism as the means to cultivate a national culture" (Berland 16–17). Berland suggests that the idea that modernism could provide an avenue to nationalism was made tenable in Canada for a number of reasons not available to Europeans, including the relative distance between the sites of violence in the Second World War and Canada, anxieties about Canada's sense of autonomy on the world stage, and the continued consolidation of colonial sovereignty which required, at least, unity in national policy.

Partaking in modernism, then, became a signal, more for Canadian artists and intellectuals than for outside observers, that Canadian culture had significance beyond the local and parochial. The ultimate sign that Canadian intellectual production had "made it" was in the laissez-faire attitudes of its cultural elites toward promoting "Canadian-ness" explicitly. The contradiction here seems to show through in the muted version of modernism that Berland finds in postwar Canada. It is characterized first by "a dignified antipathy to the dominance of American commercial and popular culture," which somewhat answers the question of the striking difference in radio's reception by cultural critics between the public broadcasting of the CBC and the largely private, commercialized broadcasting that was widespread in the United States (Berland 17). Furthermore, this modernism also held "the belief that national subjects were (or would evolve to become) united by shared cultural values and beliefs, nurtured by the country's art," while also somehow holding "the arguably countering belief that art ought to be disengaged and free from local traditions, community standards, commercial markets," and the like (18). What Berland calls these two "countering" beliefs may possibly be synthesized if we imagine the goal of this modernist project was to, in a sense, make universal the local events and culture of Canada, in the way that British, French, or American politics and culture were imagined to be for postwar Canadians. This, of course, creates a narrow view of what kinds of historical events or cultural production would be considered of appropriate national interest and what would be considered too regional, and, as Kelly clearly demonstrates, this question became the source of much dissatisfaction for CBC Radio contributors outside of central Canada.

Butling reads these operations of the CBC as parallel to Webb's departure from "the domination of a male power culture" in her received literary canon, which she discusses in the Foreword to *Wilson's Bowl*. Butling describes the CBC as also being "involved in asserting independence from father figures—in this case, independence from the Imperial fathers" (242). Fatherhood seems to be a metaphor emblematic to imperialism, as, in Butling's words, "Politicians and artists alike have long argued that developing a distinct Canadian culture would bring an end to Canada's colonial period, while also protecting a fragile national identity from US influence and dominance" (242). The apparent project of nationalism here visibly embodies contradictory tensions, since the posturing of Canadian unity and cultural significance covers over deep anxieties about the "fragility" of this very identity. That aside, the project both requires and actively constructs a particular language of coloniality: under this language, Canada *without* a distinct sense of nationalism and identity, an identity which clusters around white English and French settler history, is a Canada firmly in the grasp of its colonial "father figures," that is, Britain, France, and European imperialism. Underneath the nationalist rhetoric, it is clear that the fervour in projecting an English or French Canadian identity is designed to take the reins of colonial rule over the land of Canada from Britain and France and transfer it firmly to the new, sovereign, independent "father" that is the Canadian state. Thus, one must recognize in this rhetoric not the abolishment of colonial "fathers" wholesale, but the so-called "coming-of-age" of the new Canadian nation, able now to manage its colonial powers and influence on par with the larger and older Western nations.

However, Butling supports Berland's reading that the arena of Canadian high culture and intellectualism, of which Webb's radio broadcasts form an integral part, approaches the project of nationalism without "fanfare or flag waving" but by being "internationalist in scope and subversive in content," this fact made all the more conspicuous since Webb began her role as executive producer of *Ideas* in 1967, the same year as centennial zeal seemed to sweep through public institutions. Butling goes on to highlight how slippery a political reading of Webb's work on *Ideas* is, noting that she chose Black American civil rights activism as the first subject of *Ideas* even during the centennial:

> The fact that neither the speaker nor the topic is even remotely nationalist, yet the series takes place within one of Canada's major cultural institutions, foregrounds the salutary autonomy of the CBC and thereby affirms Canada's "mature" nation status. At the same time, Webb had long been interested in minority rights and power issues. Her cutting-edge programming became mutually beneficial, simultaneously fulfilling the CBC's mandate and her own creative and critical interests. (245)

Given such an analysis, it would be irresponsible to view Webb's radio work either as a utopian golden age of high modernist cultural expression or as simply the carrying out of the nationalist agenda of senior CBC executives. Webb, for her part, seemed to be content with executive control over her slice of the public airwaves, mostly unconcerned either way with the nationalist implications of her broadcast work. Indeed, Butling does wonder aloud whether Webb's decision to leave *Ideas* was in part because she possibly "became disenchanted with the nationalist/modernist agenda" and "recognize[d] her own co-

optation in the nationalist project," with "the CBC prov[ing] to be the biggest daddy of them all" (247). However, despite the allure of this reading, Butling ultimately seems to indicate that Webb was mostly indifferent to the question of nationalism altogether, neither actively building nor rejecting the project of nationalism in the CBC. Regardless, Berland and Butling both demonstrate that the "moment of policy" regarding high cultural broadcasts like *Ideas* encompasses diverse executive agendas, of which Webb's forms only a part.

In any case, Butling's analysis shows the crucial connection between the moments of policy and the actual content of the broadcasts, and that even a seemingly orthogonal relationship between them can have larger implications for the way that the broadcast interacts with a listening audience. Certainly, the verbal content of the broadcasts is vital to a full analysis of their "meaningfulness," which is why Webb's playful, sharp, and distinct broadcasts have been collected in *Talking*, even if this volume receives significantly less critical attention than her poetry. For instance, in a review of Irving Layton's *The Swinging Flesh*, broadcast in 1961 on the program *Critically Speaking*, Webb notes how the "now familiar Layton lion exploded in my face from every page," continuing with the metaphor:

> Between its teeth the lion has taken not only the "bourgeois-Christian civilization" but also the monolithic Communistic culture, has taken and devoured. The lion roars because the diet disgusted him and his belly ached. And I can sympathize with the lion—who wants to eat *that!*—but his roar bored me . . . *The Swinging Flesh*, though it has good moments, even exciting ones, makes me on the whole want to walk away from Layton as a poet. (*Talking* 75)

Her sensibilities as a poet show through in the wordplay and the extended metaphor, but even more remarkable is how few punches the review pulls, and this about a titan in Canadian modernist literature who not only was an associate of Webb but also had his own broadcast presence on CBC Radio and Television. Perhaps this is the voice that Webb claims in the Foreword may be "more brash or judgmental" than otherwise, but the result is a decidedly less demure version of Webb than the caricature of her might lead us to believe. The radio voice, though, does seem to take on a personality of its own, which asks the writer to pocket their subtle qualities in favour of their combative or embellished side. Even more, such a brash review inevitably demands some response from the listener, anywhere from an assenting chuckle to a guffaw of incredulousness, or a disapproving rant. That is, the voice that comes out of the speakers invites a dialogue with the listener which never fully materializes or resolves; it compels a verbal response that nevertheless will not make it back to the voice on the airwaves. This compulsion for dialogue, of course, explains the draw and drama of radio programs that feature call-ins by members of the listening audience, but even without these formal substantiations, the invitation to dialogue seems always to be a function of radio broadcast.

The script versions of broadcasts contained in *Talking* indicate the kinds of strategies and phenomena that formed the high intellectualism of Webb's public broadcasts, but ultimately they provide only a shadow or a skeleton of the actual dramatized radio shows, and *Talking* is careful to point this out. For example, the first broadcast in the collection, an exploration of Proust for *Ideas* in 1970, contains a footnote which declares that "It was designed for two voices, the narrator and 'M.' In revising for print I have made a few changes where the alternating voices, music, pace and inference

did not translate adequately to the page" (18). Webb's editing voice intrudes here to indicate a disappointment with the script version of her broadcast, an inadequacy of the page in representing the radio experience. In a footnote to the next *Ideas* broadcast in the collection, "The Question as an Instrument of Torture" from 1971, Webb states, "I have shortened and otherwise revised the essay and removed indications of voices, music, and other technical details required for radio production" (31). A trip to the Phyllis Webb fonds at Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa confirms this indication. Elaborate music cues are woven throughout the original scripts, especially framing monologues and long quotations from the various "voices" that take up the broadcast. The script declares "MUSIC UP AND UNDER" these quotations, a spatial metaphor that at once describes the music with a kind of buoyancy, rising or floating the voices which may sink without it, and borrows orchestral language, as if the broadcast as a whole is a dramatized symphony (Phyllis Webb fonds, Box 15, Folder IV.F, p. 12). The emergence of secondary voices resonates with the "question of questions" that forms the heart of the piece, hinting at the internal questioning voice where the torturer-examiner becomes the self. And "MUSIC UP AND OUT" brings in and focuses Phyllis Webb's own exploratory, questioning voice, denoted by the simple initials, "PW" (13). Her voice for much of the program is supported only by silence, her questions probing in the dark, all the more fragile when put up against the embellished quotations read by the other "voices." Yet, this is not a true silence, since the crackle of static and interference foregrounds the technology that serves as medium, a reminder only possible in the quietness of a single voice on radio.

Nine other broadcast scripts follow these two from *Ideas*. They were variously broadcast throughout the 1960s and 1970s on the following programs: *Critically Speaking* in Toronto, *Critics at Large* and *Critics on Air* from Vancouver's CBU station, and *Arts in Review* from the CBC FM Network. All of these scripts list their original broadcast date, but none suggest that any substantial editing was required in the "translation" to the page. The lack of cues on the page is striking in comparison to the elaborate, careful work put into the broadcasts on *Ideas*; "The Question as an Instrument of Torture" possibly stands out as a flagship performance, since it involves specialized musical cues and a number of other readers in addition to Webb's voice. In contrast, the lack of mentioned editing for these scripts, which are mostly reviews, indicates perhaps the "everyday" nature of broadcast shows like *Critics on Air*, which had more stock, consistent, and minimal editing, transitions, and music, and so these were not required in the scripts themselves. In a sense, these programs created a kind of factory-prepared intellectualism, which writers like Webb could churn out with little attention paid to the unique potentials of radio as a media technology. This is not to suggest laziness in the prose of these broadcasts itself, but that the serial nature of particular radio programs shouldered the work of exploring the potentials of radio technology so that the writer could focus on the verbal content of the broadcast. Moreover, the proliferation of casual "critical" programming (including *Critics on Air*, *Critics at Large*, and *Critically Speaking*) points to a broadcast landscape that sought to integrate intellectualism with everyday life.

The difference between *Critics on Air*, say, and *Ideas* also has to do with the kind of experience each program wanted to give its audience. *Ideas* was often interested in creating an elaborate drama of intellectualism, itself almost a high-art performance.

Critics on Air, in contrast, attempted to emulate the more casual, household intellectualism of programs like Roosevelt's Fireside Chats, as if a listener was simply overhearing a particularly witty conversation in the living room or at the dinner table. It is as if *Critics on Air* wants to resurrect a Samuel Johnson era, effortless renaissance intellectualism, where high culture permeates the everydayness of daily life, whereas *Ideas* functions by way of modernist experimentation, signalling and confirming radio technology's power and breadth to shoulder an almost avant-garde high cultural product.

The implications of both of these styles of programming for Canadian modernist nationalism are heavy. *Critics on Air* almost seems to elevate the mundane parts of so-called "ordinary" Canadian life. For the listening audience, the "everyday" nature of something as familiar and commonplace as a dinnertime conversation or flipping on the radio becomes connected with high intellectualism. Thus, even as *Critics on Air* fulfills its explicit function, to give the listener an interesting review or opinion, it at the same time performs for the audience the intellectualism that permeates everyday Canadian life, demonstrating that very ordinary life to be as refined and civilized as any in the US or Europe. *Ideas* instead shows Canadian listeners that the upper bounds of high intellectual output in Canada can rival that of any other modernist nation. A life permeated by the soundscape of both *Critics on Air* and *Ideas* would feel confident that its social conditions are not an obstacle to high cultural production.

We may wonder if these arms of CBC Radio are simply extensions of other kinds of literary nation-building efforts. Although the general structure of modernist nation-building is consistent across media (the absence of overt nationalism demonstrating the ascendency of that nation), my argument here is that the material technology of radio has

particular implications for the ways that these nationalisms circulate. For instance, A. J. M. Smith's landmark *The Book of Canadian Poetry: A Critical and Historical Anthology* (1943) capitalizes on a modernist sentiment that had been descending on Canadian literary circles in the mid-twentieth century. It demonstrated for readers at the time that enough Canadian verse exists that passes the taste parameters of high modernists to show that local works deserve to be considered among world literatures. In a 1944 review of Smith's anthology in the journal *American Literature*, the critic E. K. Brown succinctly articulates how *The Book of Canadian Poetry* satisfies the paradox of modernist nationalism. He says that Smith's "book is important for two main reasons. The first is that it reveals what seems living and good in Canadian poetry for a critic whose fundamental bias is anti-romantic" (440), which is to say that it contains a satisfactory amount of modernist material. Brown goes on to say that "Its second importance lies in the relative absence of national feeling and of nationalist criteria" (440). Brown continues to discuss how Romantic and nationalist biases often complicate a critic's ability to correctly evaluate a writer's work, and that the anthology helps to "deflate some very swollen reputations" (441) of Romantic, nationalist writers in favour of poets with greater international appeal. Brown's reading of the anthology follows the same structure as the modernist (anti-)nationalism of *Ideas*: the explicit rejection of parochial nationalism in turn confirms the universality of the work.

Although CBC Radio and Smith's anthology share this structure, the ways in which these two cultural products, the broadcast and the book, circulate have significant consequences for how these nationalisms unfold. In his review, Brown comments curiously: "Published by an American house, as no anthology of Canadian poetry has

been in many years, Mr. Smith's collection will be a gateway to Canadian poetry for American readers" (440). Brown seems to see Smith's decision to publish with the University of Chicago Press as being indicative of the larger rejection of parochial forms of nationalism that the anthology seems to embody more generally. Added to this, although Brown was born in Toronto, his own review appears in *American Literature*, demonstrating the impulse to introduce American readers to Canadian content. The material choice to publish the book outside of Canadian presses seems also to have the practical effect of circulating the anthology in international (and especially American) literary circles, and the inclusion of Brown's review of a Canadian poetry anthology in the journal *American Literature* seems to confirm that Smith was successful in expanding its readership to global markets.

Even if *The Book of Canadian Poetry* was not actively published beyond Canadian borders with this overt strategy of circulation in mind, the book, as an object composed of solid matter, always has the potential to be physically moved into unintended geographical spaces. Additionally, the object of the book persists over a long period of time. Thus, any idea of a book's audience must contain people in other places and future times, a point that may seem trivial until we measure it against radio, which has much more rigid limits on its sphere of circulation. Who, then, is *The Book of Canadian Poetry* for? On the one hand, the anthology clearly seems to be a repudiation of what Smith sees as the traditional idea of the canon that is too Romantic and too parochial. In this sense, the anthology is both descriptive, recording what has been achieved in Canadian verse, and prescriptive, instructing and reforming the Canadian literati. In short, one must read it as a book telling Canadians how to become modernists.

On the other hand, since there is good evidence that the text was intended to circulate in foreign markets, and simply by the fact that the object of the book always contains the potential to move to other places, one must also read it as a performance of Canadian (anti-)nationalism for world literary elites. Its terse modernist focus is certainly somewhat more intense than would be typical for Canadian critics, and Brown remarks on the surprising lack of material from the late-nineteenth-century Romantics, an unwelcome surprise even for his own modernist palette (440). We could chalk this up simply to Smith's almost fanatical commitment to modernist aesthetics, but it seems more appropriate, given the practical decisions around the book's publication, to consider this, possibly, as the performance of Canadian literature's ascendency to high modernism for international readers. His project, then, has both an inward scope, speaking back to the more traditional Canadian critics, as well as an outward scope, convincing international audiences that Canadian poetry contains something of significance beyond its own regional borders. What is crucial here is that this doubling of nationalist projects, one for the in-group and the other for outsiders, is made possible only by the material properties of the book as a media technology.

In contrast, the spontaneous nature of radio means that it can only reach the limited sphere defined by the signal strength of the broadcast towers that choose to host it. The following image, from *Saturday Night* magazine in 1931, shows the propagation of radio waves into Canada. Canadian stations are indicated with solid lines, while American signals are represented by the dotted semi-circles, which indicate how far they extend into Canadian territories.

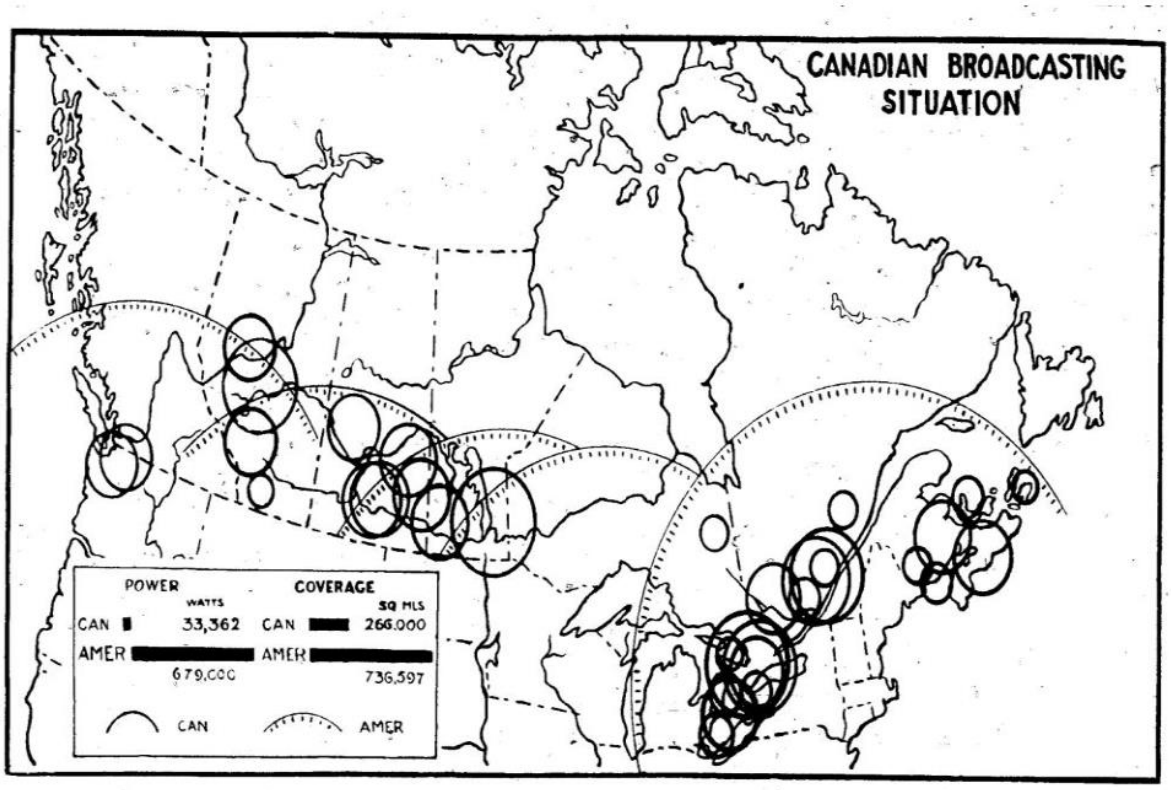


Figure 1: Map of radio propagation from American and Canadian radio stations, from *Saturday Night* (1931), via Sean Graham's *As Canadian as Possible: The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1936-1939* (2014), p. 67.

This map shows how many small, local radio transmitters were used to service mainly urban, population-dense areas near the southern border in 1931. The larger semi-circles show the much more powerful transmitters that were up and running in the United States at this time. The power and number of Canadian transmitters grew over the next few decades, but a CBC-SRC North proposal in 2006 to extend shortwave radio to northern communities that are under-serviced demonstrates how spotty and limited the propagation of radio waves continued to be throughout the twentieth century.

Radio propagates in a vacuum according to the inverse square law, which means that transmitter power must exponentially increase in order to reach more and more distant places, and this is not even to account for atmospheric and other practical sources of interference (National Communications System, "Inverse-Square Law"). In order to double the effective range of a radio wave in a vacuum, one must increase the power of the transmitter by a factor of four. Although there are various technological strategies to mitigate this issue in practice, the fundamental reality of radio is that it travels a finite distance, and the signal deteriorates rapidly the farther it propagates. Thus, the precise design practicalities of the radio station, from location, to the type, power, and configuration of the transmitters, define and limit the potential listening audience. As the image above demonstrates, the technological practicalities of radio make literal the concept of a "target audience," as the resonating circles of propagation define that audience primarily by geographical location. Of course, various marketing strategies can heavily influence the circulation of a book, for example, into specific geographies, but the technological structures of radio make geographical location a primary and definitive characteristic of its audience. Additionally, other than rebroadcasts, traditional radio programs can only be consumed during the specific duration of the airing rather than opened and closed at one's leisure like a book, further limiting the kinds of circulation that are possible to radio.

This is also why it is crucial now, in the digital age of radio, to pay particular attention to the material practicalities of the media technology that delivers "broadcasts." The resurgence of long-form, audio-only interviews and talks through the new influx and popularity of podcasts might seem to be a recapitulation of radio through new media

technologies, and certainly the way that Webb discusses radio prose in the introduction to *Talking* applies equally to these new types of content. However, what we could call "the age of digital reproduction" drastically alters just such questions about the target audience, the afterlife of the broadcast, and the question of nationalism specifically due to the structures of the technologies that underpin new media content. Indeed, it is even possible now to look up and listen to digitally archived CBC Radio shows, if one happens to have missed their first airing on traditional radio waves. This is true both of currently produced radio content, as well as certain broadcasts from the pre-digital age that an executive at CBC Radio has decided are worthy of being translated to a digital medium and archived. Thus, the digital age of radio has substantially altered both the meaning of currently produced broadcasts, as well as our relationship to broadcasts of the past, which, at one time, were wholly inaccessible if one happened not to be in the region and listening with a radio-receiver at a certain time.

So, our analysis of the "meaningfulness" of the nationalism of CBC broadcasts like *Ideas* has to account for the finite scope of the audience, especially when compared to the modernist nationalism of a book like Smith's *The Book of Canadian Poetry*. Since *Ideas* and *Critics on Air* were broadcast from stations that serviced regional Canadian areas like Vancouver or southern Ontario, and, unlike some other CBC programs, did not extend deeply into international territories (other than the northern United States), the nationalisms that these programs constructed were almost wholly pointed toward a Canadian audience. Thus, when Webb and the other *Ideas* coordinators choose to air a series of lectures on Black civil rights in America during the Canadian centennial, they are not aiming to, say, invite Americans into the folds of Canadian intellectual discourse.

Instead, we must read this kind of posturing as a performance of internationalism specifically for the listening pleasure of Canadian audiences. Knowing that American legal and social struggles might be of significant interest to, but not a primary material concern for most of their audience, the coordinators again create a type of "overheard" effect, whereby the audience gets the chance to "listen in" not only to the conversations of intellectuals but also to the cultural struggles of a foreign place, brought conveniently into their kitchens and living rooms. This kind of dispassionate attitude toward regional concerns seems deeply powerful for Canadians' sense that they can participate in the life of international society and geopolitics, which again seems built around the tension between (inter)nationalism and regionality that defines much of the programming choices of CBC Radio.

The particularities of the modernist nationalism that constitute *Ideas* and *Critics on Air* seem especially contingent on the material reality of the localized radio transmitters that broadcast these programs to domestic Canadian audiences when we compare them to the kinds of programs that were aired on CBC's international radio, which was established in 1945. CBC Radio has chosen to digitally archive William Lyon Mackenzie King's announcement of the new shortwave radio transmitters established outside of Sackville, New Brunswick, which enabled international broadcasting. The first "official" broadcast on this new technology aired on February 25th, 1945. It begins with the exclamation, "This is Canada calling!" Immediately, a grainy and embellished rendition of the Canadian national anthem follows. A voice cuts in, courteously addressing the audience and introducing Mackenzie King: "Ladies and gentlemen, the Prime Minister of Canada." Of note is the formal addressing of the audience, as well as

the arms-length reference to "the Prime Minister of Canada," rather than any kind of intimate, "your Prime Minister," or similar. "This evening," begins Mackenzie King,

> marks the formal opening of Canada's international broadcasting service. The program is wholly Canadian in its creation and in its spirit. Most appropriately, it has been prepared for the entertainment of Canadians on active service abroad. I should like the first words spoken officially over the international service of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to be words of greeting to Canadian armed forces serving on and beyond the seas. I should like them to be words of unbounded admiration and gratitude on behalf of all the people of Canada.

Mackenzie King makes explicit that the technologies of CBC Radio are being leveraged in support of the war effort. This new service expertly allows all of the following: the exchange of information from home to the military abroad, the reforging of serving Canadians' connection to the home nation, the propagation of Canadian culture to potential international audiences, as well as the broadcasting of propaganda aimed at rupturing the morale of German civilians and soldiers. How effortlessly the early minutes of this broadcast slip between the national anthem and the high praise of Canadian military forces demonstrates just the kind of nationalist fervour that *Ideas* repudiates. Mackenzie King goes on to articulate the primary aims of the international service (of course, not mentioning the coming propagandistic broadcasts):

> The establishment of this service in Canada is of historic significance. It will serve both a national and an international purpose. It will bring the voice of Canada to our own sons and daughters in other lands. It will also bring Canada into closer contact with other countries. In the better world for which you are fighting,

> Canada will have a large part to play in furthering between nations the mutual understanding and goodwill on which the permanence of peace depends.

Mackenzie King goes on to congratulate Canadians, whom he for the first time addresses with the second person pronoun, for putting aside differences of "backgrounds, origins, and creeds" in order to engage in a common war effort. The framing of the comment here by the personal address, "you," as well as the patriarchal claiming of "our own sons and daughters," and the reference to "Canada calling," as if this is a telephone conversation, seems to speak through Jason Loviglio's conceptualization of the intimate public address. The form of this new technology, radio waves that propagate great distances beyond the nation's borders, now makes it necessary for the speaker to define the intended audience (Canadians abroad) against other potential international listeners. Those other listeners, now, become the ones "overhearing" this address from a nation's Prime Minister to the constituents abroad, who are cleverly collapsed into the singularity of a familial unit, differences and tensions erased in the name of the war effort. Thus, the address goes to great lengths to preserve the international face of Canada as a unified nation, proud of its traditional and bounding anthem, gently watched over by its chief authority. With potential foreign ears, and with the fragile balance of peace at risk, there is no space on this broadcast for the experimentation or irony that a listener would find in a program like *Ideas*. However, to reiterate, my argument is not that the international broadcasts are nationalist and *Ideas* is not; rather, the forms of each technology, international shortwave versus regional stations, influence the *kind* of nationalism by which each operates.

The international service demonstrates explicitly how radio technologies, and, surprisingly enough, public broadcasting, participated in global violence. The CBC

international radio was specifically designed in order to pacify and encourage members of the Canadian military. And, even more sinisterly, as mentioned, the German-language broadcasts attempted to wage a morale-war on the airwaves against both the German military and German non-combatants alike. Public radio, then, could be considered a weapon in the arsenal of the Canadian militia, even as it fulfilled its ostensible duties to bring news and content to Canadians abroad.

At the same time, the nationalist flair of Mackenzie King's broadcast aims the violence of colonialist discourse back toward the homeland itself. The framing of Canada as a unified nation, where differences of "backgrounds, origins, and creeds" are erased under duties to the flag, attempts to re-envision the nation as ethnically homogenous. The familial reference to "our own sons and daughters" is certainly par for the course as far as paternalistic colonialist speeches go. However, in another sense, imagining the members of the nation within stable familial bloodlines does seem to reconstruct the nation as linked not only by a common and unquestioned faithfulness to the fatherland, but also by a common genealogy, which, as Mackenzie King's accent suggests, would be traced to settlers from the British Isles. Thus, this framing of Canada as a stable family unit, working toward a common goal in the name of spreading the peace that it knows so well, pre-emptively quashes the histories of violence enacted by colonial states against the Indigenous peoples of Canada, the erasure of which could be considered a violence doubled. This is also not to mention other kinds of racial violence in Canada, including the internment of Japanese migrants as well as Japanese Canadians, thousands of whom were forcefully imprisoned at the very moment of Mackenzie King's public address and

by his own legislation. The following chapter explores in more detail the relationship between nationalism, colonialism, and internment.

Since the CBC International Service had to contend with wartime fervour and a potentially international audience, the violences of its nationalism are clear: social injustices and legal battles are erased, and Mackenzie King postures as a comforting, colonial patriarch to the world. As much of the subject matter of *Ideas* indicates, it did not necessarily suppress social and cultural struggles. Could, then, domestic, high cultural, modernist radio escape the violent discourses that underpin international and other explicitly nationalist programming?

On the one hand, the early *Ideas* series that aired during the centennial on American Black civil rights activism certainly does seem to foreground disunities and the failures of contemporary Western nations. However, on the other hand, telling the story of the United States' ethical bankruptcy and its deep social divisions to a Canadian audience does seem quite convenient for the listeners' sense of being a part of an abstracted, middle-class intellectualism. Certainly, much of Canadian nationalism, even to this day, positions itself in relation to Britain and the United States, with the latter acting as a kind of photographic negative against which Canadian nationalism can pit itself. Thus, the experience of listening to these broadcasts about American civil rights in the material context of the average *Ideas* audience member—white, Anglo, middle-class—would have the bizarre effect of reifying how comparatively cohesive their immediate community might seem, whether or not this is truly the case. We must, therefore, account for the often disparate and contradictory consequences that emerge out of the necessary tension at the heart of a radio program with anti-nationalist sympathies that nevertheless airs on a

national broadcasting network. Part of these consequences lies in the discrepancy between the imagined listening audience and the practical realities of the actual one.

Beyond an analysis of specific programs, does the form of the technology on which *Ideas* was broadcast, that is, domestic, regional radio, define its relationship to potentially violent discourses? If we look back on Figure 1, which displays a map of radio coverage in Canada in the 1930s—much expanded, of course, by the 1960s, but still not providing total coverage—what we can see is that those circles emanate out from and surround mostly dense urban centres and their nearby areas. Thus, mapping the propagation of radio waves also has the effect of mapping the spaces that the CBC, in partnership with the Canadian government, imagines as being primarily in need of public broadcasting. It is more than apparent that these areas correspond to the early European colonial settlements that would eventually expand into large Canadian cities, mostly in close proximity to the southern border. Rural and northern communities, which would consist largely of non-European peoples, were and continue to be underserved as far as radio coverage goes (CBC-SRC North).

It would be appropriate, then, to conceptualize the circles of radio propagation as a set of borders around early colonial settlements, and it is within these politically defined spaces that domestic programs like *Ideas* function. And this practical reality of the technology exists apart from the desires and intentions of program coordinators like Webb, who, despite their best efforts and the ideals of their vision, simply cannot operate beyond the borders of the technology. Of course, as I have been arguing, *Ideas* and *Critics on Air* primarily speak to an in-group of mostly white, middle-class Canadian listeners, and they construct—for the national community—an image of themselves as

beyond nationalism, as culturally refined, as modernist. Even as these programs posture as internationalist, the structures of regional radio technology forcefully re-establish those domestic borders. Thus, it is the voice of culture and high intellectualism that extends to the ends of those rings, confirming the in-group within those rings as part of an intellectual community. With this structure in mind, these modernist programs, which seem at first to reject nationalism, begin curiously to resemble the *garrison mentality*.

In Northrop Frye's "Conclusion to a *Literary History of Canada*" (1965),[9] he argues that the relationship to nature of the traditional Canadian Romantics is an extension of the concept of the garrison, which, he explains, is made up of:

> Small and isolated communities surrounded with a physical or psychological "frontier," separated from one another and from their American and British cultural sources: communities that provide all that their members have in the way of distinctively human values, and that are compelled to feel a great respect for the law and order that holds them together, yet confronted with a huge, unthinking, menacing, and formidable physical setting—such communities are bound to develop what we may provisionally call a garrison mentality. (225)

The border between the frontier settlements and the hostile natural world beyond (including the original Indigenous inhabitants) becomes a marker of the limits of human (or European) cultural production. Frye suggests that the garrison community would "feel

[9] Some contemporary voices, including D.M.R. Bentley's and Frank Davey's, have pointed out the error in Frye's attempt to distill the multitude of Canadian literatures into a universal and synchronous "Canadian imagination." My reading of Frye here is less concerned with factual accuracy than it is with the way that Frye's supposedly external analysis of Canadian literature nevertheless itself lays bare and engages in the metaphors of nature, civilization, and the colonized Other that organize and justify settler-colonialism.

a great respect for the law and order that holds them together," which, of course, confirms the thoroughly colonial nature of the garrison—colonial law is the law by which the garrison justifies and perpetuates itself. Frye goes on to claim: "In the earliest maps of the country the only inhabited centres are forts, and that remains true of the cultural maps for a much later time" (225). The first important point here is that the history of these settlements in Canada explicitly originates in military "forts," used to consolidate and converge physical, colonial power on strategic points in the pre-Canadian landscape. Second, these maps to which Frye refers could very well stand in for a map of regional radio propagation in the mid-twentieth century (compare Figure 2 below to the map in Figure 1).

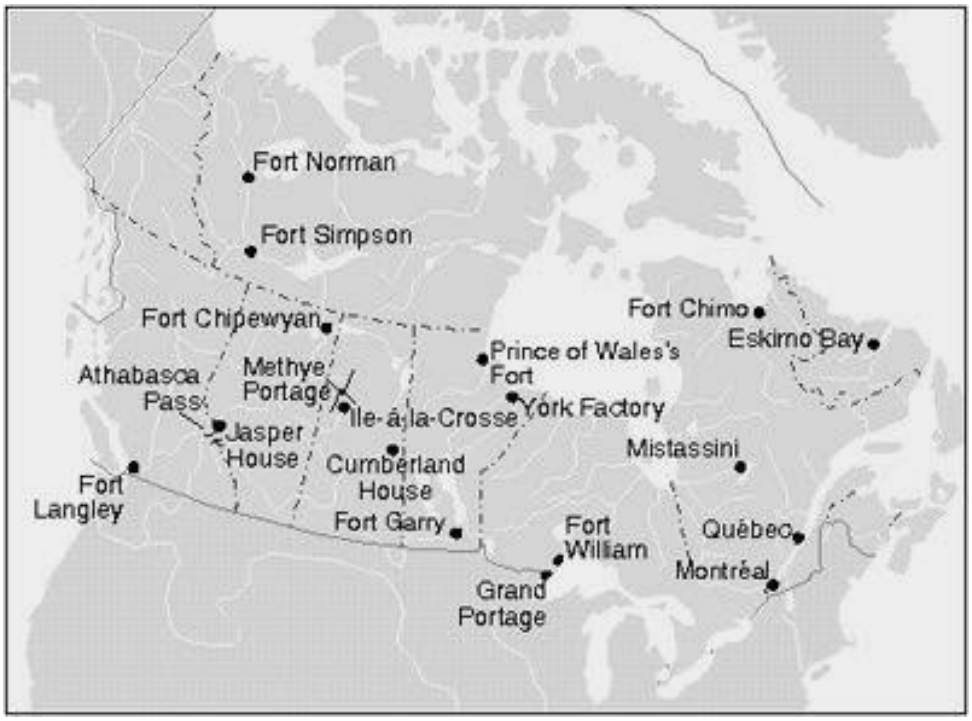


Figure 2: Map of 18th-century fur-trading posts, from "Fur Trade," John E. Foster et al, *The Canadian Encyclopedia*.

All but the most northern forts (which are less advantageous military points and were not as heavily settled by European migrants as the south) fall within, or indeed form the centre of, the circles of radio propagation in the 1930s. Thus, those radio waves provide a kind of archaeological marker for early colonial military garrisons. Additionally, the farthest reaches of those radio waves create another sort of garrison fence between the colonial community and a potentially hostile outside world that falls beyond the reach of the CBC's intellectual and cultural programming. Since the *modus operandi* of high intellectual programs like *Critics on Air* and *Ideas* was to spread the best of modernist Canadian culture, Frye's idea that the garrison primarily functions to consolidate what is most human (that is, "civilized") within the community seems to hold for regional radio as well.

This analysis emphasizes the structure of regional radio technology rather than the content of those broadcasts. We may recognize, then, that much of *Ideas*, and, to a lesser extent, *Critics on Air*, seems specifically *anti-national* in its content even while its structure perpetuates a kind of garrison mentality; that is, the programs feature writers and concepts that sometimes defy the law and traditional morality. As Stephen Collis argues, of course, Webb became more and more a committed anarchist, dissatisfied with Western geopolitics as her life and career went on, and this period in the late 1960s was a gestating time for Webb's creation of the early "Kropotkin Poems" that would eventually become *Wilson's Bowl*. Surprisingly enough, Frye seems to recognize or even predict this shift away from traditional communal morality that marks modernism:

> As the centre of Canadian life moves from the fortress to the metropolis, the garrison mentality changes correspondingly. It begins as an expression of the

> moral values generally accepted in the group as a whole, and then, as society gets more complicated and more in control of its environment, it becomes more of a revolutionary garrison within a metropolitan society. (231)

In this sense, modernist (anti-)nationalism is not so much a repudiation of the garrison structure as it is an extension of it. Furthermore, Frye's concept, though clearly critical of the garrison, calling it "anti-cultural," where "nothing original can grow" (226), is still steeped in colonial discourses of the "complications" inherent in modern Western societies; even if those "complications" are sources of anxiety and difficulty for the (white Canadian) artist, the important point is that those complex problems provide the necessary, and indeed only, ground on which significant cultural production can grow. That is to say that the conditions that provide suitably artistic struggles still remain limited to the colonial settlements (now seen as metropolitan cities), even if the artists pit their struggles against that very garrison. As far as the radio waves go, everything outside is silence or indecipherable noise, while within the circles of regional radio's propagation, *Ideas* and other modernist programs provide a beacon of light and culture.

The paradox here, that the critique of the garrison still reinforces its primacy, also invades Webb's poetry. In *Water and Light* (1984), Webb explores the poetic tradition of the Arabic *ghazal*, in part as a rejection of what she understood to be the British and Canadian Romantic traditions, traditions that partially served as the foundation of garrison cultural morality as Frye articulates it. Butling, for instance, argues that Webb uses the ghazal's open-ended lines and strange semantic disconnections "to 'liberate her psyche' from the Western lyric tradition of synthesis and unity" (*Seeing in the Dark* 64). In a ghazal (or, as Webb might call it, an *anti-ghazal*) from the section "Frivolities," the

poet seems, time and again, to reach the edge of the safety of the garrison, gazing out into the wilderness, only to turn back:

> My soul, my soul, who said that?
> as the rain stumbles over my mental horizon
>
> horizon which wavers, creates the mirage
> of a café in Milano where
>
> Mary, he says, what shall we do tonight? (ll. 1–5)

The poet first attempts to follow the rain as it "stumbles over [her] mental horizon," the horizon that signifies the limits of the poet's self and skills. The horizon, though, is articulated through garrison language: the home and the wilderness beyond. Does the poet truly see past the knowable horizon and into the wilderness, or does she simply see the cultured inside reflected back at her, "the mirage / of a café in Milano" (ll. 3–4)? The rain melds with this "mirage" in the distance, creating an impossible place, both rains and desert:

> Tonight, tonight, love, what shall we do tonight?
> The mirage settles into rain falling
>
> into the harbour and onto the day I own
> feeding the heat of dry September (ll. 6—9)

The oxymoron here between the rain, the mirage, and the dry heat echoes Archibald Lampman's quintessential Canadian Romantic poem, "Heat," where "Up the steep hill

[the road] seems to swim / Beyond, and melt into the glare" (ll. 3–4). The shimmering horizon, like Webb's mirage, merges dry heat with liquid imagery, drawing language out to the edge, as it were, of its imaginative capacity. In Lampman's work, the imaginative horizon gestures toward the transcendental possibilities of the artistic mind. However, in Webb's anti-ghazal we seem to be on the edge of a crisis, suggested in part by the confusion of voices that open the poem on the existential question: "My soul, my soul, who said that?" Not only are the ontological criteria of the soul uncertain here, but the very location or subject of that crisis is unknown (who, the poet wonders, is doing the saying?). The resonance with Lampman seems again to fit Frye's mould of the critique-by-correspondence, which re-asserts, even in negation, the dominance of the Romantic tradition in Webb's literary upbringing. This poem continues on, searching for a language beyond the horizon of the colonial garrison:

> September and the cats restless, hungry
> in view of winter, in view of cold
>
> cold as the curse of mere matter, *Mère*
> matter, the subject family, the repeated
>
> word ready to pounce out of the thunder
> out of the rainforest where leap the wild, bereft deer. (ll. 10–15)

The poet looks for a language outside of the familiar, the "the repeated // word" that would arrive "ready to pounce out of the thunder / out of the rainforest where leap the wild, bereft deer" (ll. 14–15). Yet, her "mental horizon" is still circumscribed by the

cosmopolitan image of the "café in Milano" (l. 2–4). The poem ends on this hesitancy, on the expectation of the "wild" and "bereft" language that may supplant the known, domestic images within the horizon. But in the end the poet remains stuck in the anticipatory moment before this wild language—a tongue that she cannot speak—emerges.

Certainly, *Water and Light* does not suggest that the Arabic tradition in which Webb discovers the form of the ghazal is this new anti-garrison dialect. This is made clear in the fact that the illusory "mirage" of the café in Milano contains the couple who speaks in language more typical to the traditional ghazal: "Mary, he says, what shall we do tonight? // Tonight, tonight, love, what shall we do tonight?" The repeated and exerted demands on the object of love from a passive male lover who relies on the desired for action accords with one way of reading the history of the ghazal as a patriarchal form. For instance, Butling sees *Water and Light* as enacting a "feminist critique of the ghazal tradition by foregrounding renegade lines and anti-romantic tropes" (viii). Susan Glickman, though, interestingly provides a counter-narrative of the ghazal that is predicated on "The ambiguity of the Beloved's identity," since "The lack of grammatical gender in Persian makes possible a lack of specificity as to the Beloved's sex," whereas "in Urdu, the Beloved is conventionally masculine, so as to suggest many possibilities" (49). Glickman argues that Webb's ghazals seize on this gender and sexual ambiguity in order to discover "a kind of aesthetic androgyny in the ghazal" (56), which allows her to recuperate the form in spite of its potentially patriarchal tradition (hence, the *anti*-ghazal). Still, though, what Glickman sees as the most essentially feminist aspect of the form is the white space between couplets, a "shadowy," "subversive" space that reminds

Glickman of Webb's comments on Emily Dickinson's hesitations and dashes (from the essay "On the Line" in *Talking*). What is key here though is that even though Webb, according to Glickman, finds a queer, potentially feminist history in the form of the ghazal, it is not a "word ready to pounce out of the thunder." Instead, it is a space of hesitation, of silence, perhaps, in fact, the very "thunder" or "rainforest" beyond the horizon out of which Webb hopes a new language will emerge. What happens in the shadowy, subversive, feminine white space could be considered outside of the edge of the garrison and, consequently, outside of perception itself.

In the end, what is most crucial and revealing in this poem is probably not that the poet seeks—and fails—to articulate a language beyond the horizon. Instead, what the poem makes plain is that this horizon of sense, the known, the controlled, is represented through the metaphor of the garrison. Thus, we find within the garrison the café in Milano and the lovers parroting T. S. Eliot, which casts the Western literary tradition, from the Canadian Romantics to the Modernists, as a functional arm of the colonial garrison, the same kind of cultural fortification as the spheres of propagation from national radio broadcasts. And, most tellingly, despite all of the poet's apprehensions toward this garrison of the sensical—the dominating force of Western patriarchal poetry—the poem still exists entirely within this horizon. Indeed, one could argue that the first and last lines of the ghazal itself serve as the very edges of this horizon, and the gesturing beyond, into the inarticulable, could explain some of the curious and characteristic disjointed flourishes that often end Webb's poems—that often, either by design or necessity, the poems refuse to conclude.

In any event, *Water and Light* continues on with the poet's uncertain relationship to the patriarchal cultural past. A ghazal in the section "Middle Distance" opens by ironically quoting Blake:

> The Authors are in Eternity,
> or so Blake said,
>
> but I am here, feet planted
> on the ground;
>
> I am listening to the song
> of the underground river. (351)

The vertical metaphor here between the seen (the canon fathers in "Eternity") and the unseen (the chthonic women writers in "the underground river") maps onto the tall, dated capitalizations that declare themselves in the opening of this ghazal. Instead of likewise announcing her entrance into the world of Anglo poetry, the poet opts for the more sensitive "listening" to the songs of the hidden, which is a function of the close attention to the materialism of her body, "feet planted / on the ground." Curiously, the poet here seems to decline the abstraction of the self, or, what could be called the disintegration of the self into the ethereal plane of "Eternity." A careful reader here would become skeptical of John F. Hulcoop's remarks in his introduction to Webb's collected poems, *Peacock Blue*, when he interprets Webb's voice as abstracting itself:

> *We* all identify with it [the lyric "I"] because everything *we* say is predicated upon it. It is gender unmarked . . . *we* the readers so identify with the speaker of this

> *Naked Poem* ("Suite II") that it doesn't matter what we are—lesbians, gay guys, straight men or women, African, Asian, or Caucasian— we don't need to be told what the speaker and her lover know. We know it too. (10–11; original emphasis)

No doubt that Webb employs a complex, shifting lyric self that is sometimes confessional, sometimes a character, and sometimes an abstraction. However, the idea that the "I" could be unmarked, and unmarked by gender, no less, seems refuted by moments such as this ghazal in "Middle Distance" which asserts the primacy of the material body. In fact, one could read the rending of the self from the material body (Blake's Authors moving into ethereal Eternity) as a product of the patriarchal repression of "the song / of the underground river," the feminine dark that Butling sees as underpinning Webb's politics. We may likewise be able to recover an "underground" Webb that is a material poet, and the relevant question is not the extent to which her "abstractions" and language games challenge the tradition of the lyric subject, but what has gotten in the way to bury that materialism (why the poet seems to continuously be turned away from the edge of the garrison's horizon and back to the café in Milano). Perhaps this is precisely the object of pity at the end of this ghazal: "Poor Fishstar! Yet – all is not lost" (351). Fishstar has always been a feminine trickster-muse for Webb, the bearer of "a new alphabet," which does not immediately articulate itself, but instead "gasps for air," hesitates, gestures rather than declares (*Naked Poems* 181). After all, it is she—or, at least, her sister Ishtar—whose "blue-veined hands" polish the stones in the underground river that the poet listens to in the ghazal in "Middle Distance" (351). Again, the relevant question here is what processes have rent the poet from her body which is "planted / on the ground," the same processes that make Fishstar's alphabet inarticulate?

Rather than conceiving of Fishstar, or Webb's lyric self, as an abstraction—since it does not articulate itself and cannot be fully seen—we could instead consider Webb's lack of concreteness as a burial, and, thus, fully material. Who, then, would we find with a spade?

In the next poem in *Water and Light*, the poet is "leaning out of the Leaning / Tower heading into the middle distance" (352). Butling interprets the "middle distance" as a meeting point between poet, reader, impressions and truths: "Webb's poems explore both positive and negative dimensions of the 'shadow'; they posit mottled truths located in the '[m]iddle distance.' Truth is a moveable point *within* a continuum, a point of convergence" (52). The end of this poem, "Leaning," gives Butling the title to her monograph, where the addressed seems to inhabit—or be stuck in—the middle distance:

> And you, are you still here
>
> tilting in this stranded ark
>
> blind and seeing in the dark. (353)

Though the middle distance represents a point of crisis, "tilting" and a "stranded ark," it nevertheless enables new kinds of truths unavailable to the blinding enlightenment. In this sense, the middle distance, according to Butling, is a reprieve from the European enlightenment tradition, a place where the interplay between shadows and light radically destabilizes so-called "Truth," where, as Butling suggests, the more diminutive "truth" moves and acts and listens like another character or speaker.

The middle distance, as a space of anti-enlightenment, seems not necessarily to reject utterly the garrison and Western patriarchal culture. Instead, it is a place of, yes,

deep skepticism, but also of reflection and refraction, the constant pull of Webb's literary upbringing that throws her poetry again and again back into the garrison. Thus, in the middle distance the poet sees not the full illumination of a white-yellow sun, but "a fur-blue star" which "contracts," that is to say, diminishes (is this furry, blue, mammalian star another cousin to the reclusive Fishstar?). However, this emblem for the feminine dark quickly "becomes / the ice pond Brueghel's figures are skating on" (352), though curiously enough Brueghel has two 1565 paintings that depict frozen ponds with skaters: the more well-known *Winter Landscape with Ice Skaters and Bird Trap* as well as *The Hunters in the Snow*, the former most likely being the pond that Webb has in mind in this poem, though the latter's ice boasts a dark blue that would perhaps more closely match Webb's star. In any event, the poet finds herself pitched back into the European Renaissance that would eventually give way to the enlightenment. Likewise, when "North Magnetic pulls me like a flower / out of the perpendicular // angles me into outer space," the poet seems to be on the precipice of a new truth or perspective, but this time French modernist sculpture intrudes like a mundane force to disrupt her vertical movement: "(Rodin in Paris, his amanuensis, a torso …)" (352). The poem is then in full crisis, her "sick head on the table where I write," as we quickly move through Wagner's Parsifal, Noah, "the phalloi of Miës," Columbus, Einstein, and Bohr. Butling calls this a "feminist resistance to the entropic patriarchal institutions and phallic towers exemplified in the tower [of Pisa] itself" (Butling 55), or, as the poem puts it, this is "the whole culture leaning …" (Webb 352). This poem more forcefully interrogates the poet's recoiling from the edge of a new language and turning back to the "café in Milano"; the image of the café, of course, gestures to the European tradition that is so woven into the old alphabet

that the poet struggles to make any articulation without the baggage of the past. Thus, the garrison here is policed by the shadows of these domineering patriarchal figures, and the walls of the garrison operate just as much to keep the poet in (like a prison) as they do to ward against the encroachment of the outside. The poet, then, oscillates in the middle distance between the walls of the garrison and the new alphabet beyond the horizon, unwilling or unable to move fully into either one.

I wonder, though, if another sense of the "middle distance" could be operating here, particularly one that is subject to a media analysis of distance. It is perhaps strange that the poem's first inclination in the shifting of the middle distance from insight to the garrison occurs in the distant background of a Brueghel painting. Mary A. Favret's *War at a Distance: Romanticism and the Making of Modern Wartime* reads violence with just such a sensitivity to visual art, particularly in her analysis of the ways that media tend either to abstract away from war, keeping it at a clinical distance, or to see war in a close-up, leaving only despair and numbness. Favret conceives of another way of seeing through media that escapes "the polar pulls of abstraction and numbness"—what she also calls the "middle distance"—which "opens wartime" in the Romantic era, she tells us, "to the present" (10). What is so curious and coincidental here is that her analysis of the "middle distance" stems from a reading of William and Thomas Daniell's painting, *The Rope Bridge at Serinagur* (first exhibited in 1800), which depicts refugees at the Indian city of Srinagar fleeing from the oncoming army across a bridge that seems to barely hold. The painting, Favret says, presents for the most part "a familiar picturesque aesthetic," other than the fragile human figures on the rope bridge who occupy the painting's "middle distance" (222). The "domestic devastation" interloping in the

picturesque landscape interrupts what we would otherwise experience as an "exhilaration or nationalized awe provided by the sublime panoramas" (223). Thus, in the middle distance, we are forced to confront human despair, and forced to re-politicize the territory of India as a zone where violence takes place at the turn of the nineteenth century, whereas the picturesque abstracts the viewer away from that violence, so that those figures "recede into nature" (223). Yet, crucially, the middle distance avoids the implicit colonial gaze that is cast onto illuminated figures in the foreground: as Favret puts it, "this is no sentimental tableau inviting identification" (223). The problem of the close-up seems to lean in two directions: first, the close-up invites this pernicious, condescending, sentimental gaze, and, second, if the gaze is not sentimental, then it risks the numbing effects of shock, a political deadening. Instead, the middle distance keeps violence and fragility in the centre with a scope wide enough to set that violence within the larger frame of its historical and political context.

Favret's conception of the advantages of the middle distance in the ecosystem of media images and violence does oppose traditional ideas in media studies about the dehumanizing effects of distance, that our compassion and empathy diminish as the space between us as viewers and the fragility of others grows. Yet, Favret does in fact recover a more nuanced theory of distance within media studies, such as in her insightful discussion of Raymond Williams's "Distance" (Favret 223–25), where she argues that while the drawing away from the close-up does entail a dehumanization, it is also necessary in order to destabilize or problematize our sense of our own "distance" from the site of violence. In reading Williams, she concludes that "this other mode of distance [. . .]

makes simple positioning—political or geographical—'impossible,' spinning distance itself into something quite variable and provisional" (225).

Her sensitivity here to the disparate potentials of distance (both a possible dehumanization but also an empathic dislocation from our locale) seems to come out of skepticism toward a simplistic faith in something like Levinas's humanistic project of asserting the face of the Other, a theory that the previous chapter of this dissertation developed in more detail. Indeed, the middle distance may seem to be an utter departure from the close encounter altogether. Rather than square these two approaches to distance, it seems to me that they are most instructive and useful in tension: Levinas awakens us to the dampening effects of mediation on our recognition of the Other (and *not* our identification with the Other—that is, our encounter is with the *otherness* of the Other), whereas Favret critiques the possible sentimentality of the close-up, which particularly clarifies the implicit colonial gazes contained within humanistic images.

And this critique of a sentimental humanism in media is precisely where my analysis of Webb's involvement with CBC Radio begins to break down. I wonder, to what extent is Webb's use of the "middle distance" cognizant of something like a colonial media gaze? Or, to ask this question another way, what is the relationship between the uncertain, vanguard, anti-establishment intellectualism of *Ideas* (or even *Water and Light*) and a gradually emerging postcolonial theory (with a landmark text such as Edward Said's 1978 *Orientalism* preceding *Water and Light* by six years)? In Stephen Collis's introduction to his monograph on Webb, he does mention that *Water and Light* can be read "in relation to the development of postcolonialism" (19), but the book's later sections end up going in a different direction so that we never receive an extended version

of this reading. Perhaps Webb's jostling in the "middle distance" with the authors who "are in Eternity"—her critique of the Western literary canon—as well as her adoption of the Arabic ghazal as a rebuke of the typical forms of Canadian poetry could be seen as the first tentative steps toward anti-colonial thought. And, interestingly, this tentative anti-colonialism seems to emerge naturally out of Webb's feminist thought. However, Webb's "middle distance," though opening a critique, also entails a kind of embeddedness within the object or system of that critique. Just as Webb's critique of the garrison (of the Western patriarchal canon) takes the form, as Frye suggests, of a vanguard within that garrison, so too does her grappling with the systems of colonialism come only in glimpses, with growing pains and some hesitancy—or else inability—to see beyond the conceptual edges of the colonial system. For instance, if we return to the earlier section of *Water and Light*, "Frivolities," we find a poem that seems to stumble from an anarchist critique to something resembling a postcolonial one:

> Reserved books. Reserved land. Reserved flight
> And still property is theft.
>
> Guilt in the morning and afternoon.
>
> Stick-pin doll, that's me, needled.
>
> Night-time rattle of bones. Island
> a midden, old shells, old pots, old combs.

Inside this skull an oyster brain.

Pearl / plain. Pearl / plain. Earth works. (344)

The language games that move us from "Reserved land" to "Reserved flight" end up making a hauntingly precocious critique of the invasions of colonial systems into the very materials of the land, or "Earth works," of Canada, that is, the forced displacements of Indigenous communities onto reserve lands. The "Night-time rattle of bones" of the dead, and the "midden" that contains their artefacts, assert the dead's primacy and historicity in the face of the ideological system that has the power to "reserve" and thus also to "free." The "Reserved books" then also seem to resonate with the critique elsewhere in *Water and Light* of Western patriarchal authors. Indeed, it seems that the free associative play of this poem converges the collection's wider rebuke of the Western Enlightenment tradition with an understanding (from an anarchist lens) of the ways in which capitalist systems administer power not only onto populations of communities but onto material nature as well. And, finally, the poet is pawn, perpetrator, and victim in this system, suffering "Guilt in the morning and afternoon," once again positioning the poet as a voice (perhaps ironic, perhaps hypocritical) of vanguard critique that emerges nevertheless out of—and because of—that system.

This poem is probably the most conscious in *Water and Light* of the dovetailing of the critique of Western patriarchy with an awareness of settler colonialism, and it should come as no surprise that the connection is only glimpsed through the resonance of word play. The half-formed nature of the critique—the inability to articulate that language outside of the colonial garrison—seems to have something in common with Edward

Said's comments in *Culture and Imperialism* (1994) on Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Said says that while "Conrad shows us that what Marlow does is contingent . . . neither Conrad nor Marlow gives us a full view of what is *outside* the world-conquering attitudes" of imperialism (24). According to Said, Conrad's outsider status with respect to European imperialism meant that he could register and account for the cracks in the colonial system, yet, since the "politics and aesthetics" of *Heart of Darkness* are so embedded in an imperial way of perceiving the colonies, the text cannot imagine an alternative. Said's rhetoric of the vanguard margins and the failed search for an unarticulated world beyond seems to resonate precisely with the garrison and the poet stuck in the middle distance: "because Conrad also had an extraordinarily persistent residual sense of his own exilic marginality, he quite carefully (some would say maddeningly) qualified Marlow's narrative with the provisionality that came from standing *at the very juncture of this world with another, unspecified but different*" (24; emphasis added). One can imagine the speaker in "Leaning" or in "Reserved" inhabiting this purgatory between a system that seems clearly untenable and an alternative way of being that scarcely reveals itself in glimpses, still hidden in the rainforest beyond the horizon of the known. This seems to be the stagnant fate of Webb's involvement with public radio, at first appearing to offer the utopian, anarchist possibilities of raising the public's consciousness, yet, as Kelly and Butling suggest, that very modernist-vanguard critique ends up reaffirming the nationalist boundaries of the garrison, short-circuiting the potential development of a "new alphabet" that could supplant what was available to counter-cultural Canadian intellectuals in the 1970s and '80s.

Perhaps, then, Webb could be considered in a kind of prophetic role—herself a "Priestess of Motion" (*Naked Poems*)—gesturing to the new language beyond the garrison even if her later work, such as *Water and Light*, does not seem to fully realize that language. Webb does indicate that she is somewhat cognizant of the limits of her historical contingencies, and what might be possible for later writers of her kin. Her aptly named poem "Following" fleshes out her relationship to future potentials for Canadian literature that she can only begin to glimpse. "Following" appears in the 25th anniversary issue of *Canadian Literature* (the 100th issue of the journal) in Spring, 1984 alongside a host of Canada's celebrity writers at the time, including Earle Birney, bill bissett, Michael Ondaatje, Al Purdy, Daphne Marlatt, and others. This poem, unsurprisingly dripping with contradiction, is dedicated to Daphne Marlatt, yet it begins, again, with a looming father of Western art, Botticelli, and his erotic and devotional paintings of classical women, such as the figure of Venus in his *Primavera*. The poem indicates that something divine and remarkable in femininity is captured in Botticelli, yet it also seems to evade or resist that capture:

> That which is beautiful in Botticelli
> disintegrates,
> gathers again in women:
> a woman in white,
> a lily,
> a dream in the eye
> of Botticelli. (ll. 5–11)

There is some resonance here with Webb's more widely analyzed "Marvell's Garden" (1956), which indicates a similar aesthetically stagnant fate for Venus as Marvell's tamed nature: "The garden where Marvell scorned love's solicitude— /that dream—and played instead an arcane solitaire" (ll. 9–10). "Marvell's Garden" pits a contradiction between technical mastery and a revivified or self-determining nature (or nature-as-the-feminine): "and yet—he *did* care more for the form / of things than for the thing itself" (ll. 17–18). So too does "Following" suggest that, while Botticelli's *Primavera* may be technically impressive, the male painter holds the female subject at a clinical distance, since "He is standing apart / from *Primavera*" (ll. 12–13). One wonders to what degree the "woman in white" and (or, who is) the "lily" become like the still-life for Botticelli. After all, he, too, seems captured in this motionless aesthetic prison: "He is painting forever / her in this full moon / winter's night" (ll. 14–16).

In contrast to the still, haunting, and demure "winter's night," the poet is then greeted by a new, yet familiar, figure:

> A woman in light
> leans out and over me,
> waving a wand
> of old language
> unspoken beyond
> these words . . . (ll. 17–22)

Crucially, in all of these prophetic poems, it is not the poet herself who bears the unspoken language (which is both new and primordial); instead, she seems to be the

harbinger of these other transformative figures: the Priestess of Motion, Fishstar, the woman in white. “I follow,” the poet admits:

> a flower is held out
>
> and placed in the shell of Venus
>
> who rises, wet,
>
> to greet her. (ll. 29–32)

The poet now seems merely to be an observer to this exchange between the woman in white and Venus, who, rather than lock each other in the hedges of a garden or the frames of a painting, reciprocally exchange a flower, one of those items often contained within the artist’s capturing medium. And, instead of maintaining the mediated distance between the subject and artist-observer, Venus and the woman in white close that distance to greet each other. This greeting offers a new paradigm for relationships between artists and even between art-makers and their subjects.

One problem, though, which gets to the heart of the bizarre relationship of mythopoeia, 1970s settler-Canadian popular intellectualism, and Indigenous cultures in Canada, is the teleological casting of contemporary Western society against the Other. We can see this typified in the new linguistic future that Webb time and again alludes to, which slides so easily between the “new alphabet” which “gasps for air” (*Naked Poems*) to this “old language / unspoken” (“Following”). The “new alphabet” is a becoming of a world that Webb seems to glimpse without ever having obtained full access to. The new language hesitates and catches as it “gasps for air.” The air does not lend itself easily to the creation of this new intimate, erotic discourse, yet the material of the air itself must form an integral part of that new speech. We are far from what Webb in *Talking* calls the

"brash" and bold prosody of the radio voice as it masters and rides across the airwaves, "air" signifying not much more than a vehicle. Webb's inability to precisely articulate the potential world of this new discourse means that it would be an error to cast this future as exactly anarchist or exactly feminist, although it probably does have something to do with each of those future worlds. However, the easy sliding between this new future and an old, primordial, primitive world seems couched in a patronizing mid-century Western anthropological discourse that imagines, in obscured Christian metaphors of the Edenic and the eschatological, that contemporary Westerners inhabit an especially complex, fallen or compromised world for which non-Western cultures, thought to be more "pure" or untainted by industrialization and modernity, can provide an antidote. We see this with Frye's conception of the vanguard garrison of artists who oppose the numbing and dehumanizing effects of modernization: "as society gets more complicated and more in control of its environment, it becomes more of a revolutionary garrison within a metropolitan society" (231). We can also see traces of this in Webb's bewilderment and interest in Lilo Berliner and Wilson Duff's esoteric and patterned readings of West Coast Indigenous myths (and consider, too, the colonial language of benevolent ownership and discovery in the claiming of a cultural artifact as "Wilson's Bowl"[SEE James O. Young "Profound Offense and Cultural Appropriate" 2005, pg 136.]). Despite the best intentions of Webb and the other counter-cultural white intellectuals involved with vanguard public broadcasts, the absence of a critique of this primitivist discourse is perhaps their most consequential blindness.

To return to the poem, the speaker leaves us with the image of her "following" the divine feminine figures. Yet, in the poem's looking toward a potential future, the lines of

"following" seem to move in many directions. The poem positions the queer feminism of Daphne Marlatt as a literature that "follows" the suggestion first hinted at in Webb's *Naked Poems* (and these early collections, including *The Sea Is also a Garden*, themselves "follow" the perhaps deliberately obscured traditions of H. D. and Sappho). And even in this claiming of a new (or, recovered) feminist tradition in Canadian literature between herself and Marlatt, neither do the lines of "following" seem unilateral: although Webb, like the "woman in white," offers Marlatt a flower in the groundwork of her early queer texts, they both, the poem says, greet each other, suggesting a reciprocal kinship or borrowing between both of them. In the fourth chapter of this dissertation, which focuses on the queer protagonist of Marlatt's war novel *Taken*, Marlatt's similar response to this reciprocal greeting in her doubling metaphors of mothers and lovers will be explained in more detail.

For now, Webb curiously casts this relationship in erotic terms. Webb is not primarily an erotic poet, and, though there is probably more purchase for considering an erotic aesthetic in Marlatt's work, neither is the erotic the only mode by which Marlatt's poetry apprehends the world. Thus, it is somewhat striking, and quite revealing, that when Webb in "Following" considers her relationship to the emerging generation of (queer) women's writing in Canada, the poem articulates this connection through the erotic: the flower is itself "placed" in the concave "shell of Venus / who rises, wet, / to greet her" (ll. 30–32). First, the erotic here is more than an aesthetic and certainly more than thematic. Second, this is also specifically a queer erotic. Since the queer feminine erotic appears for Webb precisely at the interstice with her intertextual and political relationship to other queer Canadian women writers, the erotic becomes a way of entering or approaching the

world. In Laurie Ricou's 1986 attempt to characterize Webb and Marlatt as Canadian women writers in "Phyllis Webb, Daphne Marlatt and Simultitude," he quotes Kathleen Scherf, who at that time was attending Ricou's graduate seminar. She has this to say about Marlatt's conflation of linguistic interrogation with the erotic: "Marlatt habitually creates an etymological figure in which the ancient world is melodiously sounded between two modern cognates 'lost, *losti*, lust-y one' [. . .] The fluent nature of female sexuality is best licked with long flowing lines and smooth, slippery word associations" (quoted in Ricou 209). Scherf's passage itself is marked by long lines and slippery word associations, but, more importantly, it makes the case that Marlatt, like Webb, is preoccupied with the queer erotic as the expression or performance of queer feminist politics, insofar as Marlatt's experiments with language and the apprehension of the material world are themselves embodiments of politics. The following two chapters make the case that this interaction with the world that we see in Marlatt's work, born out of feminist phenomenology and media theory, provides us with a new way of registering global and local trauma. Indeed, as the fourth chapter details, the queer erotic opens vulnerabilities that allow us to feel across distances, an intimate, if estranged, relationship that "Following" here develops between Webb and Marlatt.

Chapter 3: Labour and the Lyric Camera: (Re)viewing Robert Minden's Photographs in *Steveston* with Daphne Marlatt

In the fall of 1972, Daphne Marlatt and Canadian sociologist and artist Robert Minden became involved in an aural history project first initiated by Reynoldston Research and Studies in its effort to document the various cultural groups that made up British Columbia. This particular project set out to interview and document the predominantly Japanese fishing village of Steveston, just south of Vancouver. Daphne Marlatt's skills as a poet were leveraged into writing and editing for the project, while Robert Minden documented the village through photographs. The two joined Maya Koizumi, who conducted interviews in Japanese with the residents of Steveston, and Rex Weyler, also responsible for photography. After some funding setbacks, the newly created Aural History Programme at the Provincial Archives of British Columbia allowed the work to continue (*Steveston Recollected* xiii). The translated interviews and photographs were finally published in a book called *Steveston Recollected: A Japanese-Canadian History* in 1975. The main concerns of this aural history project were the encroachment of Vancouver suburbs onto and the gentrification of Steveston, worries over the potential loss of this distinct BC community, and the early history and wartime experience of the older members of the community. The book appeared during the new, burgeoning interest in heterogeneous cultural groups within mainstream (read: white) Canadian academia. The documentarianism of *Steveston Recollected* inspired Marlatt and Minden to pursue another type of encounter with the community that would be guided by the principles of the lyric rather than the interview: after they completed their work on *Steveston Recollected* (though it was not finally published until 1975), they began a joint book that

combined poetry from Marlatt with Minden's photographs of the town that was first published in 1974 and titled simply *Steveston*.

Steveston Recollected and *Steveston* are curious historiographies for the fact that they both purport to capture and express the history and legacy of life and labour in the town of Steveston, while they actually revolve around stories of the wartime internment of Japanese people in Canada from 1942 to the years following the end of the war. The structure of *Steveston Recollected*, like a more standard historical account, narrativizes internment insofar as it contains a recognizable pre-war context, a swelling of racist legislation, a culmination of exile within the camps, and a postwar return. It may be more curious to regard *Steveston*, composed primarily of lyrics and photographs, as historically minded, or as having internment as a primary focal point. Beyond the simple biographical fact that Marlatt and Minden worked on both texts in the span of a few years, and that the documentary aspects of *Steveston Recollected* are recognizable—even, perhaps, in their negation—in the artistic book *Steveston*, I would like to suggest that *Steveston* offers an encounter with the history of internment that responds to historiographical problems endemic to the scholarly work on the internment of Japanese people in Canada published from the 1970s onward. As the later parts of this chapter contend, *Steveston*, in its poetry and photographs, repudiates a *narrativization* of history in favour of a *lyricization* of the history of internment. Furthermore, the chapter argues that both the photographs and the poetry must be analyzed through the lens of lyric history in order to attend to the fragile and suppressed history of internment.

The narrativization of history has been a concept at the forefront of theories of historiography over the past half century.[10] Narrativity has, at times, been rejected as an obfuscation of historical reality, a marring of history in accepted and overwritten cultural symbols, and at others it has in fact been championed as a way of servicing historical discourse for political liberation.[11] At the heart of these various interpretations of the usefulness of the narrativization of history is our almost natural, or unconscious, boundedness to narrative, and how narrativization depends on prior, ideological ways of structuring reality. In uncovering the pragmatic effects of narrativity, Hayden White in "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality" connects our ways of understanding historical narratives with our preconceptions about literary narratives:

> If every fully realized story, however we define that familiar but conceptually elusive entity, is a kind of allegory, points to a moral, or endows events, whether real or imaginary, with a significance that they do not possess as a mere sequence, then it seems possible to conclude that every historical narrative has as its latent or manifest purpose the desire to *moralize* the events of which it treats. (17–18; original emphasis)

It is not the intention of this chapter to pursue the usefulness of narrativity in the general field of historical studies as a discipline. Instead, I am interested in looking at the

[10] *Narrativity* describes the underlying structures by which data can be shaped into a story. *Narration* instead refers to a specific instance of storytelling. See Hayden White's "The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory."

[11] See Hayden White's discussion of the five theoretical attitudes toward narrativity in "The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory." Indeed, the fifth category is constituted by those historians who choose *not* to engage in a critical understanding of narrativity, against which the other four categories are emboldened with a theoretical demand for inquiry.

consequences of historical narratives on our ability to encounter events in the past, in other words, to examine the ways in which the narrativization of history *mediates* our encounter with the past. Theories of historiography including White's often suggest that an understanding of the past demands the use of narrativity, with whatever consequences that brings. We should either be cognizant of those consequences, and attempt a sort of 'mastery' over the discourse of narrative in order to structure historical reality into something at least politically neutral if not beneficial, or otherwise retreat to non-narrative forms of historical data-keeping, such as the use of annals, which disrupt typical narratives of cause and effect in the writing of history. In contrast to these proposed solutions to the problem of narrativity, this chapter argues that the poetry and photographs in *Steveston* offer another, lyrical way of encountering the past, which allows us to, in a way pragmatic only to photography, *face* some of the problems of narrativity in the way that we approach history.

As White argues above, within the narrativizing of history a *moralizing* of history can be uncovered, which is to say that historical narratives are mobilized, whether consciously or unconsciously (in his words, "latent"), toward ideological or political ends. In his view, historians should interrogate the goals and consequences of the ways they employ narrativity, ultimately in order to harness the transformative powers of narrativity for righteous political action. Some writers have taken issue with this conception of history's redemptive power, suggesting that it seems to be at best utopian and at worst dangerous. For example, A. Moses Dirk argues that the harnessing of historical narratives for moral and political ends has been a staple strategy of oppressive, nationalist political movements. Thus, White's theory of historiography, Dirk suggests, not only provides the

epistemic grounds on which these movements take root, but may also call them into being by submitting history to the ideological whims of its practitioners: "White's endorsement of the power of nationalist mythologies needs to be taken seriously because his view of the 'public role of history' (Jürgen Habermas) can be said to hold the field in many recent problems" (314). Chief among these problems in historiography is the resurgence of revisionist historical narratives: "For the past thirty years, nationalist 'revisionisms,' including Holocaust denial, which challenge the critical, post-nationalist consensus among historians, have been unleashed in, for instance, Irish, German, Israeli, Italian, and Australian historiography" (Dirk 314). Dirk's analysis is most wary of putatively explicit oppressive regimes adopting White's theory of narrativity for revisionist ends. It may be hard to imagine that these revisionists would submit their work to the kind of theoretical scrutiny Dirk has in mind, but Dirk's point is that we should remain skeptical of so-called politically "redemptive" historical narratives, which may actually serve nationalist goals.

In the decades after the internment of Japanese communities in Canada, several national narratives emerged in the historical accounts of internment. Ann Gomer Sunahara, who first became interested in the history of internment when she learned about the experiences of her partner, David Sunahara, and his family during the Second World War, wrote one of the first histories of internment, called *The Politics of Racism: The Uprooting of Japanese Canadians During the Second World War* (1981). In the opening pages of the book, Sunahara frames the history of internment explicitly by evacuating the narrative of moral aims: "The intention of this book is not to arouse bad memories or to make accusations. What is past is past. Rather my intention is to tell frankly what the record shows about an unhappy event in Canadian history, an event inconsistent with the

public image most Canadians hold of their society" (xi). White's analysis of narrativity in historiography insists that no history can be "frank" and to "the record," that is, the meaning-making devices of historiography already editorialize, or, narrativize, the putative 'raw facts' of history. This opening claim, that the book will simply present these raw facts of "the record," attempts to suppress the book's narrativization of history, which, in turn, would also suggest that the text has no moral aims, that it will not "make accusations." Taken at face value, this claim would suggest that the following text actually lacks some key meaning-making apparatuses. If the text makes no accusations, then it perhaps also lacks an analysis of cause and effect, of the volition of historical actors, and of the roots of political policies and decisions. This would suggest that what follows is a poorly written history, which, even if it were the case, would be a peculiar claim to make in the opening pages. In fact, the body of the text goes to great lengths to assign responsibility and analyze the course of political and social energies that enabled the internment of Japanese people in Canada. This history certainly *does* narrativize, and, in White's sense, it implicitly moralizes as well. What, then, could inspire such a claim toward the "frank" facts of "the record"?

It seems that a larger historical narrative is at work here, one that extends beyond the event of internment. This narrative is the one of Sunahara's contemporary Canada, wherein those Canadians "born and raised since the Second World War [. . .] have known only a tolerant Canada: a Canada in which discrimination has been greatly reduced," and in which Canadians "have lived free of racism, and hence in ignorance of its pain and power" (xi). She goes on to say that "this book is intended as a reminder that the tolerance we know is historically only a thin and recently applied veneer on Canadian society" (xi).

This historical narrative dichotomizes the events of the Second World War, characterized by prejudice and displacement, with the liberal humanist Canada of the 1970s and early 1980s, which is "free of racism," tolerant, and seemingly incompatible with wartime Canada. Thus, on the one hand, internment emerges as a relic from an earlier time; since its constituent conditions no longer exist, it cannot be repeated, but it nonetheless should be studied for the ways that it created the contemporary moral landscape of Canada. On the other hand, internment is held back only by "a thin [. . .] veneer," and thus requires the constant vigilance of our attention unless we risk sinking back to that earlier time when such events were possible. So, Sunahara's historical narrative of the emergence of contemporary liberal Canada is characterized by a simultaneous distance from the shocking events of the Second World War, and their incessant proximity, which calls us to remember the past and renew our commitment to the liberal humanist ideals of tolerance, freedom, anti-discrimination, and so on.

In this configuration, this historical narrative, what is internment? It becomes both more and less than an event that happened. If living in a free Canada is the moral carrot, then internment becomes the stick wielded against us (who, ostensibly, "have lived free of racism") in order to carry us teleologically forward toward the end point of the historical narrative (the *becoming* of a utopian, liberal Canada). The presence of internment in the past is a constituent event in the formation of contemporary, tolerant Canada, while the (remote) possibility of its reoccurrence (it could never happen *now*, but we must also make sure that it never happens) would be a disruption in the historical narrative. Wartime itself seems to be an interruption of the ordinary logic of the national historical narrative, so that the absurdity of internment, how ostensibly well-meaning

people could enact such a policy or at least stand by as it happens, finds its proper place within the comparably absurd wartime.

The paradox here is that wartime exists in opposition to and thus outside of the Canadian historical narrative, but, simultaneously, wartime constantly encroaches on the present moment, threatening always to plunge us back to that disruptive time of intolerance, irrationality, and violence. This pervasiveness and porousness of wartime recalls both Fussell's and Favret's conceptions of total war. They agree that the constant threat of war, real or imagined, comes to invade, as it were, all time. The threat itself takes on the malleable figure of the enemy, so that we mobilize our defences—including material production, policy, and military personnel—against the *threat* of war rather than against any actual entity. The paradox that wartime simultaneously disrupts history and propels history into the present moment resolves when we consider the ways in which historical narratives of war, like Sunahara's, treat war as exceptional to and in excess of history. War's irrationality puts it at odds with the narrativization of history, that is, the process of turning the raw data of the past into a meaningful narrative. War narratives can, on the one hand, contain war by reducing out its complexity until it becomes a simple story of righteous, if tragic, hero nation and morally repugnant enemies. On the other hand, if a war narrative maintains war in its irrationality and complexity, it does so by bracketing war outside of the normal and rational historical narrative. If war becomes an exception to and thus lies outside of history, then, in a narrative sense, it also lies outside of narrative (or, in this case, historical) time. Unmoored from typical historical time, war constitutes a time of its own, a time of excess, that is, wartime. Wartime runs parallel to historical time, which permits Sunahara's narrative to claim that war is at once

in a past almost too distant to understand, and, at the same time, barely held back from invading the present moment.

The exceptionality and non-rationality of wartime then allows wartime to become a moment of national genesis. Thus, Sunahara's Canada, "free of racism," is indebted to the constitutive wartime events of which internment forms a crucial part. Through this historical narrative, we can only see internment distorted and coloured by our own mitigating explanations that curiously correspond to our anxieties over this event's presence in the historical record of Canada. So, when one states that internment could not happen in Sunahara's (or our) contemporary Canada, we should not read this statement as purely an analysis of the political possibilities of the present time period; more so, the statement actually serves to claim that the speaker is not so ethically lethargic that they would allow internment to occur today. Rather than fully encountering internment in the past, this kind of response redirects the encounter to the speaker's own responsibility in the present, ultimately attempting to evacuate the speaker of culpability for internment ('*I* certainly wouldn't have stood by and let it happen'). This schema demonstrates two points. The first is that, if we are beholden to historical narratives of internment, we may never actually encounter the past, and it will remain mediated through our own anxieties about ourselves in the present. The second point is that the constant evacuations of our culpability for the past (what Sunahara calls "arous[ing] bad memories" and "mak[ing] accusations"), the terrible anxieties that we bring to historical narratives (or that they bring to us), reveal just how implicated in and responsible for the past we remain, despite the many arguments for our ethical freedom in the present.

One of the more troubling consequences of narrativity in history is the way that traditional literary narrative modes come to supplant our reception of the past. Hayden White, and perhaps Northrop Frye as well, may respond that these narrative modes are important for meaningfully structuring reality, and that our knowledge of history may be severely limited if not for the meaning-making powers of narrative and genre. However, as readers of history, we are then led into the role of the audience, and view only a particular perspective of the past. If we were to categorize histories of internment, such as Sunahara's or even *Steveston Recollected,* in the four-part generic structure that Frye develops in *Anatomy of Criticism* (the tragedy, the satire, the comedy, and the romance), the narrative of internment would most closely resemble a comedy. Frye writes that typical comedies follow a process "from a lower world of confusion to an upper world of order" (184); an initial state of precarity (the pre-war community of Steveston, facing legal troubles and labour exploitation) undergoes a chaotic and nearly tragic transformative period (exile and internment), which leads to rebirth and reintegration (the return to Steveston, and the emergence of contemporary multicultural Canada, putatively "free of racism"). Frye makes much of how being a member of the audience mediates our view of the story, saying that, in comedy, "We see the action, in short, from the point of view of a higher and better ordered world" (184). This kind of mediation of the narrative seems to correspond with the framing of Sunahara's history by way of our current, privileged vantage point in history, where racism is supposedly a thing of the past. Being members of the audience of history, we hold the past at arm's length, measuring it against our "higher and better ordered world" (Frye 184), our "tolerant Canada" (Sunahara xi). Two points come to dominate our encounter with internment. The first is the implications

of the final narrative of internment, the comic ending that results in both a return (the leaving of the internment camps) and the constitution of our "better" world. At best, the comic ending rectifies (and depoliticizes) the troubling state of internment, and at worst it makes internment a hard but nevertheless necessary lesson to learn on our way to a multicultural Canada. The second point is that, as audience members, we do not form a part of the story of internment: we can only receive the story of internment from a distance, and react, emote, or absorb. We cannot be responsible for internment, be held accountable for internment, continue to be hurt by internment, be psychically unable to leave the camps, or hold any other stances toward internment that would be available to actors in history.

Since narratives of internment paralyze our ability to engage with a living past, I argue in this chapter that we can turn to Daphne Marlatt and Robert Minden's *Steveston* as a blueprint for a reinvigorated mode of encountering the past. Both the poetry and photography in *Steveston* explore the possibilities of engaging in alternative, non-narrative modes of encountering the past so that we may find ourselves, crucially, within internment once again. We must ask, then, if historical narratives in the decades following internment were (and continue to be) so coloured in present anxieties, what are the ways in which we can viably encounter internment? Is it possible to unravel the medium of narrative, and to *see*, as it were, internment in some other way?

One possibility for eschewing historical narratives of internment is by looking through the eyes of those who experienced it firsthand. In "Memories of Internment: Narrating Japanese Canadian Women's Life Stories," Pamela Sugiman analyzes the construction of memory from interviews that she conducted with Japanese Canadian

women who were interned during and after the Second World War. She notes that "Many writers of the internment have long promoted the view that the collective *Nisei* response to their internment was aptly expressed by the phrase, *shikata ga nai*, resignation to the situation or what can be done" ("Memories of Internment" 380).[12] However, she argues that the interviews she conducted reveal "a fuller narrative" that complicates the face of this common sentiment: she says that the statement "'What can be done,' helps to neatly and benignly describe a complex, ambivalent, and perhaps dangerous set of emotions" that "are almost always associated with resignation rather than acceptance" (381). Sugiman draws a distinction in how her interviewees understand their current relationship to their experience of internment in the past. Within *shakata ga nai*, or, "what can be done," she sees "resignation rather than acceptance," a sentiment that, she suggests, must be hidden due to "cultural and gendered views of acceptable behaviour" (381). Within Sugiman's construct of propriety, memory, and resignation, it is possible to understand these memories of internment as, psychically, undone (resigned, but not accepted). What Sugiman's study reveals is that the memory of internment is not settled, or, in narrative terms, resolved. An encounter with internment, then, must also bear the unresolved nature of the event, the resignation of history.

The town of Steveston has been a focal point in the history of Japanese Canadians. In Roger Daniels's analysis of Canadian and United States internments of Japanese immigrant communities, he argues that the economies of fishing that took place largely in Steveston are both an integral part of understanding the history of the Japanese Canadian community as well as some of the root causes of anti-Japanese rhetoric that led to

[12] The term *Nisei* refers to the children of Japanese-born emigrants.

internment: “Many of these [Japanese] fishermen lived in villages that were largely Japanese—Steveson [sic], at the mouth of the Fraser River south of Vancouver was the largest—and were in almost feudal thrall to the canneries which provided their equipment and were the sole market for the salmon they caught” (174). Daniels suggests that the canneries exploited the Japanese fishers through a merchant feudalism that tied up most of their earnings in the rental and replacement of equipment. Furthermore, the resulting financial precarity of the Japanese fishing communities made it possible for the canneries to pay the Japanese fishers much less for their work than their white and Indigenous counterparts. Being undercut, then, fuelled animosity between the white and Indigenous labourers and the Japanese fishing community in Steveston. This picture is corroborated in *Steveston Recollected*, which recounts an 1897 public address to the Japanese fishers in Steveston by Mr. T. Nagao: “If the standard price [of salmon] is 6½ cents, the season’s catch for one boat will bring $216.465. Expenses will be $66 for the puller, $100 for nets, $10 for licence, $24 for food (3½ months), $7 for boots, $2.25 for rubber poncho, $35 for boat, and $25 for personal expenses, total $268.65, which will leave us $52 short” (9). As Mr. Nagao states, the fishing profession, rather than being a livelihood, sometimes resulted in the accumulation of debt and financial servitude to the monopolistic canneries. *Steveston Recollected* (with Marlatt being the principal editor) notes that, when the Canadian government seized fishing boats owned by anyone of Japanese ancestry in 1941, the average Japanese family in Steveston had three years net income invested in their boat. Indeed, Harry Sameshima recalls that “‘They deducted 5 cents from the price of each fish for the rent, so if you caught a thousand fish that meant $50 a year for the rent’” (*Steveston Recollected* 2). The housing was owned by the canneries, and

Sameshima notes that rent was never actually payable in full, but instead scaled with the amount of fish that were brought in. The scaling of rent crystallizes Daniels's analysis that the Japanese fishers could never sever their ties to the exploitative canneries. The profits from the booming BC salmon industry that were in large part due to the efforts of Japanese fishers never translated to viable wages for the families themselves.

Daniels further argues that anti-Japanese hostility grew, ironically, because of this chronic undervaluing and underpaying of Japanese fishers by the canneries: "By 1901 more than 40 per cent of the commercial fishing licenses issued by the province (1,958 of 4,722) were issued to Japanese, whose prominence in this key BC industry quickly drew complaints from interested whites and Indians who felt that their prior rights were being ignored" (173). Much of the wealth enjoyed by predominantly white BC business owners in the early- and mid-twentieth century resulted from the overworking and underpaying of Japanese immigrants, and this exploitation formed the basis of anti-Japanese discourse, repackaged as a rhetoric of competition between labour classes. As Daniels further illustrates, laws and policies restricting the fishing licenses given to Japanese workers, restricting immigration from Japan, and restricting suffrage for Japanese Canadians provided a basis of legislation that made internment intelligible and palatable in Canada's wartime political and public spheres. If we examine the roots of anti-Japanese rhetoric as well as the kinds of racist laws and policies that were forerunners to internment, we can therefore see that labour exploitation of working-class Japanese immigrants—centred in large part around Steveston—historically underpins internment legislation.

When Marlatt and Minden originally began visiting and collecting materials in Steveston for the aural history project, the town had started to feel the pressures of

gentrification from the encroaching Vancouver suburbs, which brought back feelings of class and race struggles in Steveston as well as the expulsion of internment. In the poetry of *Steveston*, the repeated word "monopoly" begins to spread over and choke the book's vision: "This corporate growth that monopolizes / the sun. moon & tide, fish-run. So they see nothing remarkable / in this [. . .] it sucks them dry" (18). Gentrification becomes a final iteration of the ways in which the exploitative monopolies of the canneries swallow the lives of those in the community, so much so that even the natural world (the sun, moon, tides, and rivers) seems to answer to the companies. The simultaneous pervasiveness of the canneries and the seemingly imminent collapse of Steveston's traditions due to urban encroachment indirectly recall internment, at this time displaced only by a single generation: "Or how the plant packs their lives, chopping / off the hours, contains *them* as it contains first aid, toilets, beds, the / vestige of a self-contained life in this small house back of the carpentry / shed" (21; original emphasis). The members of the town seem frozen between the possibility of the town's collapse, an expulsion which would mimic internment, and the immovable restraints that cannery life throws onto them, containing them (as the central metaphor of the word "internment" suggests). The poet's lines too are "chopp[ed] / off" in unlikely, syncopated rhythms: the poem absorbs the pressures of containment into its own constitution. *Steveston* revolves around a doubling of internment in the present through modes other than the explicit legislations of 1942; now, labour exploitation and gentrification contain and cordon off the lives of the community members. The book subjects the past to the symbolic energies and patterning that we usually find in poetry, which, I argue, indicates that *Steveston* makes possible a *lyricization* rather than a *narrativization* of history. *Steveston* provides a lyrical encounter

with internment, which enables us—and the Steveston community in the early 1970s—to participate in the history of internment, rather than simply being audience members held at a distance from the drama of history.

How, though, can we theorize a *lyricization* of history? In "Lyric History: Temporality, Rhetoric, and the Ethics of Poetry," John Michael asserts that new scholarly historicizations of lyric poetry seem to ignore the fundamental readerly moment: since poetry not only attempts *to do things* (such as meditate on a subject or capture a feeling), but more specifically *to do things to a reader* that are both hard to predict and indeterminate, it shares a relationship with rhetoric. In this sense of poetry's rhetorics, the reader seems to mimic Frye's conception of the dramatic or narrative audience. However, Michael notes that this indeterminacy of the reader has consequences on our understanding of history as well:

> Paradoxically, the historicization of lyric reminds us that history itself has a lyrical aspect. It combines recollection and projection, a statement of a past experience or state of being addressed to the subjectivity of a future reader or audience whose realms of experience and states of being remain indeterminate. In this sense, history becomes lyrical, a disturbing fact that lyric poetry often calls to mind, but one that historicism often seems to forget. In the subjectivity of a future reader emerges history's and poetry's significance and whatever ethical efficacy either might achieve. (266)

Thus, the reader of poetry, in contrast to the narrative audience, does not simply observe, providing both an instrument to measure the passing of narrative (or historical) time as well as a barometer of the story's sensibilities and consequences. Instead, the lyrical

content of history (which also becomes, in poetry, the subjectivity of history) corresponds, converses, and clashes with the lyrical content or subjectivity of the reader. This is to say that history is no longer mediated by the distance between the action and the audience, as it is in narrative; the medium of the lyric only provides us with a meaningful encounter with history by way of deliberately putting into conflict the subjective modes of the past with the subjective modes of the reader. In this way, we become active participants in the expression of history's ethics, with all of the potential traumas and accusations that might entail.

In "On Lyric Poetry and Society," however, Theodor Adorno brings up some consequences of engaging in lyric poetry, which force us to tread carefully in the theoretical grounds of the lyric. He pauses on a certain dilemma within the lyric between those dreams and desires, repressed by social antagonisms, that can find expression within poetry, and those people who are fortunate enough to be able to express these dreams and desires in the first place: "Not only does the lyric subject embody the whole all the more cogently, the more it expresses itself; in addition, poetic subjectivity is itself indebted to privilege: the pressures of the struggle for survival allow only a few human beings to grasp the universal through immersion in the self or to develop as autonomous subjects capable of freely expressing themselves" (45). Adorno sees in the lyric impulse the desire to express the truth of historical antagonisms, and in the poet the rising of many voices distilled into one. Yet, as this one voice rises, as it were, among the many, it reproduces another antagonism between those who can and those who cannot speak (lyrically or otherwise), even within the topography of speech-acts of resistance. Adorno's articulation that lyric poets can "grasp the universal" and "develop as

autonomous subjects capable of freely expressing themselves" seems to hinge on the language of liberal humanism, indicating a paradox between a materialist analysis of the proletariat and the liberal humanist utopian ideals of the subject, which seem to find a reality within lyric poetry. He goes on to say that "The others, however," and here he means those who cannot speak through lyric poetry, or even speak at all, "those who not only stand alienated, as though they were objects, facing the disconcerted poetic subject but who have also literally been degraded to objects of history, have the same right, or a greater right, to grope for the sounds in which sufferings and dreams are welded" (45). The disparities between those who can access and express the universal and those who cannot speak are not only revealed in the lyric but magnified: the political Other, incapable of (or prevented from) lyric expression, alienated from subjecthood, then becomes a lyric object in the emancipation of the poet into the universal. In other words, the many voices that the poet distils lose the potential of their subjecthood when they come to signify and constitute the poet's universal subjectivity.

This dilemma would seem to be a threatening blow to any lyric with an ethical project, yet Adorno does indicate that each lyric poem grapples differently with the voices of alterity, preferring those, like Baudelaire's, which strike against bourgeois society to those lyrics which attempt to smooth over and silence those voices. Adorno further suggests that the expression of the voices of the Other, as much a paradox as that may be, is a fundamental, irreducible ethical principle revealed by lyric poetry: not only do those others "have the same right, or a greater right, to grope for the sounds in which sufferings and dreams are welded" as the lyric poet, but, moreover, "This inalienable right has asserted itself again and again, in forms however impure, mutilated, fragmentary, and

intermittent—the only forms possible for those who have to bear the burden" (45). We can characterize the "impure" forms of the Other's speech (which, by principle, fails) as ruptures in the humanist impulse of the lyric, the impulse to universalize and sublimate the lyric subject. Thus, this chapter contends that *Steveston*, and its relationship to the work of aural history, *Steveston Recollected*, bear an essential paradox between a liberal humanist and anthropological desire to *represent* the Japanese community of the BC town to the mainstream, white Canadian literary world, and the actual presence of the Steveston community as an alterity in Canadian history. Thus, the text works out an insoluble negotiation between the essentially privileged status of the lyric poet and photographer, and the actual contents of alterity that find expression within the poetry and photographs, however "impure, mutilated, fragmentary" they may be.

This task, to reintroduce alterity into the history of internment, hinges on a similar point to the one Mona Oikawa makes in *Cartographies of Violence: Japanese Canadian Women, Memory, and the Subjects of the Internment*. Oikawa discusses the paradoxes of a racial analysis of internment, first noting that, although "race" as such lacks scientific evidence, it still operates in profound ways on our social bodies. She then destabilizes a simple historical reading of race and internment, first the mistaken belief that "only a few politicians used power to expel Japanese Canadians from the coastal area" (7), and then the assumption that "while some people are constituted as 'racists' in narratives of the Internment, it is suggested that some who participated in the process of the Internment were not racist" (8). Thus, a naïve reading of race that ignores colonial and relational analyses of power distorts our understanding of our own participation in the history of internment, whoever we may be, and, finally, results in a kind of ethical vacuum for white

Canadians who were not politicians, legislators, or RCMP members at the time. Oikawa argues, instead, that "Discourses of race position everyone in relation to them, and while white people may not think of themselves as racist they still participate in the rules and practices that sustain a racial social order and from which they benefit" (8).[13] Oikawa further points out that these often-ignored relations between power and race are actually constitutive elements for the invisible subjectivity of whiteness in Canada: "whiteness is discursively unmarked and normalized through some of the Internment narratives themselves. Therefore, in representing racialization of Japanese Canadians in the past, we may reproduce the rules that produce white domination in the present" (8). Like Sugiman, Oikawa looks to interviews in order to eschew the problems inherent to what she calls "some of the Internment narratives." However, it is my contention that both Sugiman's and Oikawa's moves to look outside of typical narrative modes of history, that is, to look to the witness, betray a deeper trouble with historical narrativity in general. This chapter, then, aims to destabilize liberal humanist ways of looking, both poetically and photographically, in order to avoid the simple dichotomies between race and racist, historical villains and neutral observers, which continue to perpetuate the dominance and the ethical vacuum of whiteness in Canada.

Steveston Recollected was originally part of a larger effort led by William J. Langlois to provide photographs and aural recordings of various cultural groups in British Columbia (Woodward 63). It is somewhat tempting to consider this wider project—to pair visual and aural history—as being underpinned by liberal humanist multiculturalism.

[13] Daniel Coleman makes a similar point in regards even to early progressivist ideologies in Canada in *White Civility: The Literary Project of English Canada* (152).

Certainly the project secured its funding (no easy task) by taking advantage of the burgeoning interest toward multiculturalism in Canadian academia in the 1970s. However, writers for the project articulated their work in a neutral discourse that made room for other types of historical inquiry, and the attention in this project toward the visual and the aural itself demonstrates a skepticism toward narrative history. Therefore, we should at the outset already understand that *Steveston Recollected*, the more typical history of the two books, already navigates between liberal humanist documentarianism and other forms of bearing witness to events in the past. Much of the literature on *Steveston* sees it as a stylized—and perhaps intensified—progression of the historical documentary work of *Steveston Recollected*. Moreover, the meaning of 'the documentary' and its relationship to factual reality seems uncomplicated in the literature. Instead, it is perhaps more pertinent to note the ways in which *Steveston* undermines the purported 'objectivity' of the documentary.

Critics of *Steveston*, though, have for the most part attended to the similarities between the two texts. For example, Simona Bertacco notes how Marlatt's poetry in *Steveston* seems to reflect the same kind of humanist impulses for protection of the particular that underpin *Steveston Recollected*. Furthermore, Bertacco considers the two texts both to be branches out of the same historical event, that is to say, Marlatt and Minden's visits to the town: "In the early 1970s, Marlatt was working on an Oral History project for the Provincial Archives of British Columbia concerning the Japanese fishermen town of Steveston, BC, which gave rise to two books: *Steveston* (1974) and *Steveston Recollected* (1975). Both works marked a strict collaboration of the poet with the photographer and artist Robert Minden" (119–20). Rhetorically pairing the two texts

in the way that Bertacco does here implicitly argues that they are both responses to the same archival task, to document the town, and it emphasizes congruency between *Steveston Recollected* and *Steveston* as well as between Marlatt and Minden. For instance, Bertacco sees Minden's photographic way of looking in Marlatt's poetry. She seizes on the opening poem of the collection, "Imagine: a town," as exemplary of Marlatt's commitment to the visual; in relation to the colon after "Imagine," she says, "The pause, symbolised by the column, between the imperative verb and the object is pregnant with the expectation of a *tableau* taking shape in front of our eyes" (131–32). Bertacco's reading of the interaction between the first photographs in the 2001 edition of *Steveston* and the opening poem is anchored by the un-noted yet deft wordplay between the words "image" and "imagine." Bertacco demonstrates the ways in which both poem and photograph present images of the town and ask us to "imagine" through several vectors: they ask us to imagine what is left in the gaps of the photographs and poetry, they ask us to imagine actually being a part of the community, and they ask us to imagine the town's past.

Karis Shearer, in considering both the biographical account of Marlatt and Minden's visits to the town as well as the final texts, notes that *Steveston* "is perhaps less a 'private' poem, than an attempt to engage *personally* with the past and present of a local community, which is a kind of public" (226; original emphasis). Although both Bertacco and Shearer call attention to the presence of the past in *Steveston*, Shearer emphasizes the personal or impressionistic nature of Marlatt and Minden's encounter with history rather than the purported 'objectivity' embedded in the traditional view of the documentary. Furthermore, in contrast to Bertacco's assertion that there was a "strict collaboration"

between Minden and Marlatt, Shearer describes it as "a process that constantly involves separation and return" (Shearer 226), which she picks up from Marlatt's remarks on their collaboration upon its inclusion in *The Long Poem Anthology* (1979) edited by Michael Ondaatje. Shearer's reading does attend to the nuances of collaboration and the documentary. Her concerns, however, lie in elaborating the restrictions placed on *The Long Poem Anthology* itself. My reading, then, agrees with the core principles of Shearer's view on collaboration and documentary and extends these principles to a longer analysis of the text itself.

In contrast to both Bertacco and Shearer, Laurie Ricou seems more ambivalent in his reading of *Steveston* as an artistic attempt at historical documentary. He says that "history speaks diminuendo in *Steveston*" (295), and the history he has in mind here is Indigenous land claims in the Fraser River valley. He also goes on to note that the map, which forms the cover of the original 1974 print of *Steveston*, "announce[s], initially, the documentary impulse: the map, as a form implies truth, accuracy, and objectivity in representation" (296), an impulse borrowed from *Steveston Recollected*. At the same time, Ricou says that part of the way that the poet in *Steveston* understands maps and her role in documenting the town is by questioning the power-dynamics of map-making as a form of geo-social control.[14] In Ricou's conception of the paradox of maps, that they purport to be objective even as they betray the values of the cartographer, we can see a correspondence with the photograph's role in *Steveston*. It attempts an "objectivity in representation," an accurate look at the town, although embedded within the photographs

[14] For a lengthier discussion of the histories of settler-colonialism and cartography in Canadian literature, see Sarah Wylie Krotz's *Mapping with Words: Anglo-Canadian Literary Cartographies, 1789–1916*.

seems to be an articulation of the power, and ethics, of looking. Thus, part of how *Steveston* breaks away from the original aural history project is in its investigations into the problems and contradictions of the documentary.

Some of the photographs in *Steveston* lend themselves to this reading of the text as an artistic (anti-)documentary, a protection of the local and the particular. For instance, the set of eight images along "Moncton Street" (*Steveston*, 2001, 82–89) depict various community members going about their daily lives in the town, from "Crossing Moncton Street" to the photographs of the "Pool Hall," "Christine's Café," the "Marine Garage" workers, the Barbers, and the Hair Stylists. The image of the worker at a gas pump (86) emblematizes this documentary aspiration that is humanist more than it is scholarly or objective. The garage worker stands in the focused foreground with an almost (but not quite) invisible smile, wearing grease-stained coveralls and gently placing a hand on the pump. These signifiers juxtapose his clean and contented face (the marker of his humanity) with his labour, suggesting a kind of contradiction between the work and the worker (or, perhaps, a celebration of the humility and happiness of blue-collar work). Advertisements on what we assume to be the Marine Garage building sit blurred in the background and obscured by his upright body, again highlighting how his essential humanity is surrounded and permeated by the structures of labour and capitalism, which attempt (and ultimately fail) to overtake his body. These images seem to respond in part to Roger Daniels's analysis covered earlier in this chapter, which emphasizes the severe constraints that the canneries' exploitation levied on the everyday life of the residents of Steveston. The images take us into the felt moments of individual lives in Steveston in order to say, in a sense, that human joy can persist even in meagre financial conditions.

The other photographs in this section more obviously demonstrate the liveliness of the town, a liveliness felt even among those taking a short break from earning their wages. The main concern of the images here is with the portrait: recording the many faces of Steveston, which, curiously or not, all happen to be smiling in the set of photographs on Moncton Street. What is important here is not necessarily that the arranged portraits[15] are at odds with the "objective" nature of the documentary (to record things as they are), but more so that the burying of labour beneath a celebration of diminutive contentedness indicates a humanism of the camera-eye.

Thus, these images depart from the ethics of a traditional documentary, and perhaps raise the question of the relationship between "objectivity" and the documentary itself. In an interview with George Bowering in 1979, Marlatt gives the following description of the poet's responsibility toward the world of political realities: "I take it that a writer's job is to continue to give accurate witness of what's happening [. . .] You cannot change the world. You can change consciousness, & language is intimately tied up with consciousness. That's our true field of action, is language, as poets. And all you can do is to insist on the seeing as it's evidenced & manifested in the language. In an accurate use of language" (*Open Letter* 82). Marlatt suggests that the poet must be "accurate" with respect to the "witnessing" of the world and the "use of language," which is to say that the poet is responsible for maintaining a certain level of honesty in their impressions of the world as well as in their record of those impressions. This view leaves room for a

[15] Whether the subjects were arranged by the photographer, or whether they arranged themselves (a distinction which the images themselves cannot answer), the effect is largely the same. The presence of the camera itself seems to interrupt everyday life, making 'objective' or neutral observation impossible.

degree of ambiguity or uncertainty regarding the actual data or facts of the world. A documentary, or anti-documentary, in this sense would be one that records the mediated encounter between the documentarian and the subject, or even blurs the lines between the two, but, in the end, it must remain skeptical of the politics embedded in the observed/observer relationship.

Robert Minden articulates some of this skepticism during a 1980 interview with Avis Lang Rosenberg about his photographs of Doukhobor communities in British Columbia. He first critiques the idea that "documentary has implied a dispassionate view, an impartial presentation of a phenomenon, that anyone who was there at that place, at that time, would have come up with the same kind of understanding" (14). What is 'captured,' if anything, in the photographs is not the Doukhobors-in-themselves, but a particular encounter between a guest and a community that is not separate from but is itself a product of historical conditions. Minden goes on to note that the transparent view of documentary as a window into objective facts is almost heightened in the ways we might approach photography, if we are not careful: "What is being implied, essentially, is that there is no point of view here; it is point-of-view-less in a sense [. . .] The image-maker is bracketed out of the picture, so that the viewer sees the image and identifies the image with the phenomenon, and the relationship between image-maker and image is no longer apparent" (14). Minden points out, as others like Barthes and Sontag have done, that the photograph deceives us in its simplicity and in its apparent record of what a human eye—any human eye—would perceive in that place and at that time. He, instead, wants to complicate or make us reflect on moments of mediation: between the photographer and the subject; between our time and the historical context that placed both

there in the first place; and between the photograph's circulation and our own moment of looking at the image which is also mediated by history and by various technologies. Perhaps more crucially, Minden suggests that another slippage takes place between "the image" and "the phenomenon," which we might mistakenly confuse as being the same. To recognize that the image is not the phenomenon is to leave open the possibility that we may not be able to 'see' through the various mediations and arrive, finally, at a record of a phenomenon in its proper contexts. Instead, there may not be a Doukhobor or a Hideo Kokubo (whose face forms the cover of the 2001 edition of *Steveston*) 'beneath,' so to speak, the photograph at all: there may only be an image itself. Thus, the photograph, especially in its documentary mode, engenders at once these two self-annihilating potentials: that it records a mediation of an encounter, and that it records only itself.

Minden goes on to voice his skepticism: not only was documentary "becoming increasingly difficult for [him] as an idea," but also he says that he is "suspicious now about the way cameras are used" (14). "One has to be suspicious," he claims, "about what kind of machine the camera is, what the nature of the relationship between image-maker and subject is, what happens to that image after it's made. All those things loom large in the making of a portrait, especially when you intervene in another culture." A simultaneous use and mistrust of media technology defines, in a sense, the anti-documentary aspects of *Steveston*, the suspicion of the camera even as one points and clicks it. This is to say that the use of photography in *Steveston* also creates a document of its own deconstruction, a 'dirtying' or obstruction of the same lens that one usually keeps spotlessly clean: "to see or understand or investigate is to be involved in a relational undertaking. Or, to see is always to see in relation. But this becomes disguised, and it

takes the work of breaking the frame to acknowledge that we've been framed" (16).What is unique in the way that Minden explains his process of photography in the Doukhobor community—to make himself purposefully "conspicuous" as a photographer on the street corner, free for community members to speak with, be photographed, or ignore—is that the openness of his method is in a sense orthogonal to the technology of the camera aperture, which operates by the exclusion of light outside of the frame. The skepticism results in a kind of struggle between the photographer and the camera device, as if they have competing desires and intentions that must be managed. One of the desires of the camera seems to be in "capturing" what Minden calls the subject's "trace," which has deep implications for the power imbalance between the photographer and the subject: "To the extent that the negative contains or is believed to contain a trace of the subject, and to the extent that the photographer retains all rights to somebody else's trace, this power raises all sorts of dilemmas about the subsequent use to which photographs are put and the kinds of contexts which they may appear in" (16). This issue is acutely important for Minden's immediate project of depicting Doukhobor communities differently than the negative portrayals with which they have been shown in previous media. However, the "capturing" of another's trace is a problem that persists across all photographic portraits and is also raised in relation to the marginalized and multi-racial communities in Steveston. There seems to be, at the root, something useful about an accurate depiction of an encounter with a minority community even as a photographer—and, in our case, a viewer—must navigate the traps and pitfalls of a fundamentally unequal relationship of looking. This impulse to engage in what is at its core a fraught endeavour possibly comes out of an emerging and re-theorized anthropological commitment for mainstream

Canadian intellectualism in the 1970s that possibly reflects a humanist responsibility toward marginalized communities in Canada.

Although Marlatt and Minden undertook *Steveston* as a joint project, it would be a critical mistake to collapse their contributions into a homogeneous whole that does not account for their differing viewpoints, encounters, and, crucially, media technologies. In Marlatt's Afterword to the 1984 edition of *Steveston*, she recalls that she "was drawn to the river, to the tidal town at the Fraser's mouth where it pours into the sea," whereas Minden "was drawn primarily to people" and "Only with effort did he photograph the place" (*Steveston*, 1984, 93). We do not have to dig too far into the poetry to realize Marlatt's striking expressions of the landscape, or to feel acutely her presence as an outsider in Steveston. At the same time, Minden's portraits of various community members, such as the set of images from Moncton Street, seem, on the surface, the most memorable, so gracefully performing the humanist desire to crystallize the town in a moment of flux, as well as providing a kind of tangible record of their encounter with Steveston. However, I am also interested in what the images of the faces, what I theorize as a humanist gaze, both assert and obscure, what swirls beneath their surfaces, like the overwritten history of internment beneath community politics in 1974. That is to say that the great "effort" required of Minden to turn away from the people and toward the place is not simply a duty he performed in order to get some necessary photographs for the documentary. Rather, his "effort" can also be located within the signs of labour in Steveston. The photographic eye, though in some images fully humanist, also betrays a weariness that corresponds to the labour-weary objects in *Steveston*.

The full extent of this chapter's argument is that the visuality of *Steveston* offers us the same choice as the text's approach to history. We can *look*, so to speak, at history in a narrative mode, but we are also called (by the text, as well as by the past itself) to encounter history in a lyric mode. So too do some images in the collection ask us to look with a humanist gaze, perhaps even with the ethical gaze of Levinas as discussed in the first chapter. However, other images, especially of labour, demand that we articulate a lyricization of the photograph in order to dislocate our perceptions of subjecthood and objecthood. When we consider the influence of the archival work of *Steveston Recollected* on *Steveston*, and when we consider the narrative trajectory of *Steveston Recollected*, how it approaches and recedes from internment as its guiding focus, it seems profoundly curious that *Steveston* has not been read with more than a cursory mention of the wartime internment of Japanese people in Canada. Perhaps, though, the suppression of internment out of public consciousness, and even the consciousness of the Steveston community, explains the absence of this guiding historical event from the literature as well as the fragile, obfuscated undercurrent of internment in the text.

The poem "How it goes" in *Steveston* exemplifies the simultaneous proximity and apocrypha of internment in the collection. It is in the style of an elegy or funeral poem, beginning with the poet almost accidentally stumbling on "a pall draped placard" in a "store window" that reads:

> In Memoriam
>
> Steveston Post Office
>
> Doors Closed
>
> May 13th 1972 (*Steveston,* 2001, 22)

Michelle Hartley argues that "The placard performs the work of mourning for a community that is itself becoming absent. With the removal of the post office, the fishing village *as it was* passes into memory" (para. 31). The closing of the post office signifies both the shrinking economic state of the town as well as an end to its ability to speak. This book, then, and this poem in particular, act as a kind of vanguard to this loss of communication, a last murmur from the town. The loss of the town becomes emblematized in the activities and labour of the new generation. The poet learns of this when speaking with a woman: "'The kids grow up & go elsewhere,' she said, / *not* fishing, not limited to that, or limited, how the company pays, & she / stays" (*Steveston*, 2001, 22). The end of this life cycle, that is, fishing, living in the town, having children, bound up as it is in exploitative economics, co-occurs with a crisis in the town's potential to express itself. Tsuneko Johnson in *Steveston Recollected* presents a similar fear and dissatisfaction with Steveston's youth: "'Most young people leave Steveston. I don't think they want to continue their fathers' job as a fisherman. A lot of young kids sort of look down on their dads, as if to say, well, you're only a fisherman, you know?" (86). The economic pressures put on the town coupled with neoliberal fantasies about social mobility, education, and white-collar jobs make fishing life unsustainable and untenable in the postwar era.

The poem continues on to imagine (or remember?) disasters at sea and personal illness: "'Distress signal should not be used where Urgency signal will do.' & so, / mouth shut, silent, falling into the sea — why won't they cry out?" (23). The precarity of fishing work becomes a guiding metaphor for a spouse dying, possibly in old age, without children to fill in the loss to the community, and all of these losses are overwritten by

silence: “A pain, a pain rising & no one . . .” (23). Not only does the trailing sentence seem to end with an accusation that the pain lacked a witness, someone to see and feel the pain, and to provide a testimony, as is expected of all witnesses, but the sentence itself loses its words and passes into silence, like a death. Finally, the poem ends with another pronouncement of loss, haunting, silence: “Doors / close. & she is haunted by it, as she crosses, into shadow, any silent / sunny street” (23). The personal story of loss, the sick spouse, stands in for the wider loss, a literal emptying of the town, as the old ones who kept up the traditional fishing and canning life die and the young leave, and suburban sprawl ruptures and overwrites the town’s history and identity.

Part of why this loss is felt so acutely and why such anxieties about the town’s future permeate the consciousness of the *Nisei* is because it already happened. In *Steveston Recollected* Hideo Kokubo recounts the overwhelming anxiety the community had about being exiled and split up: “The people who went first felt easier about going because there were still may people left behind, but then there got to be fewer and fewer men left and we worried what would happen to the women and children. So a group of *niseis*, I was one of them, got together and demanded that they let us go with our families to wherever they had to go” (66). The police, of course, came and forcibly removed the men from the town, not only imprisoning them in labour camps but also keeping them unsure and unaware of the location of their families, who were interned shortly after.

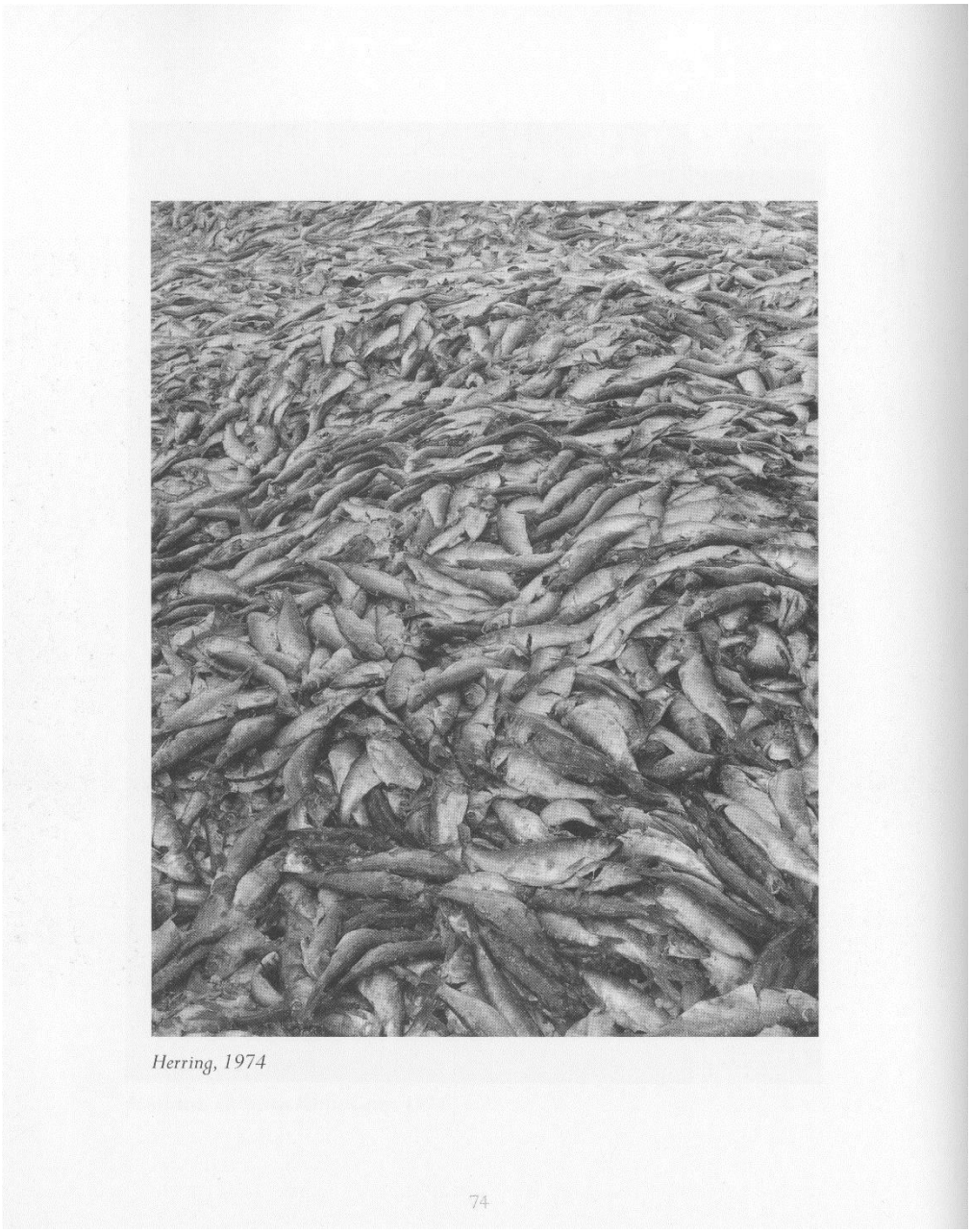
Kokubo’s account highlights the town’s total lack of political power, and, even more, the fact that attempts at advocacy simply mobilized further police violence and authoritarianism. Furthermore, Unosuke Sakamoto testifies to the aftermath of internment and the precarity of the community’s return. He recalls his pessimism at the time:

> The union people asked me how many fishermen would be coming back when the Japanese were allowed back to the Coast in April [. . .] I said I thought maybe 150 men would come back. Then the union people said if all the Japanese fishermen, that would be about 500 or so, came back at once, they'd have to ask the Minister not to grant us [fishing] licences. I told them I was absolutely sure 500 men would not come back at first [. . .] Many fewer than 150 turned up. (*Steveston Recollected* 72)

Kokubo's and Sakamoto's accounts present a wartime picture of Steveston whereby the exile of internment was thought to have caused the death of the town. The community was not expected to return, and by and large did not, until years after the war. *Steveston Recollected* goes on to recount the harsh, painful, exploitative, and persecuted return of community members who lost nearly all of their previous possessions and who experienced racist attacks upon coming back to the town. The difficult return occurred only two decades before Marlatt, Minden, and the rest of the team arrived to document Steveston. The conversations archived in *Steveston Recollected* make it clear how extraordinary and fragile the return to Steveston was, and that their anxieties about the future of the town are permeated by the memory, suppressed as it may be, of exile and internment. *Steveston Recollected* edits and organizes the interviews into a narrative arc that pivots around internment, although it also approaches history through testimony and memory.

Marlatt's poem "How it goes" similarly draws on this hybrid conversational-archival dialogue that forms the heart of *Steveston Recollected*, and, as lyric tends to do, it eschews the explicit narrative arc in favour of a suggestibility and symbolic

correspondence between the future emptying of the town and the haunting of a loss in the past. Unlike some other texts in *Steveston*, this poem does forge more concrete connections to internment than hauntings, silences, and ghosts (which are, of course, fragile connections to a fragile memory). The poet meets a woman complaining about roadwork in the town, which strangely maps the problem of urban sprawl onto the memory of internment. The speaker remarks: "They continue, as if. it wasn't so long ago / they changed direction, roads, leaving sea & moving inland, inroads, to a / heart that changes. Monopoly" (22). The passage leaves the referent of "they" ambiguous so that it refers both to the roads themselves as well as to the interned members of the community. Thus, "it wasn't so long ago" that roads were built to lead into the interior, to the internment camps, and "it wasn't so long ago" that the Japanese people of Steveston "changed direction," were sent away from the sea and interned in the interior. This memory, which "wasn't so long ago," of State-sponsored exile, the emptying of the town, the "Monopoly" of violence that the State wields over the lives and freedoms especially of marginalized communities in Canada, becomes infused with the language of neoliberalism. This repetition of the past exile in the present suggests that the new form of violence perpetrated against the town is diffused, invisible, and economic rather than explicitly legislated. This poem suggests that the memory of internment is, in part, predicated on, or made tangible by, the survival of the town of Steveston. Thus, the emptying of the town due to economic pressures and the recasting of its face by way of urban encroachment have the consequence of, again, suppressing and erasing the history of internment.



Herring, 1974

74

Figure 3: “Herring, 1974,” from *Steveston* (2001), p. 74.

Cannery Workers, 1974

75

Figure 4: "Cannery Workers, 1974," from *Steveston* (2001), p. 75.

I would like to draw attention to two photographs which were added to the 2001 edition and were not included in the first or second editions of *Steveston*. They are paired in the text, sitting opposite each other in the same two-page spread, the first called "Herring" (see Figure 3) and the second "Cannery Workers" (see Figure 4). The inclusion

of images of women's labour in the 2001 edition I think betrays the growing maturation of the collection toward the signs of work, on the one hand, and women's public presence in Steveston's history, on the other.[16] The other photographs of cannery workers were included in the first edition and showed white men, alone or in pairs, looking blank, busy, or exhausted. Instead, we have a group of women, formally posed, smiling, hands resting on each other's shoulders, demonstrating some kind of unity in their shared labour. Both the image itself and its new inclusion in the 2001 edition are politically compelling and pull us into a range of experiences within *Steveston* that were previously excluded. Indeed, even in *Steveston Recollected*, the main interests toward labour revolve around men learning the fishing trade from their fathers, men being sent to labour camps, men whose boats and fishing equipment were seized by the RCMP during World War II and forced into auction, netting only scraps. This image, though, seems to me to be a celebratory proclamation of an *otherwise* to the predominantly androcentric history of Steveston. This photograph, though, is conspicuous for its occlusions: I wonder, where are the comparable images of exhausted, overworked women, women distracted by the tasks of the cannery, women outside of this camaraderie of workers? The posing and the half-smiles here seem consistent with the photographs of domestic spaces, portraits, and families elsewhere in *Steveston*, suggesting an extension or overlap between the workplace and familial spaces in the camera gaze.

This hybrid gaze between work and private life does some interesting things to reconstitute the androcentric historical narrative of labour in Steveston, revealing

[16] One could also read the new versions of *Steveston* as politically "redemptive" historical revisionisms, which White describes and Dirk cautions against.

undercurrents of women's work that had previously been washed over in the aural history project. Partly, I think the photograph so skilfully pulls us into the camaraderie and self-sufficiency of the cannery workers, providing a visual counterpoint to the poet's experience of being an outsider in the town—not only outside the human community, but also alienated from the Fraser River and from the town's fraught histories. However, I cannot help feeling that this image also pulls us into a humanism which, in the end, masks a materialist encounter with labour itself, an encounter that has the potential to reconstitute the history of Steveston in a lyric rather than a narrative mode. Thus, in the following reading of the visuality of *Steveston*, I would like to focus on photographs beyond the portraits, the images of work without the workers, in order to show how the camera-eye in *Steveston* operates with a lyric vision.

The image on the left of the two-page spread, "Herring," is paired with "Cannery Workers" in the book ostensibly because these herring are the kinds of things that cannery employees work with. The actual processes of that labour are occluded from the shot, leaving us, who are probably unfamiliar with the actual processes of canning herring, to struggle to make sense of the excess of the herrings' bodies. The shot is taken from a soft downward angle, which reveals that the pile of fish actually has a topography as we look from the foreground into the distance. It hauntingly recalls some of the most well-known war photographs, such as the notorious image of Nazi physician Fritz Klein standing in a mass grave in Bergen-Belsen, an image as visually shocking as it is a darkly ironic inversion of the Hippocratic Oath. The visual language of "Herring" perhaps corresponds even more closely with the photographs of the aftermath of the bombings of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, which also depict a similar kind of overload of indistinguishable human

bodies and uncountable violence. In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag sees the close proximity of these historical events and their being captured by the photograph as a rupturing point in the way we *see* war and violence:

> If there was one year when the power of photographs to define, not merely record, the most abominable realities trumped all the complex narratives, surely it was 1945, with the pictures taken in April and early May at Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald, and Dachau in the first days after the camps were liberated, and those taken by Japanese witnesses such as Yosuke Yamahata in the days following the incineration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in early August. (17)

Sontag argues that these sets of images that emerged out of the Second World War came to be a defining moment not only for politics and media dissemination, but also for photography. This dominance of the images of mass graves on Western photography seems to faintly shine through in "Herring," like a negative.

"Herring" seems to adopt its visual language from these sets of notorious war images. Sontag argues that war photographs such as these, like war art, also "could be beautiful—in the sublime or awesome or tragic register of the beautiful" (55). Although we may recoil at the suggestion that war photography can be aesthetic, she nevertheless declares, "the landscape of devastation is still a landscape" (55). These images of mass graves primarily seem to operate by *stunning* us in both senses of the term: we are impressed even as we are bewildered, and, indeed, one relies on the other. As I have stated, we can attempt to take on a narrative reading of photography, though not without the consequences of narrative on our conception of history. However, in images of mass graves, the stunning effect expressly prevents us from narrativizing any individual within

the grave, whereas narrative readings abound in images of single victims, which results in a tragic mode of analysis. When viewing mass graves, we are shut off from the typical ways we might want to feel toward death: pathos for the victims, a coherent narrative of violence that we can condemn, the historical particularities of the individual people, and so on. We are left, then, at that moment of being stunned, able to see clearly an almost too-private excess of violence, but unable to actually peer meaningfully into the world that contains the bodies. Thus, these images present a kind of negative sublime, a world that transcends the human and human understanding, but, ultimately, reduces rather than expands our potentialities. This negative sublime captures the second sense of being "stunned," which points to the strange aesthetics or artistry of the photograph. Sontag calls this aesthetic mode a "landscape of devastation"; what is so dangerous and compelling about this visual language of the mass grave is that, in these photographs, the bodies themselves form the landscape, which I describe as a topography in relation to "Herring." Images of violence embody a duality: they record for moral effect and retain, however uncomfortably, their status as art objects. The mass grave more than any other style of photograph holds these two opposing characteristics. If there is an artistry in these photographs, however haunting or horrifying, it must be found in the only landscape available, the bodies. Finally, our inability to narrativize these photographs to any substantial degree of analysis (that is, an analysis that still looks at it as an image and not only as a historical document) means that we must face them in their visuality, simultaneously as moments of real violence and as art objects. Thus, the sublime rises in this contradiction—the halting, stunning effect of wavering between our bearing witness to an excess of real violence and our consumption of the unreality of the image-as-art-

object. The photographs of mass graves, offered silently before our gaze, waver intentionally beyond our understanding.

Although "Herring" borrows from the visual language of photographs of mass graves, we are thrown into the world of labour, which halts the stunning effect endemic to war images. Rather than shocking, then, the photograph becomes fatiguing. To narrativize the fish, or to comprehend them as atomized objects (let alone beings), begs us to engage in a visual labour that corresponds to, and empathizes with, the physical labour that actually goes into canning herring: preparing equipment and nets, catching the herring, collecting and organizing them, dividing them into cans, etc. In the face of the exhaustion that "Herring" puts us through, the collection almost calls us to abandon "Herring" in favour of the humanist gaze found in, say, the nine smiling or serene women in "Cannery Workers," which conveniently sits on the opposite page.

My focusing in on the photographs of labour rather than the portraits reminds me of a passage in Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida*. As Barthes is trying to figure out why he finds some photographs so inspiring, and others dull and contemptuous, he says, "In this glum desert, suddenly a specific photograph reaches me; it animates me, and I animate it. So that is how I must name the attraction which makes it exist: an *animation*" (20). Barthes here, looking for an essential quality that connects the photographs that he loves, finds that it is *an animation*. In this chapter, I am trying to analyze not what connects the photographs in *Steveston* that I love, such as "Cannery Workers." Rather, I am trying to explain what connects the photographs that make me recoil, or that exhaust me, that seem weary in their gaze, their appeal, and their content, what, in the two-page spread that includes "Herring" on one page and "Cannery Workers" on the other makes

us so thankful to be able to turn away from the herring and toward the cannery workers, what compels us toward narrativizing the town's history, and what is lost when we do.

So, I am suggesting that in *Steveston* we should turn away from the portraits and toward the work, just as we turn away from narrative and toward lyric, and away from humanism and toward the materiality of labour.

"Herring" not only resists the humanist gaze, but, like Sontag's reading of mass graves, it also seems to rebuke its constitution as an art object. In "Lyric History: Temporality, Rhetoric, and the Ethics of Poetry," John Michaels argues that the quality of the lyric or the photograph that resists its own artfulness opens up an imaginative or psychic space that allows us to engage with "living history" (275). Drawing on Barthes, he describes how this psychic space operates in both the lyric and photography: "It is by its unpredictable and uncoded elements, its punctual and idiosyncratic being in the reader's experience, that the lyric or the photograph actually enters lived time and living history" (275). Moreover, he says that in the *unpredictability* of the lyric or the photograph—and not in its coded structures—"hopes for ethical engagement finally lodge," even if "those hopes can always be disappointed" (275). To engage ethically with the lyric or with the photograph is to pause on the moments of excess and otherness in the text. I would wish only to complicate Michaels's idea that lyric history is a "living history"; surely, lyric history is a history of a perpetual present, as grief and trauma themselves perpetually invade the present. However, as Barthes notes in *Camera Lucida*, all photographed objects are spectres, and, as he puts it, in every photograph is "the return of the dead" (9). Thus, there seems to be a more complicated duality in the so-called "living history" of the lyric: what the photograph grants is not only a reanimation, a return

to the living via the interplay between the viewer and the photograph, but also a renewal of the death itself. The photograph, then, is caught out of step with narrative time, and, moving among the spectres of the past, we as viewers become spectres ourselves (and Barthes deliberately refers to the viewer as the *spectator*). In this sense, the photograph, viewed lyrically, does not represent the living nor the dead, but the moment of dying redrawn perpetually within the frame.

"Herring" makes an interesting case for lyric photography, since, of course, the fish are already dead. Thus, the loss that we bear witness to in the photograph is post-mortem, the moment when the fish are transformed from beings to commodities within the cannery. This accounts somewhat for the fatiguing effect of the photograph, since the lives of the herring are beyond the captured moment. The historical moment that we are thrust into by way of the lyric gaze of the photograph is a commemoration of the loss of labour, and we look through laboured eyes. In contrast to the humanist gaze in "Cannery Workers," the gaze of "Herring" seems to converge the camera "eye" and the lyric "eye"/I. This lyrical and laborious gaze is shared with sections of Marlatt's poetry in *Steveston*. In "Steveston as you find it" the poet reflects her disgust for the discarded and commodified bodies of the fish onto an ignorant middle-class lifestyle:

> We orient
>
> always toward the head, & eyes (yes) as knowing, & knowing us, or what we do.
> But these, this, is "harvest." These are the subhuman facets of life we
> the town (& all that is urban, urbane, our glittering table service, our white
> wine, the sauces we pickle it with, or ourselves), live off. These torsos.
> & we throw the heads away. Or a truck passes by, loaded with offal for what

we also raise to kill, mink up the valley. (*Steveston*, 2001, 19)

In this lyric, the decadent lives of other people in Vancouver, the "urban, urbane," cast further shame onto the callous way that the fish are transformed into objects, "These torsos," which end up as garbage, thrown away. So, the acute loss experienced in this lyric is the moment that the fish become object-commodities, the invisible underbelly of bourgeois life, a commemorated moment that also takes place in "Herring." Since this poem and "Herring" hinge on the very same instance of loss, we can see how both operate on lyrical visuality, a gaze that turns away from the human and, shamefully and mournfully, toward labour.

A narrative analysis of the photograph called "Canadian Pacific Camp, Spring 1973" (see Figure 5 below) would wonder about this man's circumstance—is he a fisherman, working on his own boat, or perhaps contracted to help someone else? Who are his friends and relatives in Steveston, do their portraits appear in the book, does he appear in the poetry? And, finally, the mysteries of this image are fully answered when we turn to the next photograph in the collection, a close-up portrait of his face and hands, casually holding an oiled rag. Part of what happens in the narrative analysis is that we want to turn to his full face on the next page, and for this reason I have chosen not to display the image here. We want to turn away from this photograph, and toward his life, toward the invigoration of a humanism and a human face.

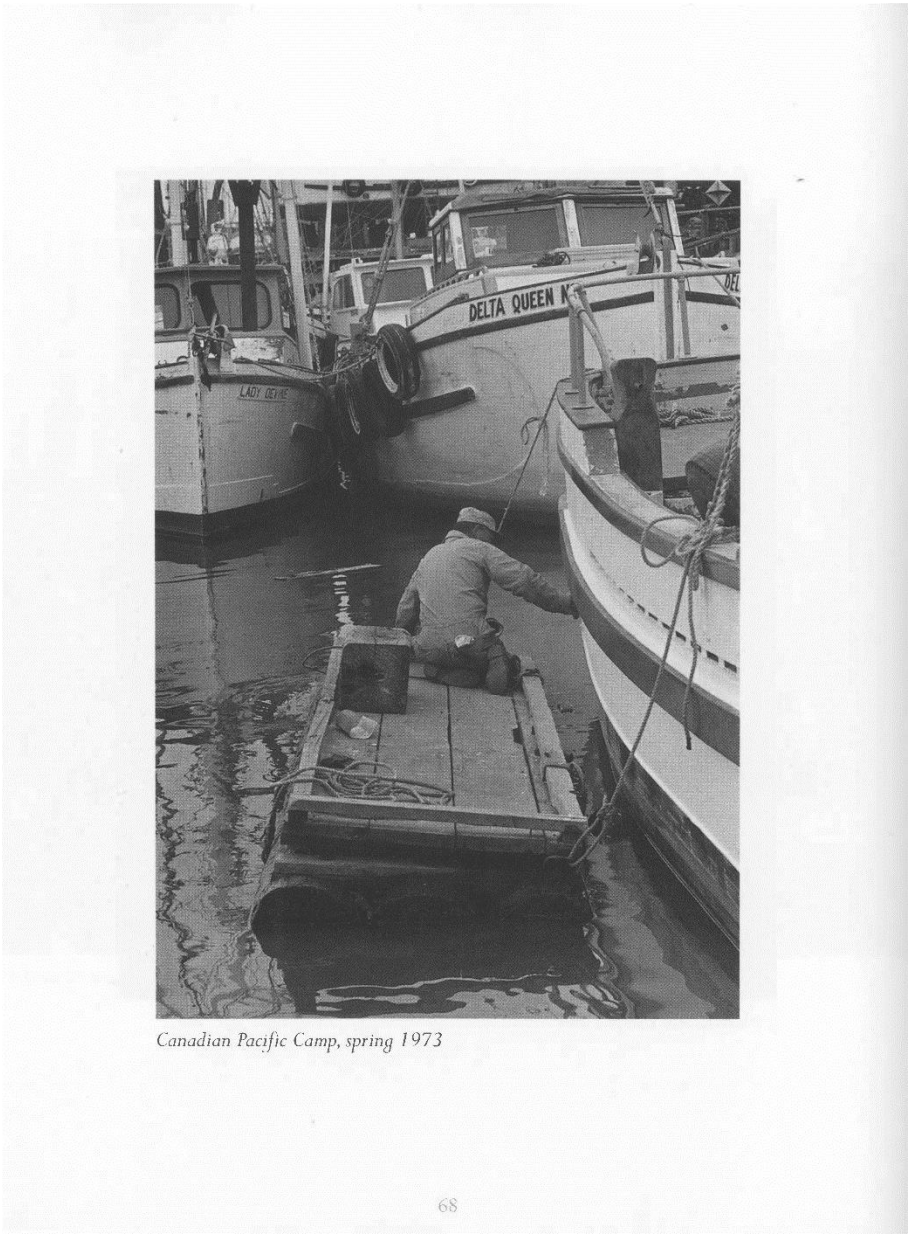


Figure 5: "Canadian Pacific Camp, Spring 1973," from *Steveston* (2001), p. 68.

Instead, I wonder if we can dwell with the lyric properties of the photograph, if we can refuse to evade the weariness of work. In a lyric analysis of this photograph, it is possible to read this image metaphorically: the slight figure of the worker kneeling on a slight, tipping raft becomes, paradoxically, a fixed point around which the larger, much

more singularly purposed boats loom and rock. He almost becomes swallowed by their size and craftsmanship. His raft attaches to the boat he is working on, like a scaffold, perhaps placing him in a side role in a grand tragedy of construction: at one moment the image underscores his efforts, and in the next they fall away in obscurity beneath the blank faces of the vessels. With such unsalvageable possibilities of wasted work, it is no wonder that we are compelled to look on in the collection for a portrait of his casual, half-smiling face, desiring the ease with which he turns from his work to the compassionate lens of the camera.

If the first, narrative analysis of *Steveston* is typified by the incredible portrait of Hideo Kokubo used as the cover image of the 2001 edition, then my analysis of the lyricism of labour finds its full expression in the photograph called "Gill Net, 1973" (see Figure 6 below). The image is both thrilling and exhausting. It depicts a close-up of a tangled net cascading over the side of a boat, piling its attached buoys in the immediate foreground. The seemingly accidental flowing of the net seems to gather a kind of Latourian material energy, both revealing and concealing the ghosts of labour beneath the net. This is, perhaps, the most lyric photograph in the collection, and in such a typical lyric fashion it bears an unresolvable contradiction. Even as it compels us, unbidden, into an unmediated encounter with labour, it also seems disturbing, somehow wrong or ungraceful, from the tangles that are almost too complicated to dwell on, to the framing that seems deliberately irritating, almost as if the camera refuses to rescue or clean up the image, while, at the same time, shuffling us on to more humanist and tolerable encounters with labour found in the subsequent photographs.

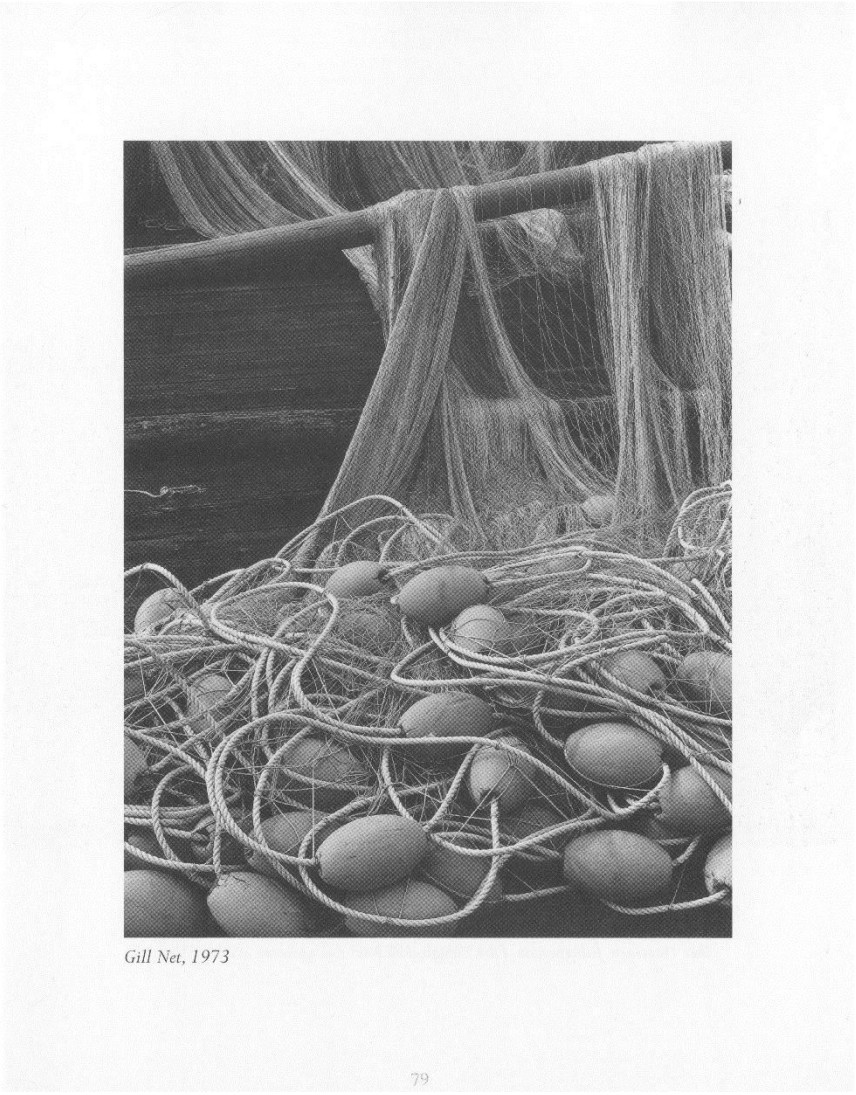


Figure 6: "Gill Net, 1973," from *Steveston* (2001), p. 79.

The aural history project, *Steveston Recollected*, narrativizes the history of the internment of Japanese people in Canada, and that narrative resembles a literary structure. First, Steveston had an integrated community, that was then exiled and displaced in the internment camps, and finally the community returned and reintegrated in Steveston. The problem with this popular narrative of internment is that, in literary terms, we would call it a comedy or a romance: i.e., integration, exile, and return. I think Minden and Marlatt's

artistic work, *Steveston*, handles the narrative in a much more complex way, essentially duplicating internment through fears about the encroachment of Vancouver's suburbia. However, it seems to me that an analysis of Minden's photographs as primarily reifying Marlatt's poetry tends toward narrativizing the history of internment, and narrativizing internment obscures our ability to encounter history in its animation in the present. So, by lyricizing the photographs, we can then lyricize rather than narrativize history, allowing us to *face* internment by focusing on images which *de*-pose and *de*-narrativize labour.

Chapter 4: Daphne Marlatt's *Taken,* Intimacy, Clarity

This final chapter looks at war through the fragmented lens of Daphne Marlatt's 1996 novel *Taken*. The novel explores the afterlife of the 1941 Japanese invasion of Malaya from the vantage point of the highly technological—even *postmodern*[17]—1990 to 1991 Gulf War. The first chapter of this dissertation laid out the foundations of Levinas's traditional phenomenology in order to analyze trauma. The second and third chapters connected Levinas's phenomenological encounter with otherness to radio's garrison technology and to the alterities of history. This chapter explores materialist feminism's recent critique of traditional phenomenology, which argues that traditional phenomenology universalizes sense experience and does not take into account the particularities of real material bodies—i.e., that differences in sex, gender, culture, and ability all disrupt the idea that our sense experiences are the same. Therefore, I outline a new feminist phenomenology that is sensitive to the materialist critiques, and this feminist phenomenology develops from two converging directions. First, feminist scholars provide a theoretical basis for a new phenomenology that accounts for the materialist critique and reestablishes the otherness of sense experience. Second, *Taken* itself suggests new kinds of perception and kinship as antidotes to global war: the novel asks us to consider relationships of *mothering* and *intimacy* with unknowable Others and across vast distances. I further suggest that these relationships develop out of a feminist queer ethos that is partially rooted in Marlatt's intertextual communications with Webb's lyric poetry. Finally, the chapter compares these fragile kinships with traditional types of wartime media, such as letters and television broadcasts, which distort the perceptual field

[17] See Chris Hables Gray, *Postmodern War: The New Politics of Conflict*

of war while reinforcing British colonial and patriarchal power structures. At the very site of the confusion between the colonial and the patriarchal in wartime discourse, the queer feminist ethos of *mothering* and *intimacy* allows us to peer beyond the distortions of media and to apprehend global violence, paradoxically, through the diminutive, intimate relationships of care.

At the same time that *Taken* forces us to stretch our conception of violence across the globe, from Canada to Singapore, Kuwait to Melbourne, it derives these long-reaching sensibilities out of the intimate relationships between mothers and daughters. Indeed, Suzanne in 1990 reimagines her mother Esme's experience of getting married and having children in Malaya when she looks through old photographs of her parents and their letters to each other. Mothering, however, breaks its strictly biological bonds in the novel. For instance, when Esme cannot imagine that her own mother, an upper middle-class white woman in colonial Malaya, could have nursed her, she wonders, "Who had that first ayah been [who had nursed her]? with what child of her own or child lost? And what had she covertly passed to Esme in her milk, what tastes, what feelings?" (113). The implication here is not only that mothering interrupts colonial binaries (even as the act of nursing is the product of colonial servitude in the first place), but also that the possible ghost of this ayah's lost child, that is, a mother's grief, may have been passed on in her milk. The intimacy of grief here provides a counterpoint to Levinas's conception of the encounter with the Other, which was outlined earlier in this dissertation: rather than the encounter remaining mediated by the gap between the gazes of the self and the Other, this essential language, the transfer of milk, takes the Other, bodily, into oneself.

This idea of mothering, taking another into oneself, a possible rupture of the liberal subject or individual, also applies to the novel's conception of broader social relations. It is, then, not coincidental that the novel begins with the following epigraph being taken, as it were, from Phyllis Webb's *Water and Light*:

> My loves are dying. Or is it that my love
> is dying, day by day, brief life, brief candle,
> a flame, *flambeau*, torch, alive, singing
> somewhere in the shadow: Here, this way, here.

The novel asks us to understand this resonance between Webb and Marlatt as a form of mothering, which seems to offer a feminist rejection of traditional ways of reading intertextuality and the canon. Stephen Collis in *Phyllis Webb and the Common Good* outlines the ways in which Webb counters Harold Bloom's conception of intertextuality as an anxiety-driven property claim, and the paradoxically atomized "individual talent" of T.S. Eliot. Instead, Collis calls Webb's technique "*a poetics of response*" (15), being separate together, with writing as the bridge that forges kinship between poets. The familial metaphor of kin bears some resemblance to the concept of *mothering* that is central to *Taken* and, I argue, Marlatt's relationship to poets like Webb. However, Collis's conception of *a poetics of response* stops short of the essential feminist phenomenology that forms the intimate ways of looking that are at the heart of Marlatt's work. The previous chapter on photography in *Steveston* developed a poetics of the image of the Other. This chapter asks, then, if not the gaze of the Other, but the gaze (or the touch, the voice) of the *mother* could inform our ways of reading media in the face of violence.

The passage from *Water and Light* thinks through "love" by way of the reverberation of light and darkness, "a flame . . . singing / somewhere in the shadow." The ambiguity in the passage relates to whether the torch is alive despite the shadow, singing in repudiation of obscurity, or whether the shadow itself grants life to the torch, which is to say that her love, dying, is both the candle and the darkness. In *Seeing in the Dark*, Butling traces this shifting metaphor of light and darkness in Webb's work. She associates this formal aesthetic with Webb's feminist sensibilities, contending that the patriarchal hubris of the Enlightenment tradition has suppressed into the darkness both non-Western, racialized Others as well as women. Webb's poetry, Butling argues, initiates "a seeing *within* the dark" (1) that reclaims the essential otherness which is suppressed in the liberal humanist metaphor of *enlightenment*. Thus, Webb's poetry provides a new way of understanding darkness, politics, and history that resonates out from the sensitive "eye" of the poet.

The broad strokes of Butling's analysis also apply to Marlatt's concerns, especially in *Taken.* In the following passage from the novel, despite the prose being probably too strict in its syntax for Webb, one can still hear her nurturing voice, and nearly mistake it for either writer:

> And all my stories turn in this transition hour just before dawn, when light begins to intimate the differences between things still rooted in earth's shadow. I think of you in the Midwest where it has been light for some time and the furrows are drawing you out beyond town. (129–30)

The light of dawn seems to solidify and clarify the distinctions between objects as well as people. There is some sort of creativity and possibility open to the pre-dawn darkness that

is perhaps not available to the lighted world. However, and this is where my analysis departs from Butling's, the lighted world here does not seem to be the *enlightened* world; this is to say that the binary between the night's darkness and dawn's clarifying light is not simply the opposition between a dark, creative otherness and the patriarchal and colonial strictures of the public (humanist, positivist) world. Instead, as the novel puts it, the "light begins to *intimate* the differences between things" (129; emphasis added). The text suggests that intimacy is somehow related to this basic phenomenological experience of clarifying the differences between objects. Indeed, in the passage, the narrator thinks of her lover across a great distance in the precise moment when the world begins to be distinguished. So, if a binary opposition is possible (and the text indicates that binaries may only be available to the lighted world), it would hinge on the contrast between the darkness of the Other and the intimacy that is somehow enabled by the process of dawn's distinction.

Webb's collection *Naked Poems* does not seem wholly alien to this relationship between light and darkness that becomes a central motif in *Taken*:

walking in dark

waking in dark the presence of all

the absences we have known. Oceans.

so we are distinguished to ourselves

don't want that distinction.

I am afraid. I said that. I said that

for you. (177)

This is the closest to a traditional lyric that *Naked Poems* comes, and it lies at the precipice in the collection between the lovers' meeting and the existential confusion that the book falls into. Yet, we have already witnessed the flourishing and the demise of the women's relationship, so, are we out of time here, or in a memory? Is this poem a product of the broken relationship, the distinction being the first step to abandonment? Or could this poem occur on any typical night, thereby revealing something more essential and endemic to the conditions of intimacy between the lovers? The ambiguity here points to a purposeful confusion between the so-called good times early in the relationship and the breakup that occurs quite linearly over the course of the first two sections of *Naked Poems*. This is to say that the poem seems to suggest that isolation (or, distinction) is not at odds with intimacy, rather they are products of each other. So, waking out of the dark, amorphous world and into distinction provides the simultaneous conditions of intimacy and isolation. Indeed, the beauty of the poem seems to originate in the fragile balancing of fear and care: "I am afraid. I said that. I said that / for you." This poem draws together what seem to be the poles of romance, the getting together and the falling apart, and instead suggests, ironically, that there is no distinction between the two. A falling into love is as dangerous and self-erasing as a falling out. And, as this chapter will explore, the poem also indicates that this simultaneous intimacy and isolation stem from our coming into contact with the world. What is more, the intimacy and isolation expressed in Suzanne and Lori's own version of "waking in dark" resonate not only with their fears and cares for each other but also with their fears and cares toward a world torn by violence.

So, this chapter connects lyric intimacy with media studies through the shared aesthetic of light and darkness in order to look at how *Taken* responds to and articulates violence. In this examination of media, I am drawn back to the first chapter's analysis of phenomenology and alterity in Webb. However, the commitment to intimacy even in the face of global violence that permeates *Taken* (and, as it happens, crops up in various places throughout both Webb's and Marlatt's oeuvres) demands a feminist rethinking of phenomenology. If we conceive of media as an extension of sense experience, then our way of being in the world is predicated on our structures of sense experience, which are not only biological (eyes, ears) but also technological (radio, television). Feminist phenomenology allows us to make a historically contextualized and de-universalized account of the whole sphere of sense-making apparatuses, whereas traditional phenomenology mistakenly conceives of a transcendental observer with sense structures that are universal among humans.

Recent feminist scholars have returned to early feminist phenomenologists, such as Simeone de Beauvoir, in order to point out that these foundational texts do contain some groundwork for de-universalizing phenomenology. In *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, de Beauvoir attempts to show how the otherness of alterity provides a new foundation on which to ground both phenomenology and ethics. Part of her project is to disrupt the idea that our sense-making apparatus is fixed, stable, and thus universal:

> As soon as one considers a system abstractly and theoretically, one puts himself, in effect, on the plane of the universal, thus, of the infinite. That is why reading the Hegelian system is so comforting. I remember having experienced a great feeling of calm on reading Hegel in the impersonal framework of the Bibliotheque

> Nationale in August 1940. But once I got into the street again, into my life, out of the system, beneath a real sky, the system was no longer of any use to me: what it had offered me, under a show of the infinite, was the consolations of death; and I again wanted to live in the midst of living men. (158)

De Beauvoir suggests here that there is a chasm between the transcendental system of Hegel and the material world of the "real sky" and "living" bodies. However, as Leonard Lawlor points out, de Beauvoir's analysis is split between her commitment to the presence of the Other, living in the midst of real others, and her understanding of phenomenology as a transcendent apparatus of philosophical inquiry. She does, certainly, complicate universalism as it relates to our sense-making structures, questioning whether, in fact, we receive sense whole, or if sense is constituted and conditioned by our historical contexts and material bodies—perception, in the end, is unstable and ambiguous. Nevertheless, as Anne van Leeuwen artfully demonstrates, even if de Beauvoir does contextualize our sense-making apparatuses, in her phenomenology the fruits of those apparatuses still reveal transcendental truths about the structures of our senses.

More recent materialist feminisms have grown out of Gilles Deleuze's work on empiricism, and they offer a biting critique of this commitment to transcendence that underpins phenomenology. According to these scholars, if phenomenology is the search for the transcendental structures that condition any specific experience, materialist feminism instead attends to the actual products and effects of an experience. As Claire Colebrook summarizes, "The question of philosophy, for empiricism, is not to account for the condition of meaning of the given but to respond to the given" (113). The "condition of meaning of the given," Colebrook suggests, is the realm of phenomenology, which

attempts to describe the structures (the *conditions of meaning*) by which we come to know things (the *given*). Materialism instead rejects a philosophy that is purely schematic or scientific in favour of one that can also be creative, dialogic, and generative: "Philosophy's creation of concepts is not a clarification or formalisation of possible experience, but a form of experience itself" (113).

As both Colebrook and van Leeuwen point out, this rupture between transcendental and material philosophies in feminism stems from the erasure of sex or gender difference[18]. In the rejection of gender essentialism, such as in a radical poststructuralist interpretation of Judith Butler's early works,[19] sex and gender become primarily contested discursive fields rather than irreducible categories of difference or unstable conditions of perception. Gender difference, then, sublates into the transcendental identity of the subject, even when that subject is under scrutiny or complication. Even more sinisterly, and this may apply to Deleuze as well, gender

[18] The more-familiar category of *gender difference* is rendered variously in early feminist works, mediated especially by the problem of translation, as *sex*, *sexual*, or *sexuate* difference, and its appearance has been critiqued as essentialist in writers like Irigaray. Stevi Jackson, however, does argue that sex as a social category had already been articulated as early as the 1970s by French materialist feminists (110). Still, as van Leeuwen also suggests, there exists some ambiguity in the extent to which *sex* or *sexual difference* refers merely to foundational, biological categories (481). Thus, the following discussion somewhat crudely uses the phrase *gender difference* to connote this highly contested and ambiguous translated phrase *sex difference* in order to point to, at least, the materialist effects of gender divisions if not also to maintain some distance from material-essentialist interpretations.

[19] Interpretations of the connection between the materialist turn in feminism and Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies that Matter* (1993) vary. Some critics claim that new materialism corrects Butler's de-emphasizing of the agency of matter (see Gill Jagger), while others contend that there is a materialist strain in Butler that accords with new materialist arguments (see Alison Stone or Sara Edenheim).

difference may sublate to difference or alterity in general under transcendental philosophies. In this sense, transcendentalism performs an erasure of gender difference.

In the face of this dire critique, one may wonder whether phenomenology, ostensibly committed to transcendentalism, can recover at all. Interestingly, materialism has had its own struggles with the tendency to collapse gender difference into other categories of critique, but feminist scholars have managed to recuperate the field, and perhaps the same can be done with phenomenology. Since materialist feminism grew out of Marxian and socialist materialism, as Diana Leonard and Lisa Adkins discuss, materialist feminisms have had to contend with the erasure of gender difference under general categories of class divisions. Crucially, Leonard and Adkins remark, in the theorizing of material problems such as domestic inequality, low pay, and gendered violence as ideological products of capitalism, "both capital and labour were viewed as ungendered categories" (9). Materialist feminists thus have had to reclaim materialist analyses of sex and gender from their politically hollowed place as simply instantiations of wider, "ungendered" social antagonisms. As early as 1980, Christine Delphy summarized the primary political task of materialist feminism when she baldly stated that the subsumption of gender difference into general Marxian categories was "due to a desperate desire *to continue to exempt men from responsibility* for the oppression of women" (79; original emphasis). So, part of the recuperative project of materialist feminists like Delphy, Leonard, and Adkins is to assert gender as a primary mode of philosophical inquiry. Contemporary materialist feminisms have largely been successful

in carving out their methodology as distinct from the (purposefully) de-gendered roots of Marxian materialism out of which they grew.[20]

Curiously, though, the materialist critique of feminist phenomenology proceeds on the same grounds. Colebrook, for instance, outlines the materialist position that feminist phenomenology is untenable because its root philosophy—phenomenology—tends to reduce gender difference to alterity in general. The claim, then, is that feminist phenomenology should be abandoned for materialist feminism instead, because the latter has undergone a successful turn to assert the irreducibility of gender difference. However, van Leeuwen demonstrates several key re-readings of Simone de Beauvoir and Luce Irigaray to suggest that feminist phenomenology may be able to undergo a similar turn. The most illustrative example that van Leeuwen takes comes from the opening remarks of Irigaray's *Sharing the World*, where she says, "As soon as I recognize the otherness of the other as irreducible to me or my own, the world itself becomes irreducible to a single world: there are always at least two worlds" (Irigaray, x). Irigaray claims that a true recognition of the Other creates "at least two worlds," and van Leeuwen argues that these worlds which are *at least two* complicate transcendentalism since they suggest that radical otherness is embedded in the very structures of our senses: the world of the Other cannot collapse into the world of the self, and thus no universal subject can exist. This version of phenomenology that van Leeuwen discovers in Irigaray begins with the irreducible

[20] For instance, Donna Haraway recovers gender difference by arguing that all knowledge is embodied. She says, though, that feminist embodiment must resist being a "fixed location in a reified body, female or otherwise," and instead correspond to "nodes in fields, inflections in orientations, and responsibility for difference in material-semiotic fields of meaning" (588). Consequently, gender difference, representing discrete processes of coming to embodied knowledge, remains distinct from the general problem of alterity in materialist feminism.

alterity of gender difference, thus it seems to reject the transcendentalism that forms the heart of the materialist critique.

This irreducible gap in our ability to conceive of the Other lies at the heart of the question of mothering outside of hereditary family structures. In *Taken*, Esme's questions over the ayah who had nursed her actually begin with a kind of disgust that she feels toward her own biological mother when she considers how she might raise her own daughter:

> There were days when she longed for something she knew she couldn't expect: a sure knowledge, an easy familiarity with mothering Aylene might have passed on—like mother's milk, she thought, and then recoiled. It was impossible to imagine her mother, who worried about babies spitting up on her and complained of grubby little hands, it was difficult to imagine Aylene ever nursing a baby. Amazed that she had never wondered until now how she had been nursed, she realized she must have been handed over to a wet-nurse, an ayah hired so that her mother could carry on her social round. Who had that first ayah been? with what child of her own or child lost? And what had she covertly passed to Esme in her milk, what tastes, what feelings? (112–13)

Esme first experiences a barrier to intimacy with her real mother that manifests in a disgust that she "recoiled" at. One might expect the connection between biological mother and daughter to be one of the most intimate bonds. However, at the moment when Esme begins to psychologically forge this bond, when she herself is looking for a

connection to her own daughter, the gap, the impossibility of full intimacy, rears its head as the primary emotion of disgust.[21]

This context, the assertion of a relational gap that is coterminous with Esme's attempt at intimacy, is necessary for a proper reading of her connection to the absent ayah. In a sense, these two relationships, one to a biological mother and one to an almost-adoptive mother, are two instantiations of the same phenomenological dynamic. When Esme cannot imagine her own mother nursing her, an absence is revealed to Esme, that she may lack a mother or at least lack knowledge of her own constitution through mothering. This lack in how she understands her own constitution would manifest as a lack in herself, and, thus, in phenomenological terms, the lack would resound outwards to her relations with the world and with others. The absence in herself, then, is filled by an absent ayah whom she has no direct access to. Her connection to this ayah is at both the height of intimacy and the depths of distance. In the case of the former, Esme knows the ayah through her own body; she has literally taken the ayah into her own being. Yet, for the latter, this ayah remains an unknowable Other, one whom she cannot even recall meeting.

This moment, then, also addresses our relations to an Other across racial or colonial grounds. The text holds the ayah's thoughts, motives, constitution, and even basic bodily appearance at such a distance that Esme cannot meaningfully encounter her. Indeed, as I noted earlier, the tenor of their connection is not even available to Esme,

[21] Julia Kristeva reads the child's disgust at "the fantasy of incorporation" with the mother, represented by the transference of milk, as the child's first emergence into a relational, distinct world: the self becomes constituted by its rejection of the Other/mother (39).

whether she was fed in addition to an also unknown "child of her own," or, mournfully, in place of a "child lost." Furthermore, this instance of adoptive mothering seems to distill the larger questions of British colonialism in Malaya: even if Esme's desires for an adoptive mothering in her childhood are accurate, the shades of an imperial relationship between a wealthy British woman and a local woman acting as her servant still colour her connection to the world of the colonial Other. This moment of intimacy that Esme begins to feel between herself and a racial Other is, in van Leeuwen's terms, coextensive with the emergence of an irreducible gap between herself and the ayah. Indeed, draped in colonial domination, even mothering takes on the duality between intimacy and distance that feminist phenomenology offers.

On first reading, *Taken* seems to suggest that colonialism itself creates this profound gap between the European and Malayan subjects:

> Esme had doubts. In the glimpses of life in the kampongs she sensed a way of being in and of the island she would never experience, despite its flowers that filled her house [. . .] But she didn't say this, didn't know how to say these things that felt like glimpses rather than positions she could take in conversation. (31)

The tenor of the language here is steeped in phenomenological discourse: glimpses, senses, ways of being, and experiences. Esme's intuitions of radical alterity, however, leave her looking sort of naïve. Decorating with local flowers in this passage opposes the gap she feels between herself and the island, but the obvious colonial overtones, the kind hand of empire gently dominating while also acquiring, appropriating, and domesticating, simply reify Esme's inability to actually encounter Malaya. Under other philosophical methods, such as traditional epistemology or ontology, which interrogate out of

"positions [one] could take in conversation," Malaya may truly remain inaccessible to the British colonizers. This is to say that the inaccessibility of Malaya, solvable or not, creates a problem in traditional epistemology or ontology. However, the inaccessibility itself is barely registered for Esme, only in mere "glimpses," a word repeated twice in this passage. Rather than a problem in phenomenology, this gap is a generative origin point out of which ethics spring. Time and again *Taken* attends to these "glimpses" of radical Otherness not only as an assertion of decolonial knowledge (that the empire cannot, as it posits, know or control totally), but also as the production of a postcolonial ethics, predicated on the fragility of our bodies, mothering, and how we look at others.

If we are to approach cultural Otherness through feminist phenomenology, however, a large problem exists in regard to the ways in which our culturally inflected structures of speech already pre-suppose the characteristics of Otherness and thus reduce radical alterity to the simple fact that other minds exist. This problem stems from incorrectly identifying the ways in which our own descriptions of phenomena themselves come up against radical alterity. For instance, how we experience our own bodies can be as culturally bound as language itself. Feminists have dwelt on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's unification of embodiment and pre-reflective experience with phenomenology as a possible answer to the gender-vacuum in much transcendental philosophy. As he says, "We do not merely behold as spectators the relations between the parts of our body, and the correlations between the visual and tactile body: we are ourselves the unifier of these arms and legs, the person who both sees and touches them" (133). That point of unification, at once seeing the body as an object of the world and experiencing it as the self (not merely something that we are *in*, but as the thing that we *are* in the first place), is

the experience of the body itself as a phenomenon. This assertion of the body as the self—and not as the worldly manifestation of our transcendental and more primary ego—is crucial for the development of a phenomenology that is also feminist.

However, Shannon Sullivan argues that Merleau-Ponty's idea of "projective intentionality," that we can read the intentions of others by the way that we ourselves interact with or experience the world, reveals a problem at the limits of his phenomenology. Projective intentionality occurs almost as a form of communication: the structures of my body permit, inhibit, and demand certain kinds of habits and behaviours (such as walking, chewing, or embracing). Thus, Merleau-Ponty claims, the universality of the structures of our embodiment demand that Others must also experience those habits and behaviours. Sullivan classifies this as a kind of solipsism, where the world is not experienced in itself, but is instead experienced as a projection of the ego: for instance, the structures of our hand make gripping a primary function, so a handshake may seem to be a natural and universal form of greeting, but the anthropological record shows us how culturally specific handshaking is. According to Sullivan, "In Merleau-Ponty's explanation of the way in which intentionality is bodily, Merleau-Ponty assumes too easily and quickly that the generality of human bodies, i.e., the similarities found in human bodily structures, allows one to understand the meaning of another's intentions as communicated in their bodily gestures" (185). There are two key issues that make this turn in Merleau-Ponty's project so curious. The first is that this emphasis on communication seems orthogonal to his key insight that our embodied experience occurs pre-reflectively, i.e., our ability to perceive and think is simultaneous to—and not in front of—our bodies. This insight asserts the primacy of our embodied experience as an origin

point for our account of philosophy itself, and not simply an addendum to the abstracted mind. However, his focus on shared bodily experience as communication between the self and the Other indicates that the first experience of the body may not be pre-reflective. Although communication between bodies may occur before verbal articulation, the body-as-communication transforms the body into a sign-system comparable to a language, which calls into question what exactly the *pre-reflective* refers to. The second curious issue is that the attention given to communication with the Other ends up overcoming the radical alterity of the Other. The phenomenological tradition that has been most fruitful for feminists like Butler, van Leeuwen, and Sullivan is the one found through Husserl, Levinas, and even Merleau-Ponty (elsewhere), namely, the phenomenology that is predicated on our encounter with an Other that seems to exceed the limits of our sense. Merleau-Ponty's move to projective intentionality, however, seems to want to domesticate the Other under the known world of the structures of our own bodies. In this sense, the Other would become dominated, not by my physical force, but by my knowledge of myself. Exerting this form of phenomenology onto, for instance, British-controlled Malaya would constitute a colonization not simply of the external body or of the mind, but of the very emergence of the body into the world and into our field of sense. And since, as Merleau-Ponty posits, the body is the self and the self is the body, this form of colonialism would exert its control over the very existence of selves—or Others—in the world.

Even if we shelve the question of culturally bound experiences of the body, we would still have to contend with Merleau-Ponty's reduction of the body into a normative model. His claim that the structures of our bodies demand and permit certain kinds of

behaviours and habits can only be legible if bodies take a limited range of shapes. Indeed, he makes much of, for instance, a distinguishing feature of the human body that sets it apart from other large apes, namely, opposable thumbs which grant the ability to manipulate and grasp tools in specific ways. We can take a cue from disability studies and ask, what, then, of people with other configurations of fingers, people without thumbs, or people without hands altogether? Are we to understand that projective intentionality, the ability to commune with others based on shared bodily experience, closes off at the moment that people with the normative bodies that Merleau-Ponty has in mind come into contact with people who inhabit non-standard bodies? His response might be that, aside from particular types of grip, there are other shared bodily experiences that permit communication. Since there exist (and we can imagine) people whose bodily structures depart from an incredible range of normative features, we would have to continue to peel back the layers of shared experience until we are possibly held together only by the bare existence of life itself (even, perhaps, before consciousness), in which case projective intentionality does not offer us much more than Heidegger's sense of Being-in-the-world. Furthermore, if communication is predicated on shared bodily experience, does this mean that, as my bodily structure has less and less in common with another's, my capacity for empathy and care is likewise reduced? And even if not, then projective intentionality would not offer any benefit to empathy and care in the first place.

In addition to differences among non-standard bodies (if a normative body is even tenable outside of an imagined concept like Merleau-Ponty's), shared bodily experiences also break down when we consider gender difference. The emphasis on the sameness of the body can be taken similarly to the idea of psychic universality, which has charged and

marred much transcendental Western philosophy. As differences become dissolved under the assumption that a culture-less androgyny will emerge, dominant identities instead take the illusory form of the universal, such as Eurocentrism, normative body structures, masculinity, and heteronormativity. In *Taken*, we can read the rejection of a universalizing masculinity in Suzanne and Lori's retreat to diminutive intimacy as a way of apprehending global hurt: the novel's ethical gaze begins in the confusion of the two women's bodies, the breakdown of the erotic partner as an object (of desire). Similarly, Irigaray's notion that "there are always at least two worlds" can be understood as the material female body reasserting its radical difference and demanding that we discard the illusory universal subject. Here we must emphasize "at least" in reference to the number of worlds we may find: "at least" begins with two, but leaves open the possibility of more worlds—even if *Sharing the World* generally has some difficulty with moving beyond this binary entry point. The feminist intervention in phenomenology seeks to maintain the radical Otherness of not one or two bodies, but of an uncountable multitude: a multitude of worlds, of kinds of femaleness, of kinds of maleness, and kinds of being otherwise.

What, then, *can* feminist phenomenology say about the Other? As Kalí Tal notes in *Worlds of Hurt*, the medicalization of experiences like post-traumatic stress disorder demonstrates the extent to which our concepts of trauma are culturally bound. Since the meaning of something like post-traumatic stress disorder (as it grew out of the earlier concepts of shell shock, battle fatigue, and even *nostalgia*) morphs within Anglo-American culture over even a few decades, we can begin to imagine the chasm between our contemporary articulations of trauma and those of other cultures, especially outside of the West and the Anglosphere. In the extended critique of Merleau-Ponty's concept of

shared experiences of the body, I wonder to what extent can feminist phenomenology make claims about the way an Other experiences fragility, pain, and grief. Does feminist phenomenology simply obscure the terms of the game, and continue to make culturally bound, universalizing assumptions about traumas of the Other, even as it dissects and ruptures gendered norms of Otherness? And what does *Taken* have to say?

One bizarre moment occurs when Suzanne, the narrator, remembers as a child accompanying her mother to the Chinese tailor's shop in Penang to be fitted by him for a new gown. As Esme stands in the shop, wealth and social status literally being woven around her, the text seems more aware of the visual cues of oppression than the child Suzanne does: "I think her gorgeous, the tailor, squatting on the floor to pin up the hem as she stands on thin brown paper, properly deferential" (43). Throughout this scene, the child Suzanne acts as a passive observer, scarcely remarking the imbalanced relationship between her mother as an object of admiration and the tailor as the one who labours for that beauty. And even less does she seem, at first, aware of her own embeddedness within this scene. She is barely more than a pair of eyes, although her gaze does seem almost to sublimate to the infinite or universal: "Endless it seems, my staring out between blinds at the usual stream of shoppers, loiterers, hawkers, everything slowing down so that i [sic] see the teacups on the sidewalk, a bowl of rice, and not the syce-driven cars." However, amidst this gaze that is both reductive and prophetic, Suzanne stumbles on a moment of ambiguity that ruptures her gaze, almost letting her for an instant see herself:

> See, for just a second, what it might be like to be that girl, younger than me, hanging around the kedai across the way, spoken to and speaking to the others but all the while staring with that territorial rudeness i know, staring between people

> and cars at me, outsider in her father's? uncle's? shop, while i, guardian of this gorgeous mother, just as rudely stare back. (43)

Suzanne here begins to understand her situatedness in this colonial landscape; she is both under the protective arm of her own mother and the motherland of the British Empire, as well as herself being modelled into her future role as a British middle-class woman. This scene represents an initial moment of Suzanne coming to a recognition of her place in the world, that there is a world that exists beyond her and her mother, and beyond the limits of her gaze. She begins to see how unusual she and her mother appear, how obtrusive they may be (generating a "territorial rudeness" in this other girl). And, she further understands that, as she has her own mother and place in the world, this young girl must have a father or uncle, and thus a place of her own.

On first glance, this coming-of-age scene seems to show Suzanne encountering the gaze of the Other, and thus her singular world—with herself as the sole, passive, and infinite observer—breaks into two. However, there are glimpses in the passage that suggest that Suzanne performs a kind of projective intentionality onto the girl near the kedai. Whereas projective intentionality refers specifically to a supposedly shared experience of the body, here Suzanne projects her interiority onto the Other. First, although the girl is "younger" than Suzanne, Suzanne sees herself doubled because of their shared identity as young girls in the shopping district of Penang. The passage betrays almost an attraction or desire for the girl at the kedai due to Suzanne's surprising insight that she so easily could have been born to different parents and thus just as easily could be the one across the street instead of the one inside the tailor's shop. This exchangeability between their contexts, and thus their identities, takes the form of a kind

of psychic universalism that robs the self of its situatedness. Of course, if Suzanne were born to different parents, specifically, say, Chinese Malaysian parents, she would be constituted by wholly different social and material forces so that she would no longer be the phenomenological self that is Suzanne. Desire or attraction here becomes an attraction to the self in another's body, entirely at odds with the rupturing of the subject that adult Suzanne finds in her relationship to Lori.

Other moments in the passage seem to indicate that Suzanne is still in the midst of struggling to emerge out of her childhood solipsism. For instance, the girl is said to be "speaking to the others but all the while" Suzanne claims to observe her "staring between people and cars at me." The ambiguity of the scene lies in the extent to which we can trust the child Suzanne as reliable in this passage. Perhaps she is quite the observer and does really notice the girl near the kedai sending her oblique glances through other conversations, other people, and cars. However, she may also be projecting her own interest for the girl into a comparable interest from the girl back to her. She also does not seem to recognize the ways in which her own eyes, the gaze of the colonizer, can generate particular kinds of responses such that Suzanne actually instigates this "territorial rudeness" even though she imagines herself to have stumbled as a passive observer onto it. Additionally, the equivocation of the bizarre "territorial rudeness" that, the text says, Suzanne "know[s]" and "just as rudely stare[s] back" indicates that Suzanne really does not understand the power dynamics inherent in looking and being looked at. The "territorial rudeness" occurs, Suzanne assumes, because she is an interloper in the shop of the kedai girl's family (if, again, we can even trust that Suzanne knows the relationship between the tailor and the girl, or indeed if she has any relationship at all). Perhaps the

text forges a wider comparison here between Suzanne interloping in the tailor's shop and Britain's greater presence in Malaya, however, this comparison seems altogether inaccessible to the young Suzanne. Furthermore, the equivocation between their two rudenesses evacuates such a comparison of all its critical acuity in regard to colonial power. And again, this still relies on assuming that the child Suzanne is a trustworthy reader of facial expressions, and that rudeness truly does anchor the kedai girl's face if not her feelings.

To return to the original question (are there problems with cross-cultural assumptions of interiority and experiences of trauma?), this passage clearly articulates a young Suzanne who emerges out of her childhood solipsism, but is nevertheless unable to truly encounter the Other without her own sense of self dominating her assumptions and projections. This passage usefully demonstrates the gradations between an utter refusal to take stock of the Other and a full encounter with radical alterity through the eyes of feminist phenomenology. The passage suggests that more than looking, even empathic looking, is necessary to apprehend the ethical demands of the Other.

One issue at stake in this critique of the limits of cross-cultural projection is my own assumptions about how the radical Other may experience trauma and fragility. Pain, of course, is felt on what Merleau-Ponty might call a pre-reflective level as a visceral, sensory phenomenon, but it can also be felt through layers of cultural significance. For instance, ascetic behaviours like pilgrimages, fasts, and meditations can all involve forms of pain that are nevertheless experienced as a way of coming to know the divine supernatural. Even the idea of personal acts of sacrifice, stories of both civilians and soldiers which are common in wartime, can radically alter one's perception of this

supposedly pre-reflective phenomenon. The line of thinking I have briefly followed here is a kind of anthropological one that assumes some sort of (albeit partial) access to cultural experiences beyond one's own. However, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's now-canonized essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" seems to force us into a methodology that must admit the fundamental unknowability of a particular kind of alterity, the subaltern. Specifically, the subaltern is more than simply outside of the hegemonic elite of Western patriarchal imperialism. The subaltern is so fundamentally disconnected from all forms of power—even the little intra-cultural power available to people under colonial rule—that, Spivak claims, they may lack even the ability to utter a word (a lack that we must also read as a material expression of colonial traumas). The subaltern's inability to speak—either verbally or through the flesh itself—rejects utterly Merleau-Ponty's projective intentionality, or the shared experiences of our bodily structures and capabilities: although the subaltern can very well have the physical capacity to produce speech in verbal, nonverbal, and written forms, the contents of that speech remain radically inaccessible.

The experience of the phenomenon of producing speech, then, cannot strictly be pre-reflective, because part of the shared experience of speech-making includes the experience of being heard. Spivak takes the example of Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri, a young unwed Indian woman who died by suicide in 1926. In researching the story, Spivak discovers that Bhuvaneswari had been part of a resistance group fighting for Indian independence, and, after being unable to carry out a political assassination, she killed herself. However, knowing that her death, as an unmarried older teenage girl in India, would be assumed to be a romantic tragedy, perhaps a mistaken pregnancy, she waited for the onset of menstruation in order to have her body *speak*, as it were, the falsity of such

an interpretation. Yet, despite Bhuvaneswari's attempt to write her narrative in the flesh of her own body, she was still assumed to have been a casualty of a romantic affair, or else insane, or both. The failure of the best efforts of Bhuvaneswari to have even her death speak a word concludes for Spivak the utter denial of the subaltern's ability to speak. Indeed, Spivak's own reconstructed narrative, carefully attending as it does to Bhuvaneswari's context, motives, and cultural coding, still fails—or refuses—to represent or access Bhuvaneswari's own experience of her death: was she mournful? Emboldened? Frightened? Patriotic? Courageous? Nostalgic? We are fundamentally unable to encounter the phenomenon of her death; her body, though revealed to be fragile like all bodies in death, still remains beyond the horizon of our sense.

Taken, of course, does not resolve this dilemma of the radical inaccessibility of the subaltern, but it does at moments seem somewhat aware of the limits of our senses. Beverley Curran describes the structure of the novel as a "narrative drift," wherein stories of the narrator and her lover, stories of her mother, letters between her grandparents, and photographs are woven into and out of each other in order to show the many sides of truth construction as a feminist ecological practice. All of these narrative threads are based on Suzanne's own experience, her memories, stories told to her from family members, her digging in the archives of her parents' correspondence, and her attention to old photographs. However, at key places in the text another first person narrative voice emerges in italicized vignettes that articulate brief moments in the experience of prisoners of war who, we are to understand, are taken by Japanese soldiers during the invasion of Malaya. The shock of these short sections jars us out of the already nonlinear story of Suzanne's family, purposefully denying us solid context with which to steady ourselves.

These short snapshots of the prisoners of war camps all pay careful attention to moments of failed speech or times when speech becomes weaponized (such as the torturous counting of prisoners that seems more cruel than practically useful). For instance, even the brief respite of food in the otherwise unkind camps becomes tangled up with the need for silence: "*It was the hand of bananas—you don't talk about these things—it was the hand of bananas that brought it home. you can't speak about it—only just ripe, and so many of them, enough to give you several bites each*" (*Taken* 63). The narrator here almost falls into the desire for the banana as a form of survivalism in the camps, not unlike both the need for silence (to escape the admonishment of the guards) and the further silence after the trauma (as a protective measure from reliving the trauma). Strangely, though, the comfort is not found in a hand *with* bananas, or a hand that *held* bananas. Rather, the "*hand* of *bananas*" provides at least the memory of relief in the prison camps (63; emphasis added). The "*hand of bananas*" ruptures the boundary between the human and the non-human, the self and the Other, imbuing the physical world with the compassionate gesture of giving that the prisoners are denied in the camps. Butler and Levinas agree that traumatic violence reduces the human to an object (a corpse). The "*hand of bananas*" offers an escape from the traumatic objectification of the human by suggesting, instead, that the non-human world, the world of so-called objects, is animated by the same compassion that we usually ascribe to humans.

The bananas also seem to call back to the supposedly normal life that the prisoners lived before the invasion in contrast with the abject life of the camps: "*all they'd given you was a little broken rice, and all you can think is waste, the lost children, dead babies who will never taste banana, and that woman shuffling beside you like a sleepwalker—*

you can't speak of it to her, you can't break through her pain" (63). Paradoxically, the shared experience of trauma between the prisoners does not lead to a communication between them. Instead, there is a mutual recognition that trauma results in isolation and the failure of speech. Perhaps, though, trauma is not the cause of this isolation; perhaps the communal trauma simply makes clear the rupture of perception and communication that underpins the relationship between the self and the Other. In this way, *Taken* neither attempts to resolve the dilemma of colonial cultural production nor erases it altogether. It seems cognizant of Spivak's critique, but the novel provides no answer except the prisoners' failure to communicate—the torturous gestation of silence.

Taken seems to register this inherent isolation in its exploration of intimacy in wartime. *Taken*, not unlike other novels about war, features an almost furious romantic intimacy in the face of the dehumanization of war. Here, during the Gulf War on an isolated island in British Columbia, Suzanne and her lover Lori attempt to shut out the violent world around them:

> Knotting and unknotting ourselves by candlelight, I think of [the nearby animals] even as we submerge in hunger searching out the soft parts, undoing nipples, lips with tongue talk, parading it, for that long final shout. Then gone in our own foetal curl, soft gone and long gone, impossible to know where each of us ends. (15)

The dim room is illuminated by a non-electric source, "candlelight," which contrasts the new spectacle of the television war that constitutes Western media coverage of the Gulf War. Elsewhere, Suzanne characterizes the Gulf War by its emergence in technology: "And all the while this high-tech war drags on—impersonal, systematic, it narrows our focus. When the war story is on there is only counting and killing" (30). The paradox of

the Gulf War, and Paul Virilio articulates this point in *Pure War*, is that the precision of the news cameras, capturing the war in high definition, ends up distorting and limiting our view as "it narrows our focus." Whereas the distant reach of the news cameras should expand our capacity for empathy, the cameras actually turn war into a spectacle, blurring the war's distinction from Hollywood blockbusters. So, the natural light of the candle not only reminds us of the epigraph by Webb and its reclamation of the generative qualities of darkness, but also responds to the artificial, distorting, *enlightening* media used to capture, or *take*, the Gulf War.

In addition, "counting" or taking stock (of casualties, of war ships, of days), which forms the bulk of media coverage, creates an atomized and similarly narrow viewpoint of the war. The lovers' bodies then, "knotting and unknotting" themselves, submerging into each other, blurring distinctions, serve as a counterpoint to the individuation inherent in war media. The blurring of the lovers' bodies is partly a postmodern sexual aesthetic that emerges directly out of Webb's *Naked Poems*. But the relationship of indistinction, possible only through the queer politics of the erotic seen here and in *Naked Poems*, provides in the material terms of the body an escape from the individualism and individuation inherent in American cultural productions of war.

War media soon penetrate this safe harbour of quietness, of queerness, of women's intimacy, as it becomes populated by "good old boys waging their epithets, their death-curse" (15). Suzanne now remarks that they are in actuality "Enclosed here—as if becalmed. The days slide by in a slow gel woods and water suspend. Nothing we do has any consequence. The fatal idea of islands cut off from the main" (16). Not calm itself, but "*as if* becalmed" (emphasis added). Like Webb as she sits alone by her fireplace on

Salt Spring Island, Suzanne discovers that the violent tendrils of war search out and invade her "Enclosed" space of intimacy. At best, their home offers only isolation and enclosure "cut off from the main," which would constitute nothing more than an escape from (and thus tacit political approval of) the Gulf War. The women begin to imagine that in their admonition of the distortions and atomizations inherent to news media, they perhaps walled off their perceptions of violence and distant places altogether. Indeed, later in the novel when Lori leaves Suzanne and returns to her own mother in Iowa, she indicates that their detachment from the world around them became untenable for her.

Yet, against their own perceptions of the politics of their enclosed, intimate space, the text offers another, wider reading. Suzanne's search for intimacy within Lori, and the productive confusion between mother and lover that she finds there is comparable to her search for her own mother Esme within the letters that Suzanne has kept. The immediate, furious search for intimacy seems to be a product of wartime, which would mean that the enclosure of the lovers is not, in fact, an isolation from wartime, but a way of registering wartime on an affective level. Wartime is characterized not only by vast distances and media's collapsing of those vast distances as Mary Favret argues, but also by intense intimacy. In this reading, the blurring of the lovers in their bedroom, supposedly an utter contrast to the death and dehumanization on the Persian Gulf coast, actually bears the marks of the war as its photographic negative: war violence breaks down the subject-object relationship (by turning humans into corpses), but instead of attempting to reconstitute the subject, the blurring of the lovers offers a new queer politics of intimacy that rejects the subject-object relationship altogether. The distance and intimacy reflect the poles between phenomenology's traditional transcendentalism and the new feminist

critique which focuses on our relationship to the material bodies that surround us. Rather than distance and intimacy being a binary opposition in wartime, they become two faces of the same perceptual problem, namely, how can one grasp, or take, war and trauma in their totalities?

Indeed, as Suzanne searches through her parents' wartime correspondence for a way to understand her place in the Gulf War, she finds the marks of her own mother's desperate search for intimacy with her husband Charles. First, her pleas for him to come home are displaced in what we might call an analogy—between their situation and that of their neighbours. Esme writes in a post-script:

> I met a Dutch woman today whose husband is in Java—& she said as far as she knew women could return to Java—if I were not going to have a baby I could have joined you darling—a bit tough isn't it? I had better stay til after Aug. any way—I suppose. What do you think dearest? (20)

Although Esme desperately wants to express in clear terms her desire for her husband to return to her, she stifles her wish and hides it in oblique pauses and subtext. Partially, the formal restrictions of the British middle-class genre of letter writing constrain Esme's ability to be honest. These restraints contrast sharply with the kind of letter writing that Webb theorizes both in *Talking* and *Wilson's Bowl*, a fragile and brutally honest form of communication that managed to forge an intimate bond between the strangers Lilo Berliner and Wilson Duff. *Taken* at these moments demonstrates the distortions that often accompany media, distortions which in this case force Esme to express herself almost metaphorically (through analogy). Esme, though, is also constrained by an inner imperial voice that crops up again and again to suppress her emotions. The narrator Suzanne

speculates that the dashes "suggest hesitation, the pressure perhaps of her father's voice—Use your head, my girl! You'd be nothing but a millstone round his neck" (20). The voice of her father emerges as the expression of colonial power exercised over the affect of its constituents. Imperial control demands an impervious separation between the domestic sphere and the public sphere—the domain of men who wage war and organize the waging of war, as Charles does—so that ethical responses which may reside in a form such as intimate letter writing do not disrupt the continued smooth operations of the colonial state.

So, British gentility and the constraining power of colonial discourse stifle Esme's language. However, her desires for intimacy with her husband crop up obliquely in the hesitations and half-stated feelings in her letter. Suzanne even notes that Esme "knows she is writing against his manly duty, his heroism, her role as dutiful wife. Planting the thought in his mind, using their familiar language, appealing to the lover in him. Come back" (20). The gendered language of colonial violence, the "manly duty" and the "dutiful wife," seem to be roles that shut one off from an ethical denunciation of war. This is to say that when Esme inhabits the identity of the "dutiful wife," she necessarily supports the war effort via her suppression of any compassionate fears she may have for the danger that war poses to the bodies of her loved ones. The moments when her desperate fears slip through the language in her letters, she simultaneously—and fearfully—casts off the mantel of the stoic, demure British wife that has been thrown on her since childhood. This rejection of colonial gender norms mirrors the one that takes place via the queer love between Suzanne and Lori fifty years later on an island off the coast of British Columbia. The lack of distinction between the bodies of the lovers,

"Knotting and unknotting" themselves, "impossible to know where each of [them] ends" (15), also repudiates the demarcation of bodies that seems endemic to wartime discourse. As Suzanne notes when consuming Gulf War news media, bodies become atomized as they are turned into munitions or supply objects, akin to the number of fighter jets available, the number of shells exploded, or the amount of ground gained in an engagement (land itself becoming an expendable supply). Bodies too become demarcated into the roles available to the grand theatre of war, from generals to soldiers, allies, enemies, civilians, prisoners of war, or terrorists. And, as Suzanne's comments about manly duties and dutiful wives suggest, the demarcation of bodies into gendered roles sustains colonial and wartime narratives. So, in Suzanne's search for intimacy in the body of her lover and in Esme's search for intimacy by way of the letters to her husband, they both reject war discourse specifically by way of attempting to cast off colonial gender norms and their constitution as atomized subjects.

The furious desire for intimacy and, of course, the instability of that intimacy can be considered, then, as a response to the pervasiveness of war, or perhaps as produced by war. The language of loss, the felt register of war, invades intimacy by way of the interrelationship between ghosts or absences and intimacy. Suzanne and Lori's relationship breaks down in a literal sense because Lori's fears about the Gulf War become wrapped up in her fears about her mother's health. Suzanne, though, also mulls over other moments of their relationship that contributed to their breaking apart, particularly her own unresolved connection to her family's past:

> Ghosts. Each of us already haunted. When I told you about the pretas, those black holes of never-satisfied desire that pursue us, your face clouded over. Do you

> really believe in such things? you asked, thinking how superstitious. All this talk of ghosts. We know about women's desire, we know the materials conditions that must be changed to satisfy it. (99)

The pretas, suffering ghosts whose hunger and thirst can never be quenched, become wrapped up in a metaphor for "women's desire," a queer identity out of step with the "material conditions" of the real world. Thus, Suzanne here expresses her anxieties about being haunted by her family's past, but Lori, skeptical of haunting, strangely turns the metaphor on its head so that queer women's identity itself becomes a kind of ghost, a cultural absence that flickers out of view and longs for an end to its suffering. Lori, speaking practically, departs from the 'ghostly' metaphor when she suggests that they "know the material conditions that must be changed" in order to substantiate or "satisfy" the kind of Being that is at the heart of women's queerness. The "material conditions" that she mentions are, foremost, Western military interventions like the Gulf War, which we can be read as colonialism by other means, rife with their associations that women must be 'dutiful wives,' that compassion for the Other is a threat to national security, and all manner of wartime ideologies. Thus, the type of non-Being, or ghostliness, that produces and is produced by women's queerness, embeds an antiviolence ethics by way of being incommensurate with a world that creates and justifies war in far-reaching places.

Lori's refusal to remain incommensurate with the world, to remain a ghost in the world, is echoed in her later statement, "*We just don't live in the same reality*," which Suzanne calls "your way of erasing our ghost-written bond" (126). Lori is specifically interested in substantiating her Being-in-the-world, which requires reforming the

"material conditions" of the world until they support a queer feminist ethics. As noble as Lori's desires to reform the world may be, I argue that the way that Suzanne reads intimacy through ghostliness provides a fundamental perceptual shift in the way we see the world that both registers the material reality of violence and paradoxically may provide a foundation on which to ground the world that Lori desires, a world that could substantiate women's queerness.

Suzanne's obsessions with the ghosts of her past—her mother, her father, the absent ayah who nursed her—also become tied to her romantic relationship to Lori, which Suzanne calls their "ghost-written bond." The metaphor of "ghosts," which connects her uncertain family past with the war dead, invades and constitutes her understanding of intimacy. When her future with Lori is at its most unclear, her love seems to flourish in that uncertainty and absence: "I find no words for this threshold, though the sense of being suspended here is exquisite. Present in your absence, my love, loves echoing. It's still dark, the gulls are crying" (115). This passage, so reminiscent of Webb's "walking in dark," even down to Webb's articulation of the "presence of all the absences we have known" (Webb 177), oscillates in the "exquisite" suspension between intimacy and alienation, whether Lori will return or remain away. The experience of love, then, becomes not only an intimate connection with another, but also an encounter with vulnerability (of the self, of absence, of the war dead). The perceptual shift that queer intimacy provides, therefore, is an encounter with the world that extends both compassion and fragility at the most fundamental point of contact with the world. The passage is readable only as a simultaneous expression of ecstasy and grief. Moreover, this paradigm

of global, fragile intimacy in *Taken* seems to be rooted in the queer aesthetics that Webb develops in *Naked Poems, Water and Light*, and elsewhere.

The passage continues on to broaden this sense of intimacy by connecting lovers and mothers. This question of intimacy develops out of the perceptual problem of daytime, which crystallizes and paradoxically obscures objects:

> Mourning the loss of early light which opens first to sound or smell or touch, not sight. The eye, unfocused, gazes at water, air, all that envelops us, pre-dates us. Post-dates us too. Mourning the loss of being before knowing narrowed into the dangerously exclusive we label meaningful, or what counts. "Knowing who your friends are." (Your lovers too?) And what about all that mothers, has mothered us into existence? Relations beyond number. (116)

As the concept of intimacy becomes extended here, so too does "mothering"; "all that mothers" points specifically beyond biological or familial mothering, and seems not only to include Suzanne's relationship to Lori or the missing ayah, but also, perhaps, to the objects within her perception in the early dawn hours, the water, air, and "all that envelops us." Mothering here seems to relate to Heidegger's idea of our "thrown-ness" into the world, that we are "mothered" into existence by forces that are barely known or are even "before knowing." In expanding Heidegger's ontology into a question of intimacy, the text here suggests that this sense of intimacy—which is both a kind of mothering and a perceptual relationship with the world—does not require, and, indeed, seems to repudiate, a categorical apprehension of the world. That is to say that this intimate relationship with the world, mothering us into being, depends on the uncertainty of perception. Mothering as a perceptual relationship, then, seems much more in line with

Levinas's critique of Being rather than Heidegger's Being itself. The fundamental perceptual mystery of the Other that Levinas articulates instead becomes the limits of our categorical knowledge of a lover, or a mother, or any other of our "Relations beyond number."

This conception of the Other as a mother or a lover recuperates some of the problems with alterity that Spivak articulates. She argues that the prevalence of "the Other" in Western scholarship, especially as a way of theorizing colonized peoples, still defines the colonized in relation to the primacy of the colonizer. The concept of "the Other" as an operant and not merely descriptive term, then, has the potential to double down on the marginalizations that colonial ideology already enforces on those it seeks to dominate. However, *Taken* suggests that we can simultaneously maintain alterity as a fundamental perceptual limit (thereby maintaining the coherence and self-determination which should be the right of the Other) while also coming into an intimate relationship with the Other. Moreover, if the Other can also "mother[] us into existence," then our relationship to the Other is not of a passive observer looking out and obtaining, perceptually, the mysteries of the world. Instead, first, we are constituted at least in part by those mysteries, and, second, our intimate relationship does not require us *apprehending*, that is, making categorical or knowable, the Other.

Taken thus offers us a turn in the phenomenology of Levinas or even Merleau-Ponty, and this turn is based in a perceptual relationship with the world that is defined by various trajectories of mothering. A similar kind of perceptual relationship to the world is articulated in Marlatt's much more widely read novel, *Ana Historic*. The narrator, Ana, attempts to reconstruct the life of a nineteenth-century woman named Mrs. Richards out

of fragments within historical archives. At the same time, she explores her own constitution as a new mother out of her early childhood and her relationship to her own mother, Ina. The irony at the centre of the text is that these various reconstructions, of Mrs. Richards, of her childhood, of her mother, of herself, do not entail an *apprehension* of the person, since the reconstructions simply reveal the chasms of meaning that separate us: "I-na, I-no-longer, i can't turn you into a story. there is this absence here, where the words stop. (and then i remember—" (11). To turn her mother "into a story" indicates that story-making is a form of apprehension or exerting control over an object or person. Thus, her mother (and this is true of Mrs. Richards and any Other) exceeds the grip of the story; the story forges new intimacies with her mother, but her mother remains in alterity, still wavering beyond Ana's perceptual limits. This could then be described as a failed novel similar to how Webb describes *Wilson's Bowl* as a text of failure. Failure in *Ana Historic*, of course, is really a failure of traditional history and archival reconstruction. The fragmented story of her mother and Mrs. Richards, instead, reveals a kind of feminist historiography that refuses to domesticate alterity by apprehending historical objects into categories. Thus, alterity survives in "this absence, where the words stop," and categorization fails as language fails. The open parenthesis, "(and then i remember—," though, suggests something beyond the failure of language and the failure of the historical story. Memory does not fill the absence that her mother leaves so much as it is coterminous with that absence. Indeed, the hesitation entailed by the dash ("i remember—") indicates the afterlife of that absence made intimate by memory. *Ana Historic* provides an intervention in historiography that is predicated on the same shift in perception at the

heart of *Taken*. *Taken*, however, places this perceptual reconfiguration in relation to violence, taking this new version of intimacy into its ethical consequences.

Taken demonstrates the inadequacy of typical news media in thinking through the ethics of war. For instance, during the Second World War, Esme and Charles learn from print news the "revelations of a concentration camp in Holland" (117). Print news here is like a sacred text that provides "revelations" to its readers, but revelations of horrors rather than salvations. The novel continues on to say that "The paper described how in one section of the camp a nursery was found," whereas "A second section housed a mobile crematorium and two large ovens." The absurdity of these two extremes contained in one camp, a nursery and a crematorium, functions more like a trope within print news than a material location in the real world. That is to say that the juxtaposition of care and torture, the irrationality of the camp, becomes a way of making the enemy meaningful: the Nazi's willingness to commit violence, which otherwise exceeds our comprehension, is domesticated by way of the Nazi being transformed into a tyrant-jester figure, not beyond rationality so much as irrational as an almost-literary characteristic. Print media likewise contain violence by what Suzanne earlier in the text characterizes as "only counting" (30). Print media must contend with two different impulses. First, they must articulate and make knowable the war, and in this way their strategy of perception mimics what Suzanne calls the light of the day which "intimate[s] the differences between things" (129); this kind of perception provides a foil to the reinvigorated feminist phenomenology that forms the basis of Suzanne's relationship to the world and critique of violence. Second, while making war knowable, print news must also obey popular notions of censorship and decency; war, somehow, needs to be articulated in a way that is palatable

to read and discuss at the kitchen table. Indeed, print news makes its way into the daily chores of housekeeping, as "Esme, who had picked up the paper with her morning groceries while Charles was sleeping off his late watch, felt compelled to recite the details over lunch" (117). The seamless introduction of war violence into the innocuous domestic scene of the kitchen table is a testament to the ways in which print media recreate war into something that could serve as a conversation starter for well-mannered British subjects.

Moreover, print news' domestication of war has the bizarre propagandistic effect of reinforcing the homeliness of the home or the domesticity of the domicile, or, in other words, the chasm that separates the theatre of war from the space of the home. When Esme expresses incredulity at the absurd concentration camp which houses both a nursery and a crematorium, "Charles looked up from the loaf of bread he was slicing. Despite what your father thinks, war makes men less human not more so" (118). Charles at first glance here seems to push back against the chest-thumping propagandistic jingo of Esme's father. However, the text lingers on strange objects that indicate Charles's own war ideology. Charles's grand pronouncement that "war makes men less human not more so" sharply contrasts the banality of his actions, slicing a loaf of bread for lunch. The pseudo-philosophical air of his statement, with its own kind of jingoistic symmetry, makes war into an immaterial field of contemplation. Moreover, humanity becomes an unstable quality that is imperfectly distributed among "men." The clear distinction between the human and the otherwise-than-human simply reinforces the peacefulness of the home: war and inhumanity are problems for other people in other places, and it is merely a testament to the relative humanity of the home that they, in comfort, can

meditate on the lessons of war. And what exactly constitutes the home, so sharply juxtaposed with the violence of the camp (even if, remarkably, the camp itself contains a well-maintained nursery)? Charles's use of "men" as a synonym for humans in general nevertheless demarcates war as a gendered field of participation, a place where men can be tested for humanity. Women, in the domestic sphere, can almost be said to harbour or be the caretakers of this relative humanity, and thus are exempted from the trials of war. The distinction here starts to take on colonial language, as the "motherland," the safe haven of humanity that all other places can only emulate, needs to be protected from hostile external forces. Sara Ahmed in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* sees in the jingoism of a British National Front poster the articulation of a British nation as feminine and, indeed, vulnerable and in need of protection due to that very femininity: she says that the "soft touch" of Britain to which the poster refers "suggests that the nation's borders and defences are like skin; they are soft, weak, porous and easily shaped or even bruised by the proximity of others. It suggests that the nation is made vulnerable to abuse by its very openness to others" (2). The ideology of British colonialism sustains itself by this constant gendered threat against its sheltered, domestic homeland. Moreover, the anxieties of this colonial ideology betray a kind of projection that the British homeland could experience the very same domination that the empire exacts on the homes of others: Ahmed notes that "Such attributes are of course gendered: the soft national body is a feminized body, which is 'penetrated' or 'invaded' by others" (2). Thus, the marrying of the British nation to the concept of the domestic home seems to pre-emptively rearticulate uncolonized places not as the homes of other people but as containing dangerous, masculine invaders who seek to rupture and dominate 'soft,' gentle Britain. The

demarcation of the theatre of war as an exclusively masculine space means, then, that uncolonized places may as well be war zones, containing nothing recognizably 'domestic' at all.

For the Gulf War, which Suzanne experiences entirely by way of media, television news and direct visual reporting supersede all other forms of media communication. In the broadcasts, Suzanne notes the "new obsession with high-tech fighters and tanks" (56); coterminous with new war technology taking precedence in military strategies during the Gulf War is the fact that reporting also became "high-tech," with the possibilities of infrared cameras tracking bombs and bodies, aerial images, and footage displayed only moments after it was taken. Virilio notes these vast changes in the technological landscape of war and media, arguing how advanced optics make long-range assaults possible just as they make the capturing of those attacks by news cameras possible. Even the language of camera operations seems to mimic a weapon: one aims the camera and *shoots*.

The advanced precision of new camera technologies seems contradictory in front of the almost-purposeful obfuscation of the actual content of those reports. Suzanne watches a news story which reports:

> 91 CHILDREN AMONG 288 BODIES RECOVERED IN RUBBLE, Iraq reports in the wake of American bombing, of—what? Language floats. An air raid shelter, Iraq asserts. Military bunker, the US counter-reports. Disputed terms echoing back and forth across communication waves. A CNN print displays painfully small bodies wrapped in blankets, blurred figures bending on the street to fold back a corner, confirm the unthinkable. (57)

The floating language, disputed terms, and blurred figures show the irony at the heart of the new high-tech media age: the increasing specificity of the cameras, the quickness of the 'wire' from event to television screen, the exact figures of death tolls are all orthogonal to the possibilities of actually apprehending the war. The barrage of images, tallies, and locations, rather than giving a so-called 'clearer picture' of the war, end up contributing to the signal noise of the communications ecosystem. For all of the advanced technology and massive reporting teams, *Taken* shows the inaccuracy that underpins the actual meaningfulness of the news items.

Taken opens an unresolvable dilemma, whether the signal noise of television news is part of its fundamental constitution, its way of seeing, or whether the confusion is deliberately fostered for propagandistic ends. For instance, this news story is capped by a weak, ambiguous defense of the target selection of the US military: "'I suppose the suggestion that he [Saddam Hussein] may have indeed encouraged civilians to occupy what he knew to be a military facility is possible,' the U.S. Secretary of Defense defensively purports" (57). The Secretary of Defense obfuscates even the origins of this supposition by both presenting it himself to the news media as well as distancing his own agency in the construction of this version of events: he only *supposes* that it "may have" been done, while the phrase "the suggestion" creates the effect that he is simply commenting on something he has overheard, which "is possible." The irony of the phrase "may have indeed," both solidifying and leaving open to ambiguity the truth of his statement, demonstrates the linguistic corollary of the signal noise of the visual images. In this obfuscatory rhetoric, we are still left to wonder, *even if they targeted a military bunker, was the proximity of the children and civilians known? And, if not, does the U.S.*

military order airstrikes without complete information about the actual location on which the bombing will take place?

In *Precarious Life*, Judith Butler launches a critique at this kind of propagandistic doublespeak: "When a bleeding child or dead body on Afghan soil emerges in the press coverage, it is not relayed as part of the horror of war, but only in the service of a criticism of the military's capacity to aim its bombs right. We castigate ourselves for not aiming better, as if the end goal is to aim right" (6). At the centre of this critique, something on which Butler does not follow up, is the relationship between media technologies and the exoneration of war atrocities. "Aiming right" is only made possible by the very optical technologies that allow one to see targets in the distance, whether through the lens of a weapons system or a camera. This question of "aiming right," then, hinges on the furthering of optical technologies, where a 'perfect aim' would be coterminous with perfect media coverage, a kind of military and media omniscience. Of course, this rhetoric of "aiming right" misses two crucial points. The first is that time and again militaries across the globe, and particularly the US military, have shown that 'collateral damage,' the indiscriminate killing of non-combatants including children, has not only been a function of inaccurate targeting and imperfect weapons; instead, the killing of non-combatants has been at times tolerated in the planning and execution of military assaults, and at others has been the mission of those assaults. Second, the language of "aiming right" already covers over an analysis of *Jus ad bellum*, or the justification of one's own waging of war and the opponent's waging of war. That is to say that, even if 'perfect aim' were possible and even if it were actually pursued by militaries during war, one still has to make the case that those people who are made into 'enemy

combatants' by a declaration of war deserve to die. Thus, one must already have an ethical claim in going to war, since a declaration of war does not on its own necessitate that the opponent must therefore be unjust (and that killing them is required in order to carry out justice in the world). Likewise, the opponent cannot themselves have a just claim to waging war, otherwise one's own actions would block the carrying out of justice by another.

However, television news focuses on the material facts of war, the number of bodies, the amount of munitions, and the locations of battles, creating a montage of sensationalism and banality, which has the effect of totally populating the airwaves with noise enough to drown out this contemplation of the ethics of war. Even the bodies of the killed children become distorted as signal noise: "A CNN print displays painfully small bodies wrapped in blankets, blurred figures bending on the street to fold back a corner, confirm the unthinkable" (*Taken* 57). Butler in a similar context succinctly articulates the curious absence of an apprehension of violence in American public discourse: "We do not, however, take the sign of destroyed life and decimated peoples as something for which we are responsible" (6). As Butler indicates, the material fact of a destroyed body, even voiceless as the dead are, makes an ethical claim especially on those who participated or witnessed its killing. What is so surprising in the Gulf War television broadcast in *Taken* is not the presence of children killed by the US military. Rather, what is surprising is the way in which the television broadcast reconstitutes the dead children not as material substantiations of violence but as more signal noise, shocking, yes, but montaged in such a way that the shock gives way to the banality and everyday-ness of television news experienced in the safety of the living room. In their effort to capture

omnisciently these material facts of the war, television media, populated with noise, drown out the voices of dead bodies, the ethical claims they, as Others nearly beyond perception, should make on us.

Instead, *Taken* offers us a way of feeling toward those affected by global violence as we might feel toward a mother or a lover. The text seizes on a particular kind of relationship to perception that, according to Butling, Webb develops especially in the fragmented lyrics of *Naked Poems* and *Water and Light*. Marlatt and Webb both articulate moments of clarity which entail erasures of the liberal humanist subject, rather than moments of enlightenment that reify the individuality of the humanist subject, especially in regard to traditional phenomenology. Take, for instance, the lucidity that the poet feels after the parting of the lovers in Webb's *Naked Poems*:

> *You brought me clarity.*
>
> *Gift after gift*
>
> *I wear.*
>
> *Poems naked*
>
> *in the sunlight*
>
> *on the floor.* (169)

Even in this moment that should be mourning, she finds not an isolation, which would re-establish the individual humanist subject, but the afterlife of the love expressed as *gifts* that are worn. The unresolvable turn of the poem, though, is that the gifts that are worn like garments simultaneously seem to be, or at least seem to leave behind, poems that are "*naked / in the sunlight / on the floor*." Thus, vulnerability itself, the nakedness of the poems, seems to be what the poet learns to wear. This sense of gift-giving by one who

was intimately close but is now absent bears a similar relationship to Marlatt's missing ayah in *Taken*. What, Suzanne wonders, "had she covertly passed to Esme in her milk, what tastes, what feelings" (*Taken* 113)? Clarity, thus, reconfigures the moment of perceptual recognition of the Other in phenomenology so that mourning, absence, intimacy, and the destruction of the humanist self all become part of the relationship with the Other. As *Taken* looks so distantly at violence, across history and across continents, far away from an island off the coast of British Columbia, it takes up the intimate gaze of feminist phenomenology in order to make proximate and tangible the damage of global violence.

Conclusion

> War time, black and white time, whole cultures reduced to dirty adjectives under the acrid developer of national will. What was one individual, one tiny life in all of that?
>
> —Daphne Marlatt, *Taken*

Taken ends with the dissolution of the narrator into her photographic negative, the ghost of the camera film roll. Indeed, when one finishes the novel, turns the final page, and finds oneself face-to-face with the back cover, the young woman depicted on the front of the book is revealed in a photo negative. The "ghostly" language, explored in the previous chapter of this thesis as a state of being in the afterlife of trauma, intensifies as the novel comes to a close. The ghostliness seems to shift more and more into a narrative or aesthetic strategy, that is, it becomes entangled in the very conditions of articulation that underpin *Taken*. As Suzanne parts from her lover Lori and the reach of global violence becomes too exhausting and too oppressive, their earlier political discussions seem trite and hollow, vaguely liberal idealism from a more hopeful—and archaic—time. Thus, individual subjectivity, of Suzanne and the narrator, dissolves into the haze of a haunting by the text's final line: "The stories we invent and refuse to invent ourselves by, all unfinished . . ." (130). Distinctions bleed, and the work of the writer seems both not their own and not concluded.

In light of this context, we are perhaps compelled to re-read the possibly overwritten "dissolution of the lyric 'I'" (Collis 17) that is familiar to Webb scholars not simply as the product of a budding postmodernism or as an expression of her commitment to anarchist communalism but also as a material manifestation of the ways in which war

tears apart human bodies and rends us until we are indistinguishable. This point is perhaps made more conspicuous by the fact that, as John Hulcoop recalls from a letter from 1970, Webb said that the Second World War "was one of *the* formative experiences of my youth," and, moreover, she says, "It all came mainly through radio broadcasts and talk among people" (*Peacock Blue* 4). War as "formative" suggests that it is inscribed on the fundamental building blocks of her psyche, yet her experience of war comes second hand, through conversations and through media technologies like the radio (a particular technology that would itself have a singular influence on her life).

So, the dissolution of the self responds to the ways in which technologies mediate these poets' proximities to and distances from war. Susan Sontag, reading Virginia Woolf's brief media analysis in *Three Guineas*, suggests that this process of dissolution is also particular to war photography:

> When Woolf notes that one of the photographs she has been sent shows a corpse of a man or woman so mangled that it could as well be that of a dead pig, her point is that the scale of war's murderousness destroys what identifies people as individuals, even as human beings. This, of course, is how war looks when it is seen from afar, as an image. (45)

Sontag, however, is mostly dissatisfied with Woolf's short analysis, since she points out that Woolf fails to register the context of the observer of the photographs: when one already believes in the brutishness of war, then war photographs cannot fail to display that brutishness in full and horrid detail. Perhaps, Sontag suggests, when we are not at such a distance from the figures in the photograph, when those figures are our family members, our neighbours, our antagonizers, our victims, then they can convey something

other than the horror of war; they can, for instance, be used for propagandistic purposes. If the photograph of a mangled body can suggest the ingenuity of our scientists and engineers to design weapons that can make human bodies indistinguishable, then it is clear how the power of looking can itself be weaponized to unify rather than dissolve nationalist fervour.

We should, then, carefully consider how we approach media depictions of war, and analyze the ways that media technologies structure or limit our ethical response to violence. Reading Webb's and Marlatt's work in relation to feminist phenomenology creates ethical demands on how we perceive media depictions of war, so that only with great peril may we look at the body of a dead stranger and feel, for instance, elated. Thus, a case could be made that it is not that, as Sontag argues, Woolf does not understand that images of war have the potential to bolster nationalist fervour in specific contexts, but instead that Woolf is speaking only to those who possess the gaze of the pacifist. Now, under Sontag's pragmatism, of course, Woolf's commitment to pacifism does appear perhaps trite and archaic. Still, it is revealing that, if one would like to trace a literary history of war media studies, one finds the paths constantly returning to a mutual origin point. Thus, despite her dissatisfaction, Sontag's illuminating book *Regarding the Pain of Others* returns to Woolf's short remarks on war photography in *Three Guineas*. In turn, *Three Guineas* itself dissolves into an argument that feminism cannot be reforged into a tool to enable pacifism (as the man who asks Woolf, "How in your opinion are we to prevent war," assumes), since, Woolf says, anti-violence is already embedded in the very foundations of women's emancipation:

> The daughters of educated men who were called, to their resentment, 'feminists' were in fact the advance guard of your own movement [pacifism]. They were fighting the same enemy that you are fighting and for the same reasons. They were fighting tyranny of the patriarchal state as you are fighting tyranny of the Fascist state. (94)

Thus, as we sketch out a tradition of war media studies, we land, finally, on Woolf's quasi-manifesto of feminism that argues, for instance, that paid motherhood as a profession would go some ways to preventing global war (102), or that the disenfranchisement of British women makes impossible their participation in nationalism, forging both a ghostly, dislocated identity and a global communalism: "in fact, as a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world" (99). Thus, feminism and war media studies turn on each other: insofar as war media studies reduce to this origin point in feminist thinking, so too does Woolf's grand argument for women's emancipation start from *looking* at photographs of bodies that are mangled by war. Sontag, despite her misgivings, cannot help but begin with the same photographs seen through those original eyes.

Webb and Marlatt are too the daughters of educated men, perhaps from a different world than Woolf (concerned that though women have been for two decades legally allowed to enter the professions, they have thus far only been permitted skittishly into the lower ranks), though not a world as different as we might like. Moreover, Woolf's declaration that "As a woman I want no country" shares a commitment to international pacifism with both poets. Her statement, for instance, anticipates the discomfort toward nationalism that Butling speculates may have contributed to Webb leaving CBC Radio,

while it also describes Marlatt's early experience of alienation as an immigrant to Canada. Webb's and Marlatt's explorations into grief, trauma, global politics, and global atrocities seem to be founded on the same principles as Woolf's manifesto: a shared experience of hurt that ruptures the lines between nation-states, between bodies, between identities, so that trauma, then, is not bound by the demarcations or edges of one person's skin from another's, but can move, like a ghost, across borders and beyond history.

The poet's translation across distances, though, comes at a cost in the era of proliferated media technologies. In *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses,* Susan Stewart paints a grim picture of contemporary poetry's grappling with the oppressive nature of postmodern media:

> And because hearing and seeing are the most mediated senses, poets return again either to the antirhetorical bias of linguistic and geometrical abstraction or to the unintentionally ironic pathos of spectacles of suffering and epiphany. In each instance, distance precludes engagement: the reader or receiver stands like Kant's general watching from a far hillside. (333)

Stewart does go on to suggest that a commitment to specific kinds of traditional poetry can spark a renewed "engagement with the senses," but media technologies nonetheless create passivity, abstraction, and disengagement even as they reduce geographical distances to the speed of signal transfers. And poetry is not necessarily safe from reproducing, like another form of media, this inoculation from an "engagement" with death, the world, or our own capacities to apprehend. The danger of poetry as a "spectacle[] of suffering" seems to echo Favret's analysis of the numbing effects of war and the ways in which British Romantic poetry registers this oscillation between the

simultaneous deadening and spilling over of affect in war (Favret 113). Can Webb or Marlatt be charged with reproducing the spectacle of war, inoculating us against—rather than engaging us with—violence and hurt?

Webb, for her part, has been characterized, particularly by Collis, as moving toward abstraction in her career, not unlike what Stewart terms "the antirhetorical bias of linguistic and geometrical abstraction." Collis, though, does demonstrate that abstraction, or silence, still registers a kind of political praxis, a rendering of the ego to the collective, a relinquishing of the most intimate of possessions. Still, though, there are many Webbs we have to contend with, one (or more) for each era of her writing career. *Wilson's Bowl* in particular, as described in the first chapter of this thesis, seems specifically fearful of the abstract and impersonal. The shying away from the "Too grand and too designed" (9) of the originally conceived text "The Kropotkin Poems" demonstrates a wariness toward the spectacle and dramatization of history. In its place, we find ourselves in that most intimate and vulnerable of griefs: the suicides of her friends. While the poem "Still There Are Wars and Crimes of War" does on the surface seem to fit the "linguistic and geometrical abstraction" that Stewart warns against, the poem intentionally bleats like a war drum specifically to evoke the inuring, overflowing effects of global atrocities that seem too big and too terrible to wrap one's head around. *Wilson's Bowl* seems afraid of being charged with proselytizing from the pulpit, and when it does, the irony is unmistakable.

Marlatt's work likewise grapples with the problems of engagement and history. The italicized sections in *Taken* which recount the firsthand experience of war prisoners seem to evoke the spectacle, especially in the sense that these sections refuse to be

contained by the main narrative, rupturing and overflowing from the novel. The lack of differentiation of voices and bodies in the prison camps works to sublimate the first person narrative to the voice of war victims as a whole: "*what you know is this camp now, your particular barrack, your own bali-bali where you sleep between B. and S., the 'lav' below no more than a cement drain [. . .] you are learning to know nothing beyond the camp, except the road just beyond the gates where you file out at five in the morning to clear grass with parangs*" (87). The experience of the camp, the 'knowledge' of the camp, fills and overflows the prisoners' heads until they "know nothing beyond" it, and that thing that they know, the camps, itself reduces to the simplified, primary experiences of cruelty and monotony, the too-painful and the too-dull.

As I describe in the third chapter, the photographs in *Steveston* work both to humanize and to hold the people who live there at a distance, and the history of internment hides beneath the visible and speakable layer that can be captured in the 1970s like another form of photographic negative. *Taken* in some ways verbalizes this haunting, where violences of the past transform not only our identities but also our very structures of perception, which struggle to be clarified or revitalized beneath the pressures of traditional media technologies. In the last pages of *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses*, Stewart with great labour finally muses, "Perhaps I am writing at the end of a world" (333), wondering if she may be penning in 2002 one of the last ink-and-paper manuscripts before critique itself will become totally digitized in the age of postmodern media. The transition from war photographs in a newspaper sitting open on Virginia Woolf's desk, or radio broadcasts that dominated the home conversations of a young Phyllis Webb's family, to the explosion of digital quick-news cycles and social-

engineering algorithms does seem stark and novel, the "end of a world," as Stewart puts it. However, a whirlwind of barely intelligible media signal noise is also largely an extension or intensification of Marshall McLuhan's analyses in the 1960s and 1970s. It remains to be seen, then, whether the age of postmodern media truly is, as Stewart anticipates, the "end of a world," or if the development and proliferation of media technologies function by seeming, at every instance and in any decade, to obliterate our previous and ostensibly traditional ways of perceiving the world around us.

Favret points out that Woolf parrots this view: in the nineteenth century, says Woolf, "Wars were then remote," whereas, in 1940, "We turn on the wireless; we hear an airman telling us how this very afternoon he shot down a raider" (Woolf, *The Moment* 130–131). Woolf claims that through media technologies like the newspaper and the radio, the everyday British citizen has lost their previous "immunity from war," since war has now come knocking at their doors, translating through their walls to be voiced in their living rooms by radio speakers. In this view, media technologies collapse the distance from war that is necessary to be immunized, as it were, from the experience and effects of war violence. Favret instead suggests that much of Woolf's 'immediate' (unmediated?) experience of war still comes second hand, not altogether unlike the ways that information would disseminate in the supposedly traditional nineteenth century:

> The media for broadcasting war had changed, but did they truly offer greater immediacy? Their affective force may be markedly different from earlier modes of communication, but was that force necessarily stronger? By what measure? Do feelings, like weapons and communications technology, become more powerful and effective over the course of (a progressive) history? (47)

Favret leaves us with an open paradox: at every age, media technologies seem to bring war more and more immediate, utterly transforming (and devastating) a traditional world that we can no longer inherit. However, media technologies operate counterintuitively by mediating, or managing, that proximity between the viewer and the subject: what is seemingly made close has at one time been recreated as an object and has at another been transformed into a spectacle under the media gaze. What is more, the ways in which each new age in media seems to storm in like an apocalypse, the "end of a world," mirrors the concept of "total war" or "absolute war" that Virilio takes up from Carl von Clausewitz. Favret notes that what is most curious about "total war," or a war that can only end in the total annihilation of one side or the other, is that each war declares itself in those same rhetorical terms: "Ironically, this reorientation [of 'war' into 'total war'] dissolves any war into the one War, so that the war to end all wars never, in fact, ends" (43). Thus, as each new war comes to signify an unprecedented intensification of violence, and thus obliterates both the past, as a quaint time when wars were not so violent and not so absolute, and the future, which is now unrecognizably transformed and in peril, so too does each new media age follow the same rhetorical structure. Perhaps what is more true of postmodern media and postmodern war is not the peculiarity of their reach or their brutality, but their way of abstracting the present from history in order to render history quaint and inadmissible. How can one be haunted by a past that exists only in a different world, one that has been annihilated by each new era? Virilio provides a possible answer here, where war and media meet in what he calls "impure war" (9), an extension beyond total war where war is waged "asymmetrically" between traditional armies and paramilitary groups, splinter factions, and so-called gangs and terrorists. Rather than a

grand spectacle, war becomes embedded in the structures of our everyday lives, from the subway to the airport to the television, and war itself becomes a battle for information, grenades and guns exchanged for media technologies (Virilio 195). The new total, or "impure," war is a diminutive war that renders itself barely visible and is certainly clouded by the lights and noises of media.

I do, however, engage reluctantly with Clausewitz, Virilio, and even Favret on the metaphysics of war in fear that such a discourse can itself make violence into the spectacular and formal 'War' proper. Rhetorically, the metaphysics of war can dominate the field of response in a way that repeats the very erasures which violence already performs on those who are subjected to, but who do not participate in, war, or on those adjacent to war, or who overhear it from, say, an island off the coast of British Columbia. Part of the aim of the analyses in these chapters is to recover a diminutive or adjacent response to violence, an affect of or engagement with violence that avoids making war a spectacle or repeating the now-trite criticisms to which we have become inoculated: 'the horrors of war,' 'the brutalities of war,' 'war is hell,' and so on. It was once hoped that the first-hand Great War poetry of people like Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen could make the so-called 'horrors of war' tangible and immediate beyond carefully managed media images in order to put the public off of the industry of violence once and for all. Yet, counterintuitively, and much like the proliferation of Hollywood war films (François Truffaut's alleged pessimistic statement about the oxymoron of the 'anti-war film' comes to mind), the 'horrors of war,' as rendered in War Poetry proper, come to signify the terrible spectacle of war and the limitless pathos that we owe to victim-combatants. The barrier between the phrases 'war is great' and 'war is terrible' becomes indistinguishable

as the metaphysics of war dominate utterly the conditions of our engagement with violence and hurt.

So, this thesis has looked not at traditional "war poets," but at two poets with a particular sensitivity to diminutive forms of hurt, two poets who themselves reluctantly peer out at the global spectacle of war from perspectives typically outside the focus of war but that are nevertheless intimately tangled in its consequences. At the same time, this dissertation takes seriously the gendered demarcations of war, which Woolf expresses as "an outlet for manly qualities, without which men would deteriorate" (7). Since she does go on to say that someone like Wilfred Owen seems not to engage in war as an extension of masculinity, we are left to speculate whether she might consider Owen to be practicing another version of masculinity (likely) or whether his position would embody something outside of masculinity altogether (doubtful). Still, and this is crucial to Woolf's rejection of being asked by a man, "How in your opinion are we to prevent war," the prosecution of war, its criticisms, its rallying cries, and the mad dash to prevent its occurrence, all are functions of a singular political sphere dominated by men from which women were excluded. Thus, more than half a century later, Kalí Tal in *Worlds of Hurt* picks up on this point, demonstrating that sexual abuse narratives and war traumas, especially suffered by those whose experiences are not sublimated to the status of sacrificial heroes, that is, not victim-combatants, should both be considered as instances of gendered violence (68–69, 156–60).

Tal's study convincingly demonstrates that women's experience of violence is not secondary or coincidental to war, represented by the prototypical figure of the male soldier, but is instead a condition of war that is nevertheless hidden and suppressed.

However, Tal, Favret, and other recent feminist theorists of war do not, I think, represent a critical turn in trauma, war, or media studies toward gender as a primary referent. Rather, the history of women's writing about war in English—which, curiously enough, has also always been about media—from Woolf to Webb to Marlatt shows us that no viable apprehension of war violence is possible without the lens of gender analysis. A poet's sensitivity, it seems, is necessary to cultivate a fragile, intimate register of care in the face of the deadening effects of global war. Phyllis Webb's and Daphne Marlatt's complex navigations of gendered social institutions and gendered historical narratives, as well as a growing sense of queer feminism particularly in Marlatt's later work, give us insight into a marginalized perspective on global violence. Their negotiations of distance, intimacy, and perception both provide an antidote for, and are nevertheless entangled within, the brutal spectacles, the quick atrocities, and the inuring effects of media depictions of violence.

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