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Crossing the Line: Censorship, Borders, and the Queer Poetics of Disclosure in English-Canadian Writing, 1967-2000

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in English

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Abstract

Since Confederation enshrined Canada Customs' mandate to seize "indecent and immoral" material, the nation's borders have served as discursive sites of sexual censorship for the LGBTTTQ lives and literatures that cross the line. While the Supreme Court's decision in *Little Sisters v. Canada* (2000) upheld the agency's power to exclude obscenity, the Court found Customs discriminatory in their preemptive seizures of LGBTTTQ material. Extrapolating from this case of the state's failure to sufficiently 'read' queer sex at the border, this dissertation moves beyond studies of how obscenity law regulates literary content to posit that LGBTTTQ authors innovate aesthetics in response to a complex network of explicit and implicit forms of censorship. The numerous inter- and intra-national border crossings represented by queer writing in Canada correspond with sexual expressions that challenge the Charter's "reasonable limits," remaking the discursive boundaries of free speech in Canada. Informed by a range of literary critics, queer theorists, sociologists, and legal scholars, the dissertation examines compositional strategies that appropriate and exceed the practice of censorship in order to theorize what I call a "queer poetics of disclosure."

Chapter One revisits Scott Symons' pre-liberation novel *Place d'Armes* (1967) alongside the era's divergent nationalisms and the imminent decriminalization of homosexuality in 1969. Symons re-maps Montreal in text and illustration and produces metafictional boundaries that challenge subjective definitions of obscenity. Chapter Two considers *Contract with the World* (1980) by the American-Canadian novelist Jane Rule. Rule's developing style of multivalent narration, coinciding with her anti-censorship advocacy, articulates an ambivalent, or borderline, model of sexual citizenship. Chapter

Three concerns Daphne Marlatt and Betsy Warland's long-poem *Double Negative* (1988), an experimental narrative of their Australian travels. Marlatt and Warland's erotic, language-mediated poetics evade both censure and the individualism of free speech discourse by questioning the limits of lyric expression. Chapter Four examines Gregory Scofield's lyric silences in poetry that asserts a gay Métis subjectivity. Focusing on *Native Canadiana* (1996), this chapter revisits anxieties of blood and border crossings during the HIV/AIDS crisis in order to draw out the implications of settler-colonial sexual censorship just before the Supreme Court's ruling in 2000.

Keywords

Law and Literature, Censorship, Obscenity, Canadian Literature, Citizenship, Queer Theory, Poetics, Scott Symons, Jane Rule, Daphne Marlatt, Betsy Warland, Gregory Scofield

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Introduction

Arrivals and Departures

“You just keep on pushing my love over the borderline.”
—Madonna, “Borderline”

1. Introduction

Madonna makes an intriguing cameo in the history of sexual censorship in Canada. As revealed in her 1991 docu-drama, *Madonna: Truth or Dare*, Toronto police were prepared to arrest the singer during her 1990 Blonde Ambition tour if she performed an act of simulated masturbation at the end of her “Like a Virgin” performance. According to the film, Madonna performed the song as planned, preparing to be arrested, but the police took no action. Two years later, Canada Customs did not detain Madonna’s book *Sex*, a collection of erotic photography and writing that includes explicit depictions of both heterosexual and queer sex acts, often combined with representations of simulated violence. The book’s uncontested importation was cited throughout the Little Sister’s trials—a legal case regarding the detainment of LGBTTTQ cultural material at the Canadian border—as an example of Customs’ discriminatory selection practices (Fuller & Blackley 31-32). In his concurring reason in the judgment following the Little Sisters’ BC Court of Appeal trial, Justice Hall wrote,

We were referred to various pictorial representations from a publication termed the “Madonna Book”. It was apparently found to fall into the non-obscene category but it must have been a close call. The relationship between the depictions in that publication and what is

sometimes termed “the marketplace of ideas” in discourses on free speech is not readily apparent. (qtd. in Fuller & Blackley 49)

When considering expressions of sex or gender at the Canada-US border, coming in appears more fraught than ‘coming out.’

Customs, and now Border Services¹, has had the legal authority to censor material at the border since 1847 (Fuller & Blackley 7). Twenty years later, under Confederation, Customs’ mandate included the ability to seize “indecent and immoral” material, suggesting that censorship has been, as legal scholar Brenda Cossman contends, “a defining characteristic of Canadian national identity” from the founding of the state (*Censorship* 12). Closer to the present day, increasing migrations of LGBTTTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Two-Spirit, and Queer) visitors, refugees, tourists, and citizens further emphasize the role of the nation’s boundaries as discursive sites of censorship and/or disclosure for queer subjects within—and without—Canada.

As Marshall McLuhan notes in “Canada: The Borderline Case,” first delivered as the Marfleet lecture at the University of Toronto in 1967, the nation is “a land of multiple borderlines, psychic, spatial and geographic” (244). Although the primary literature in this dissertation may be categorized as “English-Canadian,” many of these texts transgress national, canonical, and generic limits. Less a study of transnational influence than transnational and intra-national *circulation* (in the many

¹ With the passage of the Canada Border Services Agency Act in 2005, Canada Customs and Revenue (along with Citizenship and Immigration and the Food Inspection Agency) merged to create the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA). Given the historical boundaries of my dissertation, I generally refer to the agency as Canada Customs.

senses of the word—from the currencies of travel and tourism to books and blood), this dissertation considers how the socio-legal conditions formative to the creation and distribution of a range of contemporary LGBTTTQ-authored writing become embedded in literary forms. In undertaking this research, I consider the following questions: How does queer writing both corroborate and contest the limits of national and sexual identities in settler-colonial space? How do literary forms and genres bear the traces of erotic transgression? How might queer and transnational authorship challenge liberal models of citizenship, or reimagine the individual's right to the freedom of expression? Finally, how do mobility, and the recuperation of disavowed or reimagined geo-political borders, correspond to the ways in which LGBTTTQ authors navigate the subjective limits placed upon gender and sexual expression?

In the first sections of this introductory chapter, I begin by setting some temporal and definitional limits and continue with an analysis of the landmark Supreme Court of Canada decision in the case of *Little Sister's v. Canada*. The Little Sister's case provides a unique opportunity to analyze how the state 'reads' queer sex at the border. In his discussion of "homotextuality," Terry Goldie cites Lee Edelman, in *Homographesis*, who notes, homosexuals "were not only conceptualized in terms of a radically potent, if negatively charged, relation to signifying practices, but also subjected to a cultural imperative that viewed them as inherently textual—as bodies that might well bear a 'hallmark' that could, and must, be read" (7). In the latter half of this introduction, I extrapolate a theoretical framework for interpreting the tension between censorship and disclosure as it manifests in representations of border-crossing. By using the Little Sister's case as a discursive touchstone and point of

departure, I consider the aesthetic and political uses of indexing obscenity in order to theorize the self-reflexive modes of censorship I call “a queer poetics of disclosure.”

2. Setting Limits

There are few extended studies of literary censorship in Canada, especially when contrasted with the robust body of work on the topic in Anglo-American literary studies, and fewer still that focus on censorship and queer representation. While Americans have a First Amendment right to the unfettered freedom of expression, section 1 of Canada’s Constitution places “reasonable limits” around the right to free speech in this country, with important implications for so-called minority expressions, as I will discuss further. Canada’s self-mythologizing as a tolerant, liberal-democratic nation also promotes the assumption that censorship of queer expression does not happen within our borders. While Mark Cohen’s *Censorship in Canadian Literature* (2001), the field’s only monograph-length study on the topic, productively includes a consideration of queer sexuality through his analysis of Timothy Findley’s anti-censorship position, Cohen only briefly touches upon the Little Sister’s case. While legal scholars such as Cossman have debated the juridical and policy implications of the judgments, the cultural impact of the trials, and the way Canadian laws regarding sexual identity and expression affects the country’s literatures more broadly, has yet to be fully explored. Thus, I position my project in what Cossman has recently termed “the new censorship studies,” considering the ways in which “censorship is producing, constituting and mobilizing the sexual subjectivities that challenge it” (“Censor” 47-48). Nearly two decades after the

Supreme Court's ruling on *Little Sister's*, we may begin to historicize the fractious activisms and contentious debates that informed the modes of queer sexual expression in the latter half of the twentieth century. Moreover, my project deemphasizes how censorship dictates literary content to posit that the discourses of implicit and explicit censorship similarly impact questions of literary form and genre. The latter approach will, I hope, provide a framework for making visible censorship's more elusive productions.

My selection of primary texts extends from Scott Symons' experimental, autobiographical novel *Place d'Armes*, published in 1967 (two years before homosexuality was decriminalized in Canada as part of the sweeping Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1968-1969) to Jane Rule's realist novel *Contract with the World* (1980), Daphne Marlatt and Betsy Warland's innovative travelogue *Double Negative* (1988), and Gregory Scofield's collection of lyric poetry, *Native Canadiana: Songs from the Urban Rez*, published in 1996 (four years before the Supreme Court's 2000 ruling on the *Little Sister's* case). While I am wary of framing these texts within the teleology of a seemingly uncomplicated accretion of rights, the chronology assists in identifying moments of dissonance between socio-legal history and their literary representations. My dissertation analyzes LGBTTTQ-authored writing as a discourse existing alongside, and inflected by, Canada's history, laws, and social policies; my methodology follows Frank Davey's argument that literature borders "the general social text." Davey writes that literary texts leave "their marks 'outside' themselves and [contain] marks which refer 'beyond' themselves. So invasive are their interweavings into the social text that they have, strictly speaking, neither an 'outside'

nor an ‘inside’” (*Post-National* 19). The late 1960s not only signal the beginning of contemporary LGBTTTQ rights legislation in Canada but also highlight a range of important moments in the nation’s cultural history, such as the Centennial celebrations and Expo ’67. As Davey has pointed out, the 1960s have also been “mytholog[ized]” in Canadian literary studies due to the expansion of the Canada Council for the Arts, the nationalist strategies of anthologizing and canonization, and the debated starting point of Canadian literary postmodernism (“Al Purdy” 39-42). The decade also witnessed a flourishing of feminist organizing and gay and lesbian activism that continued into the 1970s and afterward. As Cossman notes, the inclusion of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in the Constitution Act of 1982 led to a new period of incremental minority rights legislation in Canada, often through the Supreme Court, which directly impacted the outcomes of the Little Sister’s case and, arguably, the literature produced throughout these decades, as well (“Lesbians” 224).

Before I unpack the cultural baggage of the Little Sister’s ruling, I will define how I will be using some key terms. Throughout the dissertation I tend to prefer the acronym LGBTTTQ over “queer” (though not exclusively) when referring to political subjects generally or individual writers; I attempt to use the label by which the author defines him or herself, when known and only if necessary. While I understand these labels may be contingent, inflected (or made, problematically, invisible) by class and race, and risk essentialism in their use or might promote what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick calls the “minoritizing view” of homosexuality (1), my aim is to ground the project in specific histories and political discourse. As sociologist Gary Kinsman argues, “There is no pure revolutionary subject lying somewhere outside these social

experiences” (377). Yet at the same time, Goldie’s insistence on maintaining discrete cultural categories seems problematic in this case. He argues,

Studies of homosexuality sometimes attempt to treat both lesbians and gay males as two parts of one whole. As the two primary identities of persons driven by same-sex desire they are obviously linked. Still, myriad aspects of culture show the extreme divisions between lesbians and gay males... These differences are at times so extreme as to suggest different epistemologies. (2)

While I cannot speak to the lived lesbian or trans experience, for example, I should not rest comfortably in the assertion that, as a gay man, I have a totalizing understanding of bisexual or gay male experience. There are certain studies that must necessarily exclude some letters from the spectrum, but when it comes to censorship, lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, Two-Spirited and transgendered people, and—I would contend, heterosexuals—are all implicated, though in different ways, by the Canadian border’s regulation of gender and sexuality. So, while somewhat cumbersome, “LGBTQT” allows for both the solidarity of “queer” in addition to a representation of specific historical, if socially-constructed, identity positions. Furthermore, the slipperiness of identity positions provides useful instances of epistemological border crossing. For example, the Métis poet Gregory Scofield identified as Two-Spirited² earlier in his career and now identifies as “gay” (Scudeler 190), suggesting both the necessity of a term like “queer” while providing an example of how a consideration

² As I discuss at greater length in Chapter 4, “Two-Spirit” was chosen by a group of transnational and pan-tribal queer Indigenous activists as an inclusive, if culturally-specific, term indicating the co-presence of masculinity and femininity in an individual (Driskill et al. 10).

of shifting historical identities may be revelatory in our understanding of queer politics on the page.

“Gay” on one side and “queer” on the other might be the first uneasy border here. For Peter Dickinson, “‘queer,’ as a literary-critical category, [has] an almost inevitable definitional elasticity, one whose inventory of sexual meanings has yet to be exhausted, [and which] challenges and upsets certain received national orthodoxies about writing in Canada” (5). In *The Erotics of Sovereignty*, Mark Rifkin writes that “the power of *queer* lies in leveraging the normalizing dynamics of nationalism, contesting their enclosures in ways that open up possibilities for modes of desire, embodiment, pleasure, association, and identification not constrained by the need to construct, legitimize, and manage a territorial and political entity” (38). Yet in this way, queerness is always deferred, or what José Esteban Muñoz calls “an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future” (1). But all desire for the contrary notwithstanding, LGBTTTQ people—and their expressions—are still very much defined (or detained) by their positions vis-à-vis the nation-state.

Defining “censorship” might be as thorny a political task as parsing the nuances of “queer.” In Cohen’s useful discussion of the etymology, he notes that our most common, current understanding of censorship as “government suppression” of speech and/or thought comes down from the Enlightenment’s emphasis on the power of individual reason, available only after society is liberated from oppressive institutions such as the church and state (4). Yet Cohen argues for a reconsideration of censorship’s earlier dual meanings: “Before the twelfth century, ‘censurer’ and ‘censor’ had the same meaning, which included the non-pejorative sense of one who

judges or evaluates; as this definition fell out of use, ‘censor’ came to mean an official who suppresses, while ‘censurer’ became one who finds fault, blames, or condemns” (3). Later thinkers attempt to maintain these Enlightenment definitions of censorship. John Leo argues, “In normal English...‘censorship’ means control of utterance by government” and he goes on to exclude “claims of censorship made by artists who are denied grants...as ‘word games...[that] are generating suspect statistics and polluting public discussion”” (qtd. in Cohen 4). At the other end of the spectrum is what Cohen calls the “constructivist” definitions of censorship, inspired by philosophers such as Michel Foucault. Constructivist critics of literary and cultural censorship interpret the latter not only as a direct action by the state against an individual, but rather as a “process embedded in the forces that shape society” more generally (Cohen 6). Various gatekeepers—from editors, scholars, and grant committees to prize judges, festival organizers, and booksellers—participate in these “embedded” processes that determine who and what gets published and circulated in the nation’s cultural economies.

Though Cohen finds such “constructivist” critiques closer in line with his own, he questions the value of broadly discursive definitions of censorship forwarded by critics such as Richard Burt. Burt goes as far to argue, “censorship operates not only in repressive terms...but also as a complex network of productive discursive practices that legitimate and delegitimize the production and reception of the aesthetic in general and of the avant garde in particular” (Burt 220). Cohen ultimately defines censorship somewhere in between the Enlightenment and constructivist camps, writing that censorship is “the exclusion of some discourse as the result of a judgment

by an authoritative agent based on some ideological predisposition” (8). For the purposes of my dissertation, I am interested in the tension between the “productive discursive” possibilities of Burt’s definition, and Cohen’s emphasis on the act of judgment with its attendant legal consequences. More centrally, I want to consider the ways in which self-censorship as both an aesthetic and political practice of resistance may be interpreted as a “productive discursive” act, as I will discuss in further detail below.

While some scholars of censorship opt for limiting its definition, Cohen contends, “Not only do I believe that censorship can occur both before and after a work's publication; I would go further to argue that censorship can occur even before the work is written” (12). The primary texts included in my dissertation walk both sides (indirect and intentional) of the self-censorship line that Cohen demarcates:

Self-censorship often occurs before a discourse is even articulated. It is often indirect: I may decide not to say something, but it may be because a third party has put pressure on me to keep silent. That third party may be the government, but it may also be a private interest.

Self-censorship can be intentional (I may choose to keep my criticism of the government to myself because I know it is the only way of obtaining a grant), but it may also be unintentional: I may have so completely assimilated the values of society that my suppression of my opinion may be unthinking and automatic (in which case it becomes difficult to identify). (14)

My own consideration of “self-censorship” goes beyond a protective or paranoid self-reflexivity to view instead the resistant potential of this form of censorship, a self-censorship that has the potential to, paradoxically, target the hegemonic other by becoming itself a form of self-expression—a revelation by way of redaction. For example, all the writers in my project deploy metafictional or metapoetic strategies that attempt to mitigate and redirect the effects of their sexual representations through various kinds of extra-textual commentary.

Self-censorship and self-disclosure—even the quotidian articulations of one’s gender identity or sexual orientation—raise an interesting question in the debates on the definitional limits of “censorship.” To come out, or not to come out: is it an act of censorship or self-censorship? If one takes the more discursive line via Burt and others (as I do), then the choice not to disclose can be interpreted, simultaneously, as self-censorship (a personal choice to come out or not) as well as a more traditional example of imposed censorship (a heterosexual hegemony creating a space that implicitly erases queer sexuality—through a perceived lack of safety in possible moments of disclosure, for example). Yet at the same time, the moment of non-disclosure—or moments in which the expression of queer sexuality is ambiguous, or revealed and then redacted, as in some of the primary texts I consider—may be an instance of “productive discursive” self-censorship as a form of political resistance. In this case, self-redaction indexes and resists the burden placed on LGBTTTQ subjects to disclose, and the hegemonic frameworks that often foreclose even the possibility of that expression (such as when a passport form does not allow for genders beyond the male/female binary). These forms of productive discursive self-censorship are the

focus of my study. Unlike Kinsman and Cohen, for example, I am less skeptical of the political strategies that a poetics of disclosure might offer, while not seeing form as an end in itself. In *Post-National Arguments*, Davey writes,

In the literary practices of Canada, as in those of most Western countries, readers, critics, and often writers have been diverted from awareness of the political dimensions of literature by [two ideologies]...the aesthetic/humanist and the national. In the former the aesthetic is held to be a celebration of humanity, to be ‘above’ politics in its enacting of a homo both *sapiens* and *fabrilis*. (15)

Yet it is through aesthetics that we make visible the immanent suppression of queer desire and gender, or the kind of self-censorship Cohen rightly terms “difficult to identify” but, I contend, not always “unthinking” or “automatic” (14). In Canada, the question of aesthetics—its role or (ir)relevance—threaded throughout the obscenity trials in the latter half of the twentieth century. What was on the line, literally, in the Little Sister’s case against Customs, was the importance and effect of sexual expression in social life and who should be the arbiter of allowable representation. In other words, what should Canadians be ‘exposed’ to and who gets to decide? These debates focused upon limits—of expression and the nation.

As Dickinson notes, “Minorities (national, sexual, racial, gender, class) have always been more attuned to the permeability of borders than have dominant groups” (35). The concept of the borderland is useful for thinking of borders less as strict markers of exclusion and more as potentially intimate sites of contact and cultural exchange. As the queer theorist Gloria Anzaldúa writes in *Borderlands/La Frontera*,

“the Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy” (iii). Indeed, border studies emerge from Anzaldúa’s foundational analogy, which interrogates the boundaries that divide both sexual subjectivities and nations. Anzaldúa makes this point more explicitly when she claims, “I, like other queer people, am two in one body, both male and female” (19). She locates both desire and deviation in the borderlands: “Most cultures have burned and beaten their homosexuals and others who deviate from the sexual common” (18). Thus, queerness is not just regulated by the border; it is a frontier that marks the extreme limits of the common. While it is problematic to remove Anzaldúa’s borderland conception from the cultural specificities of her Mexico-US project, her definition allows for some vacillation, at least epistemologically, between the borderlands that mediate nations, and the borderlands that mediate selves and nations. Moreover, Anzaldúa’s writing calls attention to the contingencies of the lines demarcating nation-states, particularly in settler-colonial space. As historian Michel Hogue argues, long before British and American governments marked the international boundary at the forty-ninth parallel, Indigenous nations made their homes on the Northern Plains, “complete with their own borders and boundaries” (4). In his short story, “Borders,” Thomas King demonstrates the legacy of such boundary-making. In this narrative, a Blackfoot woman crossing the US-Canada border—a boundary that transects traditional Blackfoot territory—refuses to name either Canada or the US in a

declaration of citizenship and is thus detained in the border between them.³ As King's story reveals, the border makes differences of race, class, and gender newly visible. If the borderland may be, as Anzaldúa suggests, a space that "shrinks with intimacy," what is the erotic potential of Canada's borders?

In *Borderlands*, W.H. New turns to the metaphor, coined by Pierre Trudeau in 1969, that the US is "the 'elephant' that Canadians 'sleep beside,' so that 'when the elephant rolls over, so do we'—not necessarily to mimic or oblige but at least to get out of the way" (48). Trudeau's metaphor for Canada-US relations is curiously domestic and echoes his proclamation, regarding the decriminalization of consensual homosexual acts in 1968-69, that the state has no business in the bedrooms of the nation. Even with an 'elephant' on the other side of the 'bed,' the erotics of the border suggest that transgression is not always punitive, but can sometimes be pleasurable or liberatory. The dual Canadian-American citizen author Clark Blaise, in his essay "The Border as Fiction," contends that some Americans have a sentimental view of Canada, so that crossing the border becomes an act of magical thinking, or what Blaise calls "time travel" (9).⁴ In such cases, Russell Brown argues, the border serves

³ Chapter Four explores at greater length the implications of the international boundary for Indigenous people of the northern Plains, especially the Métis.

⁴ The Canadian-born Blaise, and his wife, author Bharati Mukherjee, emigrated from Toronto to San Francisco in 1980 to escape the intolerance Mukherjee encountered in the former city as a South Asian-born woman. In a 1997 *Mother Jones* essay entitled "American Dreamer," accompanied by a photo of the author draped in the American flag, Mukherjee writes of her experience in 1970s Canada as being "particularly harsh." She goes on to write, "Canada is a country that officially, and proudly, resists cultural fusion. For all its rhetoric about a cultural 'mosaic,' Canada refuses to renovate its national self-image to include its changing complexion. It is a New World country with Old World concepts of a fixed, exclusivist national identity" (n.p.). Thus, the couple's own migrations suggest a counter-narrative to the vision of Canada-as-sanctuary Blaise discusses in his essay.

as a “sanctuary line,” recalling how Canada became figured as the “Promised Land” in the history of the Underground Railroad (25).⁵ The sanctuary narrative conflates both racial and sexual mythologies of Canadian civility and tolerance, especially the “moving-to-Canada” trope that recurs in American popular culture, especially after Canada legalized same-sex marriage in 2005. For example, in the final season of the television program, *Queer as Folk*, a lesbian couple relocates with their son from Pittsburgh to Canada after Babylon, the gay bar at the show’s centre, becomes the target of homophobic violence.⁶

Of course, such narratives conveniently elide the continuing legacies of colonialism, racism, homophobia, and transphobia *within* Canada. Theorists such as Jasbir K. Puar have pointed to the ways in which some gay and lesbian subjects have more recently been folded into the nation through various strategies of inclusion, especially same-sex marriage. Puar builds upon Lisa Duggan’s concept of “homonormativity,” or “a formation complicit with and invited into the biopolitical valorization of life in its inhabitation and reproduction of heteronormative norms” (Puar 9). When such strategies enjoin with the nation-state, Puar terms this “homonationalism” (3). Taking up Puar’s theory in the introduction to their recent volume, *Disrupting Queer Inclusion: Canadian Homonationalisms and the Politics of Belonging*, OmiSoore H. Dryden and Suzanne Lenon caution,

⁵ As I discuss at length in Chapter Two, Jane Rule both promotes and problematizes the vision of Canada as sanctuary, particularly in terms of the Vietnam War, throughout her fiction and essays.

⁶ *Queer as Folk* was adapted from a UK miniseries of the same title. Though the American series was set in Pittsburgh, it was shot entirely in Toronto on location in the Church-Wellesley village, adding some irony to the emigration narrative in the final season.

As a field of power, homonationalism apprehends how the ‘turn to life’ for some lesbian-gay-queer subjects (i.e. their enfoldment within legal, cultural, and consumer arenas) is now possible because of the simultaneous curtailing of welfare provisions and immigrant rights, as well as the expansion of state powers to conduct surveillance and to (indefinitely) detain and deport. (6)

Thus, while we might seem to have liberated ourselves from many of the legal constraints that left us ‘on the outs’ with the nation, Lenon and Dryden caution us to remember how such inclusions are often contingent upon the exclusions of others.

In “The Border as Fiction,” Blaise reminisces about his childhood fascination with maps and notes that “countries were like bodies, and borders were their skin” (3). Similarly, Gabriel Popescu observes how Friedrich Ratzel, an early political geographer writing at the turn of the last century, conceived of borders as “the epidermis of this organism [the state] that both provided protection and allowed exchanges” (17). The epidermal metaphor of boundaries usefully conflates the border’s potential for erotic contact but also contagion. Indeed, the first act of Canadian Parliament to consider homosexuals as a “status or type of person” was not the Criminal Code on sexual offenses but rather the Canadian Immigration Act of 1952. Under this new immigration policy, inspired by the American and British communist witch-hunts that had long conflated homosexuality with radical politics and susceptibility to blackmail, homosexuals had been given a “status” only to be labelled subversives; thus, people who had been convicted of “gross indecency” or “buggery” (two examples of Canadian legal terms revealing their British parentage)

were not admitted to the country (Kinsman 170). Gay men and lesbians were considered national security risks and in a 1960 pre-emptive measure, all known “sexual subversives” were fired from positions within External Affairs (Kinsman 172). Even with the decriminalization of private, consensual homosexual acts in 1969, the government ensured a military exception to the law, indicating how the political imaginary feared the nation’s borders and foreign diplomatic positions were threatened by those who transgressed the borders of sexuality and gender (Kinsman 171). As Judith Butler writes, “The terms that facilitate recognition are themselves conventional, the effects and instruments of a social ritual that decide, often through exclusion and violence, the linguistic condition of survivable subjects” (*Excitable* 5). Canadian homosexuals gained “status” in law only to be excluded from the forms of national belonging by an act of bureaucratic violence mediated by the very language, Butler might argue, that brought them into being as specified persons under the law. The latter provides another example of how even in its most punitive functions the law produces the very subject it punishes. As Edelman argues, such Cold War policies, in their attempts to ‘out’ the homosexual within the nation, ultimately drew attention to the illegibility of the queer subject and his ability to pass undetected, placing him under “the aegis of inauthenticity” (556). While the homosexual became a subject under the law, he was simultaneously stripped of his national affiliations and the privileges of citizenship.

As this section demonstrates, Canadian law both produced and excluded the LGBTTQ subject in the latter half of the twentieth century, setting the very limits that would later determine those same subjects’ inclusion within the nation-state. The gay

and lesbian response to both state regulation and, later, its strategies of normalization, inspired explicit cultural representations of queer erotic lives as part of its resistance. Indeed, Cossman points out how the increasing censorship of queer culture parallels the “emergence” of gay and lesbian visibility from the late-1960s onward (“Censor” 45). In the next section, I turn to the Little Sister’s case in detail to demonstrate how the nation’s boundaries operate as the site of mutually implicated anxieties regarding sexual expression and national identity.

3. Arrivals: The Little Sister’s Case

The Supreme Court ruled on *Little Sister’s v. Canada* in 2000. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the Vancouver gay and lesbian bookstore, Little Sister’s, had many of its shipments from the US detained, and often destroyed, by Canadian Customs. The border agency had been targeting the bookstore’s shipments while similar material shipped to other organizations, such as public libraries and mainstream retail stores, was imported without incident. Little Sister’s sought to have the obscenity legislation within the Customs Act struck down as it infringed upon the freedom of expression guaranteed in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Supreme Court ruled that while the obscenity section of the Customs Act did infringe upon the freedom of expression, it was a “reasonable limit” as prescribed by section 1 of the Charter. The majority ruling did find Customs discriminatory in its use of the law and instructed the agency to rework its own policies. Though seemingly a partial win for Little Sister’s, detainments at the border actually *increased* after the trial, as the

Supreme Court placed no oversight measures on how Customs redesigned its procedures (Billingham 271-274).

The implications of the Supreme Court's earlier decision in *R. v. Butler* are crucial for contextualizing the Little Sister's case.⁷ In 1992, Manitoban Donald Butler appealed his lower court convictions on obscenity charges to the Supreme Court. While he was convicted for selling hardcore pornography under section 163 of the Criminal Code, the Supreme Court had to consider if his conviction violated the freedom of expression guaranteed to Canadians under the Charter. The Supreme Court found that the charge did indeed violate the freedom of expression but that the violation was "justified" as a "reasonable limit prescribed by law" (qtd. in Cossman & Bell 3-4). In addition, the court created a new test for determining obscenity based on its potential to harm. The test found that "sexually explicit representations that do not include violence, are not degrading nor dehumanizing, and do not involve children should not generally be found to be obscene" (Cossman & Bell 4). The judiciary's goal in creating this test was an attempt to remove morality from the discourse around obscenity. While this might have been seen as "the beginning of a new era of liberalization in the regulation of sexual representations," in fact, prosecutions of erotic texts, particularly those depicting LGBTTTQ sexuality, actually increased (Cossman & Bell 4). During the Little Sister's case, the bookstore and its intervenors argued that the section 163 definitions of obscenity and the harms-based test inherited from the Butler decision were not inclusive of LGBTTTQ sexual

⁷ In Chapter Three, I discuss how debates regarding the *R. v. Butler* decision spurred, in part, a flourishing of feminist and queer arts collectives in this period of the so-called "Sex Wars."

expressions to begin with, and therefore those determinations of obscenity were already biased and discriminatory.

The main problem with the Butler decision, Cossman argues, is that it creates a hierarchy of “good” and “bad” sexualities. “Good” sex is heterosexual, private, and monogamous. “Bad” sex is queer, public, and non-monogamous (Cossman, “Disciplining” 77). This hierarchy is constructed through the Supreme Court’s three-part categorization of pornography: “(1) explicit sex with violence, (2) explicit sex without violence but which subjects people to treatment that is degrading or dehumanizing, and (3) explicit sex without violence that is neither degrading nor dehumanizing” (qtd. in Cossman, “Disciplining” 80). The vague language has led to problems of interpretation. For example, Customs used the “degrading or dehumanizing” phrase to defend its prohibition of materials that depicted anal penetration (Cossman, “Disciplining” 85). Perhaps the most problematic aspect of Butler, and the definition central to the obscenity ‘test,’ is the new definition of harm:

Harm in this context means that it predisposes persons to act in an antisocial manner as, for example, the physical or mental mistreatment of women by men, or what is perhaps debatable, the reverse.

Antisocial conduct for this purpose is conduct which society formally recognizes as incompatible with its proper functioning. (qtd. in Cossman, “Disciplining” 80)

Legal scholar Bruce Ryder suggests that while Butler’s “harm” focus was a better approach to obscenity legislation than the morality approach taken in the past, the obscenity laws still upheld the general sense that representing sexuality was “bad”

(213). The harms-based test is based on the assumption, seemingly taken for granted, that pornography or erotic representations are inherently negative. Like a fatal disease diagnosed in stages, erotic representation in this framework can never be “good” or even “neutral,” but exists on an already sliding scale.

As discussed above, the “degrading and dehumanizing” component of Butler may be “vulnerable to subjective or even discriminatory evaluations” (Ryder 218). Regulating sexual representation post-Butler becomes a matter of judicial subjectivity regarding what acts are “degrading” or “dehumanizing.” The bias of some judges was evident even before the Butler ruling. For example, even in his 1987 ruling overturning the Customs ban on *The Joy of Gay Sex*, Ontario Provincial Court Judge Bruce Hawkins stated, “However repugnant the concept of anal sex may be to the heterosexual observer, it is, I find, the central sexual act of homosexual practice...to write about homosexual practices without dealing with anal intercourse would be equivalent to writing a history of music and omitting Mozart” (qtd. in Fuller & Blackley 11-12). This ruling reveals how the judge’s disclosure of “repugnance” at “homosexual practice” works to produce his, and the hegemony’s, heterosexuality. As Sedgwick puts it, “the erotic identity of the person who receives the disclosure is apt also to be implicated in, hence perturbed by it” (81). Yet at the same time the ruling offers an odd proscription of what queer sex entails, suggesting a hierarchy of practices that are more or less “homosexual”; furthermore, the grammatical restrictions of the ruling suggest that heterosexuals never practice anal sex, and presumably neither would lesbians.

Given the inherent bias of obscenity legislation, and the importance of erotic representation for affirming queer lives, Little Sister's and their intervenors argued that the harms-based test should not apply to gay and lesbian pornography. The majority of justices disagreed, arguing that gay and lesbian pornography had as much potential as straight pornography to produce social harm. Cossman quotes Justice Binnie, writing for the majority, who provides the example of a "dominatrix." Justice Binnie argues that scenes of domination are "harmful" because they are "no less dehumanizing if the victim [i.e. submissive] happens to be of the same sex, and no less (and no more) harmful in its reassurance to the viewer that the victim finds such conduct both normal and pleasurable" (qtd. in Cossman, "Disciplining" 91). Justice Binnie inadvertently proves the potential fallibility of the harms-based test: Who determines that representations of consensual S/M sexuality are *not* "normal"? The courts had already developed the "community standards of tolerance test" in an attempt to identify obscenity and remove subjective opinion on morality. The latter requires justices to consider not matters of taste, but tolerance, according to Chief Justice Brian Dickson: "What matters is what Canadians would not abide other Canadians seeing because it would be beyond the contemporary Canadian standard of tolerance to allow them to see it" (qtd. in Persky & Dixon 66). Yet the latter is nearly just as subjective as a matter of taste. As Stan Persky and John Dixon argue, "Isn't the notion of the 'community as a whole' merely a means of imposing 'the tyranny of the majority'?" (66). As the above discussion demonstrates, the definitions of the obscene, and the borders that mark the limits of nations, expression, and sexuality, are equally contingent. These so-called "reasonable limits" might produce other kinds of

harm, as well. In their essay, “Queer Nationality,” Lauren Berlant and Elizabeth Freeman write, “The queer body—as an agent of publicity, as a unit of self-defense, and finally as a spectacle of ecstasy—becomes the locus where mainstream culture’s discipline of gay citizens is written and where the pain caused by this discipline is transformed into rage and pleasure” (155). The Little Sister’s case revealed how the same border that marks Canada’s boundaries also set the limits of queer expression and citizenship.

In the Supreme Court ruling, the justices largely agreed that the border had been used to discriminate unfairly, arguing:

[I]t is fundamentally unacceptable that expression which is free within the country can become stigmatized and harassed by government officials simply because it crosses an international boundary, and is thereby brought within the bailiwick of the Customs department. The appellants’ constitutional right to receive perfectly lawful gay and lesbian erotica should not be diminished by the fact their suppliers are, for the most part, located in the United States. Their freedom of expression does not stop at the border. (1125)

While the court was willing to identify the practices at the border as unconstitutional, the majority overturned neither the definitions of obscenity found in the Butler decision, nor the legislation that makes Customs, and now Border Services, state censors. In the next section, I consider the cultural legacy of the Little Sister’s trial and the ways in which the case demonstrates the citational nature of censorship.

4. Departures: Theorizing Censorship and Disclosure at the Border

Sexual censorship, especially when it occurs at a border crossing, is both citational and site-specific. A citation refers to both the act and, originally, the document that “summon[ed]” a person to court or a tribunal. In this way, an obscene text is simultaneously the indiscretion and the evidence of that indiscretion (*OED*). The second meaning of citational relevant here is to “a reference providing information about *where* a particular quotation, text, etc. is to be found” (*OED*, my emphasis). The *OED* notes that the latter meaning was first used in terms of legal precedents and later took on its scholastic sense. Both meanings of citational collapse the legal and spatial senses. As Brown notes, when one crosses a border, one “will not only leave behind one set of laws and politics for another, but will cross into a realm of new ‘customs’” (26). Indeed, as the Little Sister’s case demonstrated, obscenity may be cited in one space (such as the border) and not in another space (a public library), even if both sites are in, or mark the bounds of, the same country.

Censorship—particularly in terms of sexual expression—has a long history of being enjoined with spatial exclusion and the maintenance of borderlines. In “What is Enlightenment?” Foucault, discussing his method of a “historical ontology of ourselves” writes,

This philosophical ethos may be characterized as a *limit-attitude*. We are not talking about a gesture of rejection. We have to move beyond the outside-inside alternative; we have to be at the frontiers. Criticism indeed consists of analyzing and reflecting upon limits. (45)

Calling for a move away from structuralist universals, Foucault considers the metaphor of the frontier in order to reposition the uses of transgression. He asks readers to consider “what place is occupied by whatever is singular, contingent, and the product of arbitrary constraints?” (45). For example, the indices of obscenity are neither natural nor immanent within a society (though they are often invoked as being natural and immanent) but rather, to borrow Foucault’s brief definition of the “archaeological,” developed through “the instances of discourse that articulate what we think, say, and do as so many historical events” (46). Or, to put it more precisely, what we *may* think, say, and do (in terms of sexual acts), according to the state.

The genre of the legal judgment, heavily dependent on the use of citation, provides one archaeological narrative in terms of precedence. Moreover, by thinking through obscenity discursively, one is able to note how the obscene is contingent upon a range of socio-cultural influences that change over time and space. The “Memorandum D9-1-1,” debated throughout the Little Sister’s trials in terms of its potential status as law, is an internal document used by Customs and now Border Services that outlines “obscenity indicators.” Toward the conclusion of that document, now available online, the authors have included a note that states the indicators “are subject to change as the CBSA strives to continually reflect the evolving community standard of tolerance” (n.p.). But how does one view the definition of obscenity as discursive or contingent without falling into the trap of mere cultural relativism, which is the danger of the libertarian defense of totally free speech? Foucault argues that while inquiry must be historical, and lead toward the transgression of “arbitrary constraints,” it must also be put “to the test of reality, of

contemporary reality, both to grasp the points where change is possible and desirable, and to determine the precise form this change should take” (46). If there must be a limit to the freedom of expression, where should the line be drawn?

I do not take a libertarian approach to free speech, but I am wary of legislating against any imaginative works or speech acts that do not require, or explicitly incite, a crime—even if I might find those works and words reprehensible for any number of reasons. It is important to recognize that protesting against another’s speech might be, simultaneously, a defensible exercise of an individual’s freedom of expression *and* a demand for the other’s explicit censorship; however, even when calls for censorship invoke centres of institutional power—a corporation like Twitter, a university administration, or the state, for examples—to regulate expression *on behalf* of sexual minorities, we risk relinquishing by increments whatever power we do have to speak back. Of course, even with the kind of narrow limits on censorship that I advocate, we will never be free of the ethical quandaries around issues of expression and representation. As I will explore further in the following chapters, each writer differently inhabits the uneasy boundary between representation and reality, tightening or loosening that space between speech act and impact, to various ideological ends.

Throughout the dissertation, I draw upon Georges Bataille’s writing on transgression in *Eroticism* (1957), and several of his interlocutors in queer studies, such as Foucault, Butler, and Shannon Winnubst, among others, in order to theorize the interwoven constraints binding sexual expression, the law, and literary forms. Bataille argues,

[E]roticism is defined by secrecy. It cannot be public... There is a taboo in force. Nothing is absolutely forbidden, for there are always transgressions. But the taboo is sufficiently active for me to be able to say by and large that eroticism, perhaps the most intense of emotions, is as if it did not exist as far as our experience is present for us in the form of speech and language. (252)

If “eroticism is defined by secrecy,” Bataille suggests, paradoxically, that silence is the expression of eroticism. Indeed, he writes, “Erotic experience will commit us to silence” (252). Bataille anticipates Foucault’s writing on silence in *The History of Sexuality*:

Silence itself—the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers—is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary, than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within over-all strategies. (27)

The porous border that slips between discretion and disclosure suggests that self-censorship may be an effective response to censorship as it indexes those imperatives to conceal and suppress expression. In Canada, the crossing of geo-political borders may often serve as the site of this silence. For example, the Canadian philosopher Ian Angus argues, “The forty-ninth parallel is not Canada; it lets Canada show itself as different,” just as “the border is not silence; it is the site that allows the hearing of silence. In crossing, one may return both to the constantly reassuring murmur of anonymous belonging and to hysterical attachment to contingencies. The border

suspends” (134). In terms of sexual expression, the border “suspends” in both the spatial and punitive meanings of the word.

Butler’s *Excitable Speech* (1997) usefully responds to debates regarding censorship, hate speech, and queer representation at a juncture contemporaneous with the Little Sister’s trial. Butler shows how the impulse to censor offending speech often ends up revealing, if not amplifying, that which was supposed to be silenced:

in the legal arguments that make the call for censorship...the rhetoric that is deplored is invariably proliferated within the context of legal speech. Paradoxically, the explicit legal and political arguments that seek to tie such speech to certain contexts fail to note that even in their own discourse, such speech has become citational, breaking with the prior contexts of its utterance and acquiring new contexts for which it was not intended. (14)

The latter indicates one way in which censorship may be, in Burt’s words, a “productive discursive” act. As this dissertation will demonstrate, a queer poetics of disclosure builds upon the citational nature of censorship, with equal consideration of the legal and spatial meanings of “citation.” Indeed, the novelists, poets, and memoirists I consider in my dissertation both directly and indirectly allude to Canada’s history of sexual censorship. As Burt observes, censorship always makes a production of itself: “Even at its most destructive, then, censorship is always simulated, always paradoxically staged as a legitimating and delegitimizing performance” (220). Through (re)producing censorship in or as art, the simulated and arbitrary aspects of discriminatory censorship become newly visible.

5. A Queer Poetics of Disclosure

In the “Coda” to *Here is Queer: Nationalisms, Sexualities, and the Literatures of Canada*, Dickinson concludes with a personal memory of his experience as a doctoral student in Vancouver during a benefit for the early Little Sister’s trials at the B.C. Provincial Court. Though what he offers is a flashback, he reflects on the case in the present tense, suggesting that the trials continue into an indefinite present⁸: “The legislative and judicial branches of my own government have once again colluded to deny Canadian citizens access to the kind of literature that I both write and have aspirations of teaching some day” (194). This play of grammatical temporality suggests how the Little Sister’s trial informs a particularly Canadian queer political imaginary. Indeed, Susan Billingham refers to the trials as “almost legendary” (271) and the Little Sister’s case, in particular, has been reiterated in several queer cultural productions. For example, Vancouver publisher Arsenal Pulp Press has published a line of out-of-print or censored works of LGBTTTQ literature called “Little Sister’s Classics,” beginning with Jane Rule, the subject of my second chapter, and her novel *The Young in One Another’s Arms*. The 1999 Canadian romantic-comedy film *Better than Chocolate*, directed by Anne Wheeler, co-stars novelist-actor Ann-Marie MacDonald as a Vancouver lesbian bookstore owner in a battle with Customs. In addition, filmmaker Bruce LaBruce has created a unisex perfume called “Obscenity,” which he produced after having his films repeatedly returned and marked “‘obscene’ by Canadian customs agents” (Coleman n.p.). These queer productions, from the

⁸ Though Dickinson’s memory is of a night in 1993, the book was published in 1999, one year before the Supreme Court verdict.

popular to the avant garde, demonstrate how the various forms of redaction or silence that limit LGBTQ culture reveal the impulses and strategies that suppress queer representation.

My dissertation focuses on prose, poetry, and hybrid literary genres, rather than theatre, film, photography, or digital works. While the latter forms remain especially relevant to the discourse of sexual expression and censorship, the Canadian judiciary has remarked upon the difficulty of classifying obscene writing, in particular, when compared to the evaluation of visual works. In the BC Court of Appeal ruling in the Little Sister's case, Justice Hall considers that while he sees "little if any difficulty in having properly trained [border] personnel screen pictorial material...I can see that border officials may have greater difficulty classifying textual material" (52). Similarly, while the Supreme Court agreed with the BC Court of Appeal that the harms-based community standards test "does apply to written materials...it will be very difficult to make the case of obscenity against a book" (1127).

There are useful parallels to be made between the illegibility of the obscene text and what Butler considers the unintelligibility of the queer subject (*Gender* 16)—both of which the state often attempts to 'read' at the moment those texts and subjects are crossing borders. In 1998's *Boys Like Her: Transfictions*, for example, the Taste This Collective (Ivan Coyote, Zoë Eakle, Anna Camilleri, and Lyndell Montgomery) retell their experience of being stopped and their possessions searched at the US-Canada border. The accounts demonstrate how border crossings impose the nation on the queer subject as much, or perhaps more, than the queer subject imposes on the

nation. “Because this is the law,” Coyote writes, “They have every right to paw through my journal with latex gloves on, scattering love notes and photos and preciousness and privacy all over the trunk of the car” (18). Coyote suggests that in this instance, literature has become contraband: “Canadian words, queer words that we spoke on-stage for money in the land of the brave. With no valid permit, license, visa or contract to do so” (18). The desire for queer visibility is, needless to say, complicated by moments of perceived danger. Yet the queer writer has a mode of subversion not easily identified and tracked at the border. Coyote writes that “you cannot smell poetry in the car afterward, it doesn’t leave any residue in the lining of your pockets... Poets are hard to pick out of a crowd” (18). Here, Coyote points to the political possibilities that arise from queer writing that is distributed outside the mainstream circuits of literary production and consumption.

Yet the Little Sister’s case revealed some important exceptions. Justice Binnie, writing for the majority opinion in the Supreme Court judgment, noted that the Customs seizures

included not only magazines, videos and photographic essays, but books consisting entirely of text, including works by internationally acclaimed authors such as *The Man Sitting in the Corridor* by Marguerite Duras and *Querelle [de Brest]* by Jean Genet. Also seized were the award-winning novels *Trash* by Dorothy Allison and *The Young in One Another’s Arms* by Jane Rule. Frequently AIDS/HIV safe-sex education literature was classified as prohibited. (1138-1139)

In my dissertation, the close reading of case studies from Canada’s archive of queer writing—through the lens of what Brown terms the country’s socio-legal and cultural “discourse of borders” (33)—reveals the boundary between censorship and disclosure, between illegibility and intelligibility. Throughout the Little Sisters’ trials the justices frequently referred to the law, and the obscenity sections of the Customs Act in particular, as the mechanism that will “catch” obscenity, suggesting that the obscene is something on the move. The anxiety caused by the elusory nature of the obscene text—with all its literary and rhetorical powers of metonym and metaphor to, in a sense, pass in plain sight—mirrors the anxiety of attempting to classify the queer subject as intelligible, or legitimate.

The dissertation offers four case studies across as many decades in order to reveal the changing political and aesthetic strategies queer writers and activists have deployed in response to censorship. The first half of the dissertation explores how some LGBTTTQ writers have advocated for the freedom of expression through invocations of—sometimes unorthodox—nationalism and citizenship. Chapter One revisits Symons’ still-controversial pre-liberation novel *Place d’Armes* alongside the era’s divergent nationalisms. I draw on Bataille’s theory of transgression, and Butler’s argument that, in terms of offensive speech, “a loosening of the link between act and injury...opens up the possibility for counter-speech” (15), to show how Symons re-maps Montreal in text and illustration, producing metafictional boundaries that challenge the subjective definitions of obscenity.

Chapter Two focuses on Rule’s multi-perspectival narration in *Contract with the World* in order to theorize an ambivalent, or borderline, model of sexual

citizenship informed by Cossman's reworking of Butler's "border speakers," Duggan's injunction to "queer the state," and Berlant's articulation of "diva citizenship." While *Contract with the World* was seized by Customs in 1993, and Rule offered powerful testimony at the Little Sister's trial, I also read the novel alongside the earlier obscenity charges faced by *The Body Politic*, Canada's gay liberationist newspaper, an incident Rule includes within her narrative. Thus, *Contract with the World* provides a unique hinge between two of the country's most influential censorship cases.

The latter half of the dissertation turns to writers who interrogate and problematize nationalist strategies of LGBTTTQ resistance. In Chapter Three, I explore the discourse of queer mobility and tourism in an analysis of Daphne Marlatt and Betsy Warland's collaborative travelogue, *Double Negative*, a hybrid-genre account of the poets' train journey across Australia's Nullarbor Desert. Drawing on lesbian and queer theories of utopia, and Winnubst's Batailleian theorization of freedom, I argue that Marlatt and Warland's erotic, language-mediated poetics evade both censure and the individualism of free speech discourse by questioning the limits of lyric expression. The desert, given its long history of colonial violence, ultimately fails to remain a permanent space of lesbian expression in *Double Negative*; instead, Marlatt and Warland reimagine the desert, what I call a "borderland utopia," in language, providing an alternative to the freedom of expression that disavows the promises of imperialism and consumer tourism.

Continuing my discussion of the queer lyric, and the politics of bordering colonial space, my final chapter considers Gregory Scofield's *Native Canadiana*:

Songs from the Urban Rez. Drawing on recent Indigenous interventions in queer studies, such as Qwo-Li Driskill's theorization of a "Sovereign Erotic" (51), and Rifkin's call for us to read queer Indigenous literature as "forms of political theory" (2), I consider the various forms of silence Scofield offers—from the marginal glossing of Cree to erotic euphemism and metaphor—in order to assert his gay Métis subjectivity. This chapter revisits anxieties of blood and border crossings during the HIV/AIDS crisis in Vancouver's downtown eastside in order to draw out the implications of settler-colonial sexual censorship. In Scofield, these lyric forms of silence—enjambment, translation, metaphor, the page's white space—provide textual borders that reclaim and redeploy the limits placed on the expression of Indigenous languages and sexualities.

While the primary texts offer a range of both popular and experimental forms and genres, they share several strategies that I have called, collectively, "a queer poetics of disclosure." From Symons' diary in *Place d'Armes* to Marlatt and Warland's metapoetic confessions in *Double Negative*, each writer in the dissertation deploys autobiography in ways that disrupt the divide between the private and the public. Moreover, these intimate disclosures correspond with forms that resist semantic closure. Even in Rule's realist fiction, we read an abundance of perspectives that destabilize any singular vision for queer politics—perspectives that amplify, rather than conceal, the oppositional ideologies circulating within the LGBTTQ community. Each author uses various forms of self-redaction, from Symons' editing of his novel-within-a-novel-within-a-novel, to Marlatt and Warland's process poetics, and Scofield's refusal to parse certain aspects of the Cree language and culture for the

non-Indigenous reader. I will demonstrate how these self-reflexive silences ultimately index hegemonic forms of implicit and explicit censorship. Similarly, each writer mobilizes different forms of intra- and intertextuality in order to circulate lost or forgotten queer writing within new circuits of expression, or to speak back to the very laws and policies that have erased LGBTTTQ lives. Finally, each of these writers transgresses geo-political borders, as they recuperate, reimagine, or reterritorialize space through the imposition of new boundaries in ways that either collude with, or contest, the processes of colonialism and nation-state formation. While these writers share many, if not most, of these strategies with the poetics of modernism and post-modernism more generally, when put in service to expressions that inhabit the very boundary of nation and inhibition, these formal and generic tactics circulate as a particularly queer poetics of disclosure.

Chapter One

“A Centennial Fugitive”: Bordering Obscenity in Scott Symons’ *Place d’Armes*

1. Introduction: Revisiting the “Monster”

In a December 1967 interview with Toronto’s *Globe and Mail* newspaper, Scott Symons (1933-2009) proudly declares himself “a Centennial fugitive,” absconding from a nation, he believed, that was “driving [him] out” (“Symons loves...” 26). In fact, by March 1968, Symons was a real fugitive, hiding in the Mexican countryside in order to evade—according to Symons—the Toronto police, the RCMP, Interpol, his family, and the parents of his seventeen year-old male lover with whom he was travelling (Taylor, *Six Journeys* 192; *God’s Fool*). The details regarding his Mexican exile are somewhat unclear, particularly because the self-mythologizing Symons fictionalizes portions of the account in his last published novel *Helmet of Flesh* (1986); however, according to Symons’ friend, the journalist Charles Taylor:

Chasing the couple, the [Mexican] *Federales* claim to be seeking Symons as the author of an indecent book [*Place d’Armes*], and his lover as an illegal entrant. But the real reason is that the lover is a minor, and a male, from a prominent Canadian family. Toronto has spoken to Ottawa, Authority has roused itself, wires have hummed. In a Mexico City hotel room, the parents of the lover wait for the *Federales* to deliver their quarry. (*Six Journeys* 192)

In both his life and sexually explicit experimental writing, Symons sought to shatter bourgeois sensibilities that he believed were stifling English-Canadian cultural life. Noting an antecedent in the trials of Oscar Wilde, Taylor describes how Symons feared that if his lover's parents succeeded in getting Symons extradited as the author of a pornographic novel, he could also face charges in Canada under the sodomy laws that were still on the books. In a letter from Mexico, Symons claims, "What I am doing, with my male-lover, is the English Canadian revolution. And it is a revolution with a cause...the right to love, and to share that love, and to use that love to redeem a hellish Canadian community" (qtd. in Taylor, *Six Journeys* 219). Even in the midst of a serious legal crisis, Symons spins his personal experience into a larger project of cultural liberation.

The Mexican legal drama finally resolved when Symons' lover received his passport, allowing him to move freely in and out of Mexico, and his parents left the capital city after the local police had failed to locate their son. Symons' wife, Judith Morrow, a granddaughter of the president of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce and with whom Symons had a young son, sent word that she planned to divorce Symons. Finally, in a curious irony, Symons learned that his so-called "indecent" novel had been awarded the Beta Sigma Phi Best First Canadian Novel Award, including a thousand-dollar prize (Taylor, *Six Journeys* 219-221). He and his lover returned to Toronto and Symons writes, "To cross this border is to accept the conversion that my entire living these past months and progressively years, has preached. It is to accept my own conversion. So that—in another way of saying—I pass from the pangs of professional Martyrdom to the singular life of the practicing

Saint...” (qtd. in Taylor, *Six Journeys* 221). Border-crossings often signal important transformative moments in Symons’ life and writing yet this instance is particularly important given that the border-crossing represents the intersection of national laws, expression, and spiritual redemption through sexual transgression—all of which are central to understanding *Place d’Armes*, and are also themes which recur throughout Symons’ incendiary life and writing.

In this chapter, I place Symons’ novel within its biographical, literary, and socio-legal contexts, with special emphasis given to the relationship between sexuality and nationalism in both English Canada and Quebec. The latter informs a discussion of the ways in which Canadian literary criticism ‘polices’ the boundaries of the canon as well. Intervening in the often-contentious criticism on Symons, I build upon the 1990s queer readings of the author’s work by deploying Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s method of “reparative reading” and Judith Butler’s theorization of censorship and speech act theory to consider how we might critically approach Symons’ controversial novel without foreclosing its flashes of queer potential. Both the queer and postcolonial interpretations of the text may be extended by introducing a discussion of the novel’s aesthetic use of borders which assist Symons in defining and questioning the limits of sexual expression. Drawing upon Georges Bataille, I argue that Symons’ novel does not seek to break down barriers regarding sexual identity and expression but rather uses various border-crossings (national, sexual, and generic), as well as a sexualized re-mapping of Montreal’s historic Place d’Armes, as the parade ground for a transgression that ultimately points to the subjective nature of obscenity.

If Symons was driven out of Canada in 1967 as a fugitive, and he admits to Taylor in 1973 that his lawyer advised him to leave the country of his own accord (“The Spy...” 25), he was also in voluntary exile from his nation, and from the critics who had ravaged his first novel, *Combat Journal for Place d’Armes: A Personal Narrative*, in mostly hostile, often homophobic, reviews that frequently deploy ad hominem attacks⁹. Most infamously, Robert Fulford, in a *Toronto Star* review, called Hugh Anderson, the novelist’s autobiographical protagonist, “A Monster From Toronto,” and “the most repellent single figure in the recent history of Canadian writing” (qtd. in Taylor, *Six Journeys* 217). Even Phyllis Grosskurth begins her comparatively objective review for the *Globe & Mail* by suggesting, “Place d’Armes was written by a very clever 17-year-old. I realize that Scott Symons is long past 17, but he should have got his novel out of his system years ago.” Symons is later called upon to bear the burden of a stalled national literature (as well as the stereotype of the developmentally-stunted narcissistic homosexual) when Grosskurth concludes, “If good novels are to come out of Canada or anywhere else, it will be possible only when authors discard adolescent self-absorption” (A19). In matters of genre, anyway, the politically conservative Symons was ahead of his time, casting aside divisions between reportage, fiction, and diary—a mode his contemporary reviewers criticized as a largely self-indulgent project.

Such conflations between author and protagonist necessarily recur in criticism of Symons’ writing up to the present, especially given that *Place d’Armes* is subtitled

⁹ In terms of ad hominem attacks, Symons could give as good as he got. In his 1990 article, “Atwood as Icon,” for example, he calls the writer “our leading tractarian, our eternal Schoolmarm, and—our national troll. Yes, our national imp inhabiting some bleak underground cave” (66).

“A Personal Narrative” and the novel’s events bear such a similarity to Symons’ life. The sex scandal, concomitant with the novel’s release, lends the book its lingering mythos; however, there is an element of sensationalism that undergirds this critical imperative to foreground Symons’ biography, which I have admittedly done as well, a sensationalism which largely plays into Symons, and later Taylor’s, mythologizing (Martin 198). The spectacle of Symons’ biography is based upon the voluntary loss of his great privilege: born into a wealthy, established Rosedale family, he attended the Trinity College School, the University of Toronto, Cambridge, and the Sorbonne and later worked as a curator at the Royal Ontario Museum, a professor at the University of Toronto, and held a consultancy at the Smithsonian, in addition to a number of freelance writing and lecturing positions (Symons, “Brief Biography” 399-400). He gave it all up in 1965, and yet, by repeatedly indexing that loss in his writing, he utilizes that same pedigree throughout his life to validate his commitment to maintaining his version of the nation’s heritage: British, High Anglican, and Tory.

For example, in a 1978 series for the *Globe and Mail* entitled “Canada: A Loving Look,” Symons concludes his article on his childhood neighbourhood, “The Cherished-Loathed Rosedale,” by arguing that despite its reputation for snobbery, the neighbourhood and “its quiet embodiment of decent manners, and its sense of family and of historical continuity” keeps all Canadians from being “merely Americans” (45). The latter is hardly the radical clarion call of *Place d’Armes* yet even in the earlier novel there is a firm commitment to maintaining the continuity of the past. As Terry Goldie points out, even Symons’ biographical note in the first edition of *Place d’Armes* claims that the author’s great-grandparents were all “here by Confederation”

(*Pink Snow* 114), as if this authenticates Symons as *truly* Canadian, and makes his voluntary exile from his country and class all the more spectacular.

The novel, originally commissioned by Jack McClelland, whom in a letter Symons calls, punning on his novel's title, "a Publisher-in-Arms...a militant publisher who is also a buddy-in-arms" (qtd. in King 188), was released by McClelland and Stewart in 1967. Symons considered the book his Centennial "gift" to his country ("Symons loves" 26). The novel—or "anti-novel" as Christopher Elson suggests in his introduction to the recent Dundurn Press edition (18)—concerns the protagonist Hugh Anderson, an upstanding married-with-child citizen of Rosedale, who keeps a diary, or "Combat Journal," of his twenty-two day sojourn to Montreal, and a pilgrimage to that city's Place d'Armes in particular. Hugh, educated much like Symons and also variously employed in museums, writing, and publishing, "*demission[s]*" from Ontario to Montreal because "*the events of the past few years in Canada have been systematically destroying me, my culture*" (48)¹⁰. Hugh begins to take notes for, and write, a semi-autobiographical novel about Andrew Harrison, another version of Symons/Hugh who is also keeping a diary and notes toward a novel. In between scenes of dining, antique shops, and sight-seeing, as well as conversations with thinly-fictionalized representations of some of the cultural and

¹⁰ All quotations from *Place d'Armes*, except when noted, are from the 2010 edition of the novel published by the Dundurn Press, with an introduction by Christopher Elson, as part of its "Voyageur Classics: Books That Explore Canada" series. This edition, while making the once difficult-to-find text available to a new generation of readers, does not reproduce the lavish maps, plates, and illustrations of the first edition (which were also excised from the first paperback edition in 1978.) The 2010 edition does maintain the five typefaces of the original. Any references to the first edition (1967) or the first paperback re-release in 1978 with an introduction by Peter Buitenhuis will be noted.

literary figures of the day, Hugh explores his burgeoning queer sexuality through paid sex with young French-Canadian men, Yvon, Pierrot, and André, who become central to his allegorical project of national inversion; that is, if English Canada maintains a position of economic and political dominance over Quebec, then inversion—with all its homosexual implications—will, Hugh believes, overturn the dominant and submissive positions of the ‘two solitudes.’

Although *Place d’Armes* is Symons’ first novel, he had been building a reputation as a well-regarded, if increasingly controversial, speaker and journalist on Quebec since the early 1960s. Portents of *Place d’Armes*’ vitriol may be seen in “The Meaning of English Canada,” his 1963 address to the Canadian Centenary Council Symposium in which he says “the English Canadian seems just a little like Rip Van Winkle waking up and wondering where he is” (32). He goes on to describe what he terms “negative nationalism,” or the “Authorized Version of Canadianism” a decidedly Liberal, in Symons’ eyes, nationalism that argues for progress while it is in fact “negative, naïve, nostalgic” (33-34). Symons despises the “Methodist mannikin,” his term for the politicians who replaced the British ruling class and who “to achieve political power in Canada...had to abolish [their] own [British] personality” (35). In this speech Symons praises by contrast French Canada’s vibrant culture in the midst of the Quiet Revolution,¹¹ “the most talented, the most purposeful outburst of creative

¹¹ The Quiet Revolution refers to a series of social, political, and cultural policy reforms in Quebec following the Liberal party’s defeat of the Union Nationale in the 1960 election. Such changes resulted in more public institutions and services in areas such as health, power, and education, as well as an increasingly prosperous francophone middle class. The Quiet Revolution also witnessed the decreased influence of the Roman Catholic Church in public life as well as a surge in francophone literature and culture (Dickinson & Young 305-344).

energy anywhere in the Western World” (32-33). Needless to say, “French Canada” and “English Canada” are taken as two monolithic cultures throughout Symons’ writing. He concludes his speech with a lyrically rousing ode to his country: “To the Canadian, all this, the heritage re-offered, the potent plenitude of our Kingdom of Canada” (38). The germ of *Place d’Armes*’ urgent cry for the conservation, and embodied celebration of, a so-called disappearing heritage may be located in such pre-centenary writings.

While Symons reported on the Quiet Revolution occurring in Quebec, he was meditating upon his own personal and creative upheavals. In a 1989 interview with *The Idler*, a magazine to which Symons had also been a contributor, he describes his thinking leading up to 1965 when he decided to leave his wife and son and undertake work as a novelist:

I contemplated for at least five years before I did what I did that it would have to be done. I kept waiting for other people to do it. Why should I, who was happily married, had a lovely home in Toronto, a lovely farm full of Canadian art and culture, a Curator of Canadiana, a Professor at the U. of T., a Visiting Curator at the Smithsonian, have to do it? I did not leap with any glee. There was a sense of vocation and a sense of civic action. One can laugh at it, one can praise it, but it’s genuine. The choice risked my life because it risked my sanity. I knew that this was where one had to move in, to open the doors to male sentience. (qtd. in Elson, “Mourning and Ecstasy” 12)

When he left in late 1965, he spent three weeks in Montreal and wrote *Place d'Armes* as it happened. In his diary, Hugh notes, "The fact of the matter is that I am living me in French, **being** lived in French, and writing me in English!" (285, bold in original). As Taylor recounts, "[Symons] aspired to live a novel, and to write it all down, virtually as he lived it. He would actively seek adventures and encounters and then record his reactions to them. For as long as it took, for as long as he could stand the strain, he would set down everything that happened to him, everything that registered in his sensibility" (*Six Journeys* 211). To emphasize the 'lived' experience of the novel, the first edition included several pull-out maps and illustrations so that the book appeared to be the working "Journal" of a tourist, as I will discuss in further detail.

If *Place d'Armes* may be considered excessive in its form, then Elson aptly describes its sequel, *Civic Square* (1969), as "the strangest of the strange" (*Dear Reader* 73): over 800 unbounded pages that readers received in a blue box. *Civic Square*, like *Place d'Armes*, also takes a city as its subject: Toronto. Written largely in a non-sequential order of letters to an unnamed Dear Reader or DR, "we get a celebration of dappled Country Canada as well as a savage attack on mediocrity and political sellout" (Elson, *Dear Reader* 73). Just as the first novel included the artefacts of the life lived behind, or in, the book, materiality finds a different expression in *Civic Square*. In Nik Sheehan's 1998 documentary, *God's Fool*, publisher and writer Anna Porter, then an assistant at McClelland and Stewart who worked on the hand-printing of the text, recalls that Symons added hand-drawn decorations of his trademark "flying phallus" on at least the first page of every copy, though there were

some variations.¹² While James King points out that McClelland, Symons' editor-publisher, had commissioned *Place d'Armes* knowing it would be a "shocking" text (185), the correspondence between publisher and author reveals that McClelland carefully attempted to mitigate Symons' explicitness during the composition of *Civic Square*. For example, McClelland suggests that Symons overuses McClelland's "favourite four-letter word, fuck" and risks destroying "its value when...[including it] too freely" (qtd. in King 186). McClelland then quickly asserts, "This is not a censorship plea, God knows. What I guess I am trying to say is that you weaken the whole piece by coming on a bit strong on the emancipation bit" (qtd. in King 186). While the linguistic and material excesses of *Civic Square* would not be repeated in future projects, Symons would return to similar themes throughout the rest of his career.

The merging of material and print cultures continues, for example, in *Heritage: A Romantic Look at Early Canadian Furniture*, a 1971 coffee-table book with Symons' lyrical, often erotic, descriptions of antiques paired with photographs by John de Visser. The final book of a loose trilogy, *Heritage* is the result of a "furniture safari" in which Symons undertakes a "personal Odyssey in-to the heart of early Canadian belief" (n.p.). As Symons proclaims in his introduction, "Furniture is faith!" (n.p.). The book is a sophisticated expression of what Symons would later call his early childhood's "real education": polishing his parents' collection of *objets*

¹² The copy of *Civic Square* held by the University of Western Ontario Libraries, for example, includes Symons' autograph (with the S of his first name drawn as a bird taking flight) as well as a drawing of the flying phallus in red ink on the title page. He has also drawn a large flying phallus in three colours over the text's first page, with the opening lines: "Cocks are beautiful. All cocks are beautiful" (1).

d'arts in their Rosedale home (qtd. in Taylor, *Six Journeys*, 196). Though less experimental in form than either *Place d'Armes* or *Civic Square*, *Heritage* extends the former's rhapsodic celebration of early Canadiana. As Elson notes, "This 'look at early Canadian furniture' was explicitly a further dimension added to the bicultural diptych of the Toronto and Montréal novels and Symons considered it an integral part of the meanings cumulatively proposed by the trilogy, an added dimension of Body and Blood, of spaciousness and substance" ("Some Potent" n.p.). *Heritage* both celebrates and replicates the *objets d'art* that Symons claims as both erotic and spiritual sustenance.

Spirituality remains a central concern of Symons' final novel, *Helmet of Flesh*. The novel largely owes its eventual publication to Dennis Lee, who spent fourteen years working as Symons' editor on the project and helped select its title (Sheehan). Following the travels of a semi-autobiographical protagonist from Toronto to Marrakesh, this time satirically named York Mackenzie,¹³ the novel mirrors the travel narrative of *Place d'Armes* in more conventional prose. In this work, the writer leaves his male lover in Newfoundland while he travels to Marrakesh and takes up with a band of fellow expatriates for an often alcohol- and drug-fuelled tour of the North African desert intercut with sexual encounters with young Moroccan men and flashbacks to scenes with his lover in Newfoundland. While it may be mostly set on a different continent, Canadian national identity is still a main topic for Symons who

¹³ The protagonist takes his first name from the garrison town at present-day Toronto. His last name alludes to William Lyon Mackenzie, the Scottish-Canadian journalist, first mayor of Toronto, and leader of the 1837 Rebellions (Russell n.p.). The latter is particularly ironic given Symons' well-documented dismay for those politicians he called the "Methodist manikin[s]," whom he held responsible for eroding English Canada's British heritage ("The Meaning" 35).

uses the circle of expatriate characters to observe and critique ‘postcolonial’ European empires. Symons himself had decamped to Morocco in the early 1980s and stayed there, more or less, until his return to Toronto in 2000, where he lived until his death in 2009.

All four of Symons major works engage with travel, sexuality, history, and spirituality. While certainly any one of Symons’ book-length projects could make a rich case study for a discussion of border-crossing, eroticism, and expression, *Place d’Armes* is particularly useful given its historical publication date in the Centennial year and its direct engagement with the cultural and sexual politics of its period, a time that saw great changes to the law regarding gender, sexuality, and expression.

2. *Place d’Armes* in Context: “Better, by far, to be a pédéraste than a ‘fédéraste”

On Day Five of the *Combat Journal*, Hugh spies the office building of *La Presse*, the French-language newspaper, and reminisces: “The old *Presse* building. Madame Comresse! Sad, I used to work for it...back in the days when the French-Canadian Revolution was an idea, a conspiracy hatched between editorial meetings. Oh – the guilt I felt as an English Canadian then...the daily judgment on myself. As I watched the French agonize under our history” (138). Symons, like his protagonist, worked for *La Presse* where he wrote some of the earliest journalism on the Quiet Revolution, and received a National Newspaper Award for his work in 1961. The historian C.P. Champion notes that by the mid 1960s, Symons was considered an “‘authentic’ voice of English Canada” within Quebec (78). The latter appreciation stems from his francophilia, mastery of the language, and for his journalism in *La*

Presse. Thus, even before *Place d'Armes*, Symons was a familiar commentator on Quebec nationalism in the lead up to the Centennial year and the October Crisis of 1970.

For example, Symons had been a dissenting voice in the flag debates of 1964. Lester B. Pearson, arguing for the retirement of the British Red Ensign, had claimed that an “exclusively Canadian” flag would unite an increasingly fractious nation (qtd. in *Champion* 71). While Symons was arguably sympathetic to the people and interests of Quebec, he was strictly against the idea of removing the Red Ensign: “[A] completely new flag [suggested] un Canada neuf et unilingue Anglais” (Symons, qtd. in *Champion* 78). Indeed, if the new flag was meant to mitigate Quebec anxieties, the people apparently had little interest. As Pierre Trudeau put it, “[French Canadians] do not give a tinker’s damn about the flag. It’s a matter of complete indifference” (qtd. in *Champion* 79). The fast-approaching centenary year expedited the choice and design of the new flag. Although Pearson claimed the Maple Leaf was an attempt to rid the nation of outward symbols of its colonial past, “In his opening speech on the flag on 15 June [1965], Pearson invoked the anniversary of Magna Carta” (*Champion* 87). In *Place d'Armes*, Hugh echoes the author’s anger about the flag:

“I pledge allegiance to my flag...” Fuck that! No—unfuckable. Unfuckworthy. But at least it locates, situates, defines, the Canadian Heresy. At least, at last, it allows ground for attack, for satire, for hate...Defines the New Canadian Establishment. And am I going to have a go at the bastards! Am I ever...before they get me, get us all, for ever! (142)

For Hugh, and by extension, Symons, the new flag was a negative symbol of the changes rapidly occurring within Canada.

For example, government commissions become a frequent target of ridicule in the novel. In addition to the new flag, the late 1960s brought the first report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1967) that called for vast policy changes regarding the language of federal government services (Morton 294). In his diary, Hugh writes, “I love my land...& I love my people. Still. Unpardonable crime in this age of ‘cool culture’ and commissions” (55). Later, describing his novel-in-progress to Luc, a French-Canadian poet who suggests the ““novel sounds like a minority report to the Royal Commission on Biculturalism”” Hugh responds, ““I suppose a little; but that isn’t really it at all...at least I would never write it if that were it”” (99). For Hugh/Symons, the federal government’s attempts at national unity have a flattening effect on both cultures. That there are ethnic groups, including Indigenous people, in Canada beyond “French” and “English” is given no attention in the novel. Instead of biculturalism, Symons would rather capture the vibrancy of French Canadian culture for English Canada, or, as the third person narrator writes of Hugh in *Place d’Armes*, “He’d have to start his own English-Canadian ‘Quiet Revolution’ against this new Canadian Church...he, the anti-clerical Loyalist” (60).

When Hugh volleys against the social and cultural programs associated with Pearson’s Liberals, from the new flag to various Royal Commissions (the Commission on the Status of Women, called for by Pearson’s first female cabinet minister Judy LaMarsh, would submit its first report by 1970), the attack is usually in

misogynistic terms.¹⁴ Politicians are described as “the eunuchs at Ottawa” (283) and the “flounder[ing]” nation may be blamed on the fact that “there isn’t a convincing hard-on in Ottawa, and if there were, it would be Tory and not Liberal, that is certain!” (245). Two months before his pilgrimage to Montreal, Hugh recounts that he was fired from his publishing position because he told his boss, “you’ve got no balls, Sir” (63). Women in any position of socio-cultural power are frequently ridiculed: “the wife has a beard, bass voice, & three testicles. She is a TV producer when she isn’t producing hubby” (57). While Symons’ project of English national emancipation is dependent upon liberating the body, as he writes, “Everything tells me I’ve been brought up a deaf-dumb-paralytic...cannot see, hear, touch, move” (124), it remains a specifically *male*-embodied liberation that Symons calls for, one that should not be easily aligned with the women’s and gay liberation movements of the time. As Goldie observes: “*Place d’Armes* only reclaims the misogyny of Tory heterosexism in a Tory homosexuality” (“The Man of the Land...” 156), positioning male-male desire as a purer expression of masculinity.¹⁵

¹⁴ Symons uses the same tactics in his nonfiction writing. In the 1990 essay on Margaret Atwood, Symons writes, “With Ms. Atwood [feminism and nationalism] appeared as one. Perhaps because the advance of the Canadian identity seemed to go hand in hand with the detumescence of the Canadian male” (60).

¹⁵ In her introduction to *Epistemology of the Closet*, Sedgwick reflects on the relationship between gender and same-sex desire in 1970s lesbian-feminist theory: “The assumptions at work here were indeed radical ones: most important...[the] efficacious re-visioning, in female terms, of same-sex desire as being at the very definitional center of each gender, rather than as occupying a cross-gender or liminal position between them. Thus, women who loved women were seen as *more* female, men who loved men as quite possibly more male, than those whose desire crossed boundaries of gender. The axis of sexuality, in this view, was not only exactly coextensive with the axis of gender but expressive of its most heightened essence: ‘Feminism is the theory, lesbianism is the practice.’ By analogy, male homosexuality could be, and often was, seen as the practice for which male supremacy was the

Despite the novel's formal experimentation and explicit homoeroticism, the text remains in continuity with an archive of Canadian literature that deploys gender and sexuality in order to explore national tensions within Montreal; moreover, several of these authors and their works appear as intertexts, sometimes lightly fictionalized, in Symons' novel. While *Place d'Armes* seeks to overturn the "New Canadian Establishment," the wealth of canonical literary allusions, intertexts, and cultural figures provides a scaffolding that belies Symons' implicitly expressed desire for the text's eventual assimilation into the then-burgeoning Canadian canon. For example, Hugh claims, "everything I am doing disproves the *Two Solitudes*" (98), alluding to Hugh MacLennan's 1945 allegorical novel about the struggle of Paul Tallard, born to an aristocratic Quebecois father and a mother of Irish heritage, to reconcile his fractured identity. Paul, who aspires to be a novelist, abandons an earlier European-set manuscript in favour of a new book set in his home country: "[A] Canadian book would have to take its place in the English and French traditions. Both traditions were so mature they had become almost decadent, while Canada herself was still raw" (MacLennan 454). Where MacLennan sees a "raw" lack of domestic tradition, Symons claims centuries of Canadian identity through its physical cultural heritage—the antiques and Canadiana of his early curatorial career that later appear throughout his novels. While MacLennan's protagonist struggles to reconcile and merge both cultures, Symons' Hugh wants to celebrate both rich traditions without sacrificing one to the other. The beginning of World War II puts an end to Paul's goal of writing his Canadian novel, but his marriage to Heather, a woman from a wealthy Anglophone

theory" (36).

family, allegorically unites the country's separate "race-legends" in a melodramatic heterosexual romance (MacLennan 511). Thus, MacLennan's novel serves as the fulfillment of Paul's incomplete manuscript; similarly, Symons' *Place d'Armes* is the product of Hugh's novel-in-progress.

Douglas LePan's 1964 novel, *The Deserter*, winner of that year's Governor General's Award, provides another crucial post-war intertext. Set in an unnamed city at the end of an undated war, the novel follows a deserter named Rusty who abandons his company shortly after an armistice. Rusty escapes the quotidian existence of post-war living for the urban nightlife of his fellow deserters, prostitutes, and criminals. Although it has received very little critical attention in general, *The Deserter* is worthy of a queer reappraisal in its own right. LePan came out publically, at the age of 76, in his 1990 collection of homoerotic love poems *Far Voyages* (Barton 13). While LePan's protagonist in *The Deserter* is not explicitly gay (in fact, much of the experimental novel's plot concerns Rusty's search for the elusive Althea, as well as encounters with female prostitutes) Rusty deserts not only the military but, given his unofficial status, the possibility of a state-sanctioned marriage as well as other institutions of citizenship. In the long, introspective depictions of Rusty's search for companionship and intimacy in the unnamed city's underground and docks, where the deserters often identify each other through various non-verbal codes, LePan crafts what may be an allegory of the pre-liberation, urban cruising experience:

They [the deserters] were lonely because of what they had lost. But that wasn't all. There was another reason why they wouldn't be at ease with their fellows, even with those who also knew themselves to be

exiles. For him it had been like a play that began with the one word ‘Banished!’ So it had been for others. But each of them had been banished in different ways, at different times, they associated their estrangement with different faces and gestures and voices. The circumstances of their banishment were special, and isolating. All they had in common was their exile and the loneliness that flowed from it. And how could a community be built out of that? (117-118)

While LePan writes in a lyrical mode, his deserter and Symons’ protagonist share a similar rage and sense of displacement. For example, Rusty criticizes the lifestyle of a friend employed in a government ministry: “‘You can dull your fury with good living. You can feed it caviar and smoked salmon and other tidbits until it becomes as tame as a pet poodle. You can take the edge off it with luxury. There may be fury in your blood, all right, perhaps a whole river of knives, for all I know. But you can blunt them any time you like with money and comfort’” (LePan 53).

In Symons’ novel, Le Pan appears as “Eric Newman” whose novel *The Traitor* inspires Hugh’s own mission, as he finds himself “deeply linked” to Newman’s protagonist; however, Hugh argues, in a letter he sends Newman, that “the hero deserted but he never disastered, and came out the other side. He was a deserter without a disaster. A revolutionary without balls!” (148). Despite these criticisms, Hugh takes inspiration from Newman’s novel and declares that “If I stay [spiritually] constipated and can’t write me out, then I’ll blast my way out, bodily. And if I can write it - - and am not exhausted by the very living of it - - then it is equally suicide: social, political, economic” (150). Through Hugh, Symons states his intention to go

further than LePan's novel, choosing suicide (even if only metaphorically) over desertion, and explicitly rendered scenes of homoerotic desire over Le Pan's lyrical discretion.

Suicide (and homicide) are tropes of two further texts related to *Place d'Armes*: Hubert Aquin's *Next Episode* (1965) and Leonard Cohen's *Beautiful Losers* (1966). Both authors, as Peter Dickinson has pointed out, are remembered by literary historians for their contributions to the development of Canadian literary postmodernism while "Symons is consistently left out of the picture" (82). Goldie suggests some possible reasons: Symons' "overt homosexuality," his becoming an expatriate writer, and the fact that "even in comparison to *Beautiful Losers*, [*Place d'Armes* is] just too weird" (*Pink Snow* 114). Goldie suggests that while Aquin's novel of a separatist revolutionary in a Swiss psychiatric hospital will likely always be read as foreshadowing its author's similar life and suicide in 1977, Symons' novel may have failed to receive its critical due, in part, given its almost immediate conflation with autobiography, as I discussed in the previous section. In contrast, Cohen was already established as a heterosexual poet of romantic lyrics and there was no evidence that any character or action in *Beautiful Losers* was autobiographical (Goldie, *Pink Snow* 92-93).

Both Aquin, under the alias Pierre Godin (Elson, "Introduction" 18), and Cohen appear in *Place d'Armes*. The third-person narrator relates, with admiration, the revolutionary nature of the Aquin alias: "Pierre's free flight from the irrelevance of day-to-day, into homicide, into the reacquired right to kill—rather than to be dead

alive, rather than to die living” (315). Earlier, in Andrew Harrison’s journal, Symons’ writes:

So much easier to be a Jew, a member of that fraternity of exiles, whose only redemption lives in the magnificent written plaint—in a whole North American literature culminating in Bellow and, in Canada, in [Mordecai] Richler and [Irving] Layton and Cohen. I don’t lessen their achievement...but they were born into a culture of expostulation! They were born with the right to permanent exile. But what of the goddam Legitimist, Establishment, Hereditary, Infeodated, Loyalist, Christian Canadian Tory? For him to speak his mind...requires a Counter-Revolution at least. (218-219)

The French Canadian and the Jewish writer each have an inherent oppositional perspective from which to write, according to Symons, as well as a way into “permanent exile.” While Symons deploys homosexuality as a way of positioning the narrative as an outsider text, he clearly does not identify with a similar “fraternity of exiles” among gay or bisexual writers, largely because to do so would dull the political edge of the sex acts represented—for Symons, to be truly transgressive he needs to be both High Anglican Tory *and* homosexual. Just as he will not abandon his British heritage for a new Canadian identity, he will not abandon one party for a queer one. As Leo Bersani has observed, “To want sex with another man is not exactly a credential for political radicalism—a fact both recognized and denied by the gay liberation movement of the later ‘60s and early ‘70s” (205). Symons’ refusal to adopt a gay political identity points to another reason, perhaps, Symons remains

largely outside the Canadian literary canon, even after the advent of queer studies. Symons' sexual disclosures, while politically circumspect, must be interpreted alongside his involvement with Quebec nationalism. While he does not go so far as to declare a causal link, Symons claims that his "predicting the French Canadian revolution [in his journalism]...took [him] to the verge of [his] own voice (and at that very time [he] became again sensitive to the sexual beauty of men!)" (qtd. in Taylor 204); thus, for Symons, writing, desire, and nationalism are intimately commingled discourses.

Indeed, the relationship between Quebec and Canada has long been described in gendered and sexualized terms. As the legal scholar Carl Stychin points out, marriage is frequently used as a metaphor for Canadian federalism, with Quebec positioned in the feminine role (17). Moreover, nationalism within Quebec, given the influence of the Catholic Church prior to the Quiet Revolution, promoted the family as the central institution that would preserve Quebec identity, with women viewed quite literally as "mothers to the nation" (Stychin 17).¹⁶ Yet, as Stychin claims, "This historical reproduction of Quebec through women's bodies leaves heterosexual men with little role in the project of nationhood (apart from one function). These deployments thereby further both the male homosexualisation and the female gendering of the [Quebec] nation" (17). During the Quiet Revolution, some strands of Quebec nationalism recuperated and redeployed these homophobic metaphors. After years of police harassment, and numerous raids on gay bathhouses and bars in a so-

¹⁶ While women gained the right to vote in federal elections by 1918, Quebec was the last province, in 1940, to extend provincial voting rights to non-Indigenous women (Dickinson & Young 239).

called “clean-up” for the 1976 Olympic games in Montreal, gay and lesbian activists formed the *Association pour les droits des gai(e)s du Québec*, which campaigned for civil rights protections (Smith 365). In 1977, Quebec became the first North American legal jurisdiction to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation in its Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Stychin 4). Not only did the latter extend constitutional protections to LGBTQ people, but also assisted in redefining the terms of belonging in a newly articulated Quebec nationalism that no longer depended on ethnicity, and the Church’s emphasis on the family’s reproductive role, but language, for its identity (Stychin 8-9).

As Stychin and others have commented, the emergence of this new nationalism that allowed for the expression and protection of social differences within a cohesive Quebec nation—bound by a constitution viewed, by some, as even more politically effective for minorities than the federal one Quebec would reject in 1982—may be likened to a ‘coming out’ for the nation (Stychin 11). For example, one of the period’s best-known plays, Michel Tremblay’s *Hosanna*, about a drag queen and his lover, was, according to Robert Schwartzwald, “embraced as a powerful declaration of Québec’s right to ‘be itself’... Here, transvestism was legible as the ‘fantasy’ of an alienated, oppressed national collectivity that needed proudly to acknowledge and assert its *spécificité* as a necessary prelude to taking its place among the universal community of nations” (Schwartzwald, “‘Symbolic’ Homosexuality” 265). As an Anglophone writing in and about Montreal—and, as I will argue further, re-writing the limits of Montreal—Symons similarly conflates homosexual and nationalist emergence. Yet, while both Quebec and Anglo-Canadian nationalism in the decades

immediately following the publication of Symons' novel would increasingly wrestle with a rights-based model of group identity affiliation operating within and against the nation-state, Symons repeatedly disavows so-called identity politics. In *Place d'Armes*, sexual expression *is* nationalist expression yet the former cannot be pinned down to any one orientation; thus, Symons' strategy is not a pure antecedent to Queer Nation, the 1990s activist group that sought to use "alternating strategies of menace and merriment...to see and conquer places that present the danger of *violence* to gays and lesbians, to reterritorialize them" (Berlant and Freeman 155). As the following sections will demonstrate, Symons may appropriate the historical violence done to gays and lesbians in order to "reterritorialize" Montreal, but rather than radically remake the English-Canadian nation, Symons aims to maintain its continuity.

3. Symons & His Critics: "Someday even the academics will use it as an artifact"

In Hallvard Dahlie's 1974 article, "Self-conscious Canadians," one of the first texts of academic criticism to engage with Symons, Dahlie briefly mentions *Place d'Armes* as it "represents a very self-conscious attempt to be experimental, daring, iconoclastic, irreverent, [and] funny"; however, Dahlie finds its total effect "one of annoyance rather than curiosity, intrigue, or delight" (15). Later, he concludes that Symons is a "straw [man] who [is] easy to destroy, for I don't think as [a novelist] Symons...[is] taken seriously by very many readers" (16). While the latter sentiments echo the general consensus of Symons' initial reviewers and critics, the novel received at least one positive notice in a 1968 issue of the American literary journal

Northwest Review. The reviewer attempts to universalize the text when he writes, “Though directly concerned with a very specific place, it is actually concerned with the 20th Century Everyman, although he just happens to be Canadian this time” (Bayes 131). The latter is a curious reading, given the protagonist’s obsession with nationalist concerns. Yet unlike Dahlie, who finds the novel’s explicit sexuality an “embarrassment” (15)—embarrassing for whom, it remains unclear—the American reviewer considers the sex scenes an “affirmation” that transcends “what could be a mere homosexual romp” (131). As these two examples demonstrate, *Place d’Armes* was a confounding text upon its publication, and in the intervening half-century, the novel’s reception continues to be uneven.

In his introduction to the 2010 edition of the novel, Elson notes there have been “two waves” of Symons’ criticism (18). The first wave crested in the 1970s when critics such as Dahlie, Peter Briggs, Elspeth Cameron, and Peter Buitenhuis provided formalist, generic, or thematic readings of the novel that situate the text in its national and literary contexts. Briggs considers the ways in which Symons investigates the problem of national identity through sexual identity, and the “clear relationship between the [historic] objects [Hugh admires] and the structure of the narrative” (79). Moreover, Briggs is one of the few critics to seriously consider the novel’s iconoclastic, if “near blasphem[ous]” (79), religiosity at any length: “The act of communion holds in combination the elements of the French-English dichotomy, the idea of French Canadian sacrifice and the importance which contact with things Canadien can cure” (81). While Briggs analyzes the novel’s historical gaze, Buitenhuis focuses on the novel’s revolutionary power regarding sexuality and

French-English relations, calling the text “the most important statement about Canadian imaginative life in the 1960’s” (n.p.).

Other scholarship of this period emphasizes the work’s formal experimentation. Dahlie’s article revisits the earlier native-versus-cosmopolitan debates stemming from the competing Canadian poetics of the 1940s, though he does not use those terms. Instead, he writes of “unconscious” or “self-conscious” nationalisms, praising the former and criticizing the latter for being too pedantic and removed from “aesthetic sincerity and universal significance” (6). *Place d’Armes* is one of several texts of the 1960s which, Dahlie notes, “moved away from self-conscious Canadianism in terms of content” and turned to self-consciousness in “matters of style” (14-15). Cameron’s article considers some of these stylistic inventions, noting the ways in which the novel’s journal form recalls early diaries and journals in Canadian literature—from explorer and settler narratives to the “missionary journal and the military journal” (Cameron n.p.). Cameron’s analysis remains especially useful for its insights regarding the novel’s demarcating of private and public texts: “The notes in [Hugh’s] journal, then, are private; the novel will be the transformation of their essence into art for the public” (n.p.). Given how sociologists and legal scholars such as Gary Kinsman and Brenda Cossman now consider the changes to sex legislation in the 1960s and 1970s as, essentially, a debate between policing public and private spaces of sexuality, Cameron’s analysis of the novel’s journal form is particularly fruitful. The “transformation” of notes into novel that she alludes to never occurs in any finite way; that is, Symons’ processual writing remains in between its private ‘rough’ form and its public ‘whole’ form, just as

Symons/Hugh will come to inhabit a borderline position between nations. While the novel's concluding scene of communion arguably brings together the novel's disparate authorial voices, the 'rough' draft remains in the novel as we receive it. Thus, as I will discuss further in the following section, Symons' crossing and re-crossing of aesthetic or generic borders allows for the simultaneous transgression across the zones of acceptable public and private intimacy.

Both Dahlie's and Cameron's discussion of the novel's "self-conscious" experimentation anticipates the turn, in the 1990s, toward viewing the novel through postmodernist theoretical frameworks, particularly informed by Linda Hutcheon's discussion of metafiction, in addition to then-emerging queer and postcolonial theories. Writing in 1993, Goldie compares the ways that Symons and the Australian author Patrick White use gendered tropes "to produce the land, the geographical or topographical entity, as a 'natural' nation" ("The Land..." 156), extending his work on "indigenization" in the monograph *Fear and Temptation*. Goldie considers Symons' novel "a multi-layered comment on autobiography" (157) yet critiques how Symons' protagonist finds in Quebec "the place of the primitive other" and fetishizes the nation's "seigneurial past" (159). In an important article the following year, Robert K. Martin also calls for a new reading not only of the protagonist's sexual politics but the way that Symons' public persona has been reiterated in criticism, particularly "the premises on which Symons cast himself as revolutionary hero." Martin, like Goldie, remains suspicious of Hugh's appropriation of Quebec, referring to the gesture as "a kind of sexual tourism" (198). George Piggford emphasizes the latter when he revisits the novel's representation of identity through the frame of

metafiction and national inversion, which become conflated as a form of “trans-cultural sodomy” (56). Building upon both Martin and Piggford’s analyses, in particular, Peter Dickinson investigates the “critical homophobia” (69) that erased Symons and the expatriate poet Patrick Anderson from the Canadian canon. By interpreting Symons as a “travel writer” (82), he demonstrates how Symons entered several forms of exile at once: national, sexual, and critical. Exile, whether self-imposed or chosen, is a form of border-crossing. In Symons’ case, not only do his escapes to Quebec, Mexico, and Marrakesh at various points in his life mirror the transnational narratives and genre bending in his writing, but they also reflect the less-examined critical and historical exile from the boundaries of Canadian canon formation. The latter transgression remains, perhaps, the central controversy of contemporary criticism on Symons. Martin, writing in 1994, observes,

We would not want to lose a text as rich, as outrageous, as powerfully evocative of its time as *Place d’Armes*, but it is necessary to read it defensively, ready to take up the combat that Symons wants. Its limitations speak eloquently to the problem of writing the other, of speaking from a position of privilege while seeking to efface it, and of the ways in which a *jouissance* that seeks to undo the (cultural) text may end up simply rewriting it. (210)

The idea of possibly ‘losing’ the text suggests that queer critics might, paradoxically, end up achieving the endgame of the novel’s early homophobic reviewers: a kind of censorship through non-engagement, given the novel’s misogynistic and nationalist project. At one point, Hugh observes of his novel, “Someday even the academics will

use it as an artifact” (141). Indeed, *Place d’Armes* has become an artefact—one of the few pre-liberation texts in Canadian writing—and reveals to us, much like the early fiction of Jane Rule that I discuss in the next chapter, a fragmentary and unsettled, if anticipatory, queer sexual politics.

In his “defensive” reading method, Martin approaches the text by commenting upon both the novel’s homophobic reception as well as its own problematic politics (and how both are intimately linked to heteropatriarchal configurations of gender, nation, class, and the canon). Yet such reassessments—while offering the very insightful readings I build upon in this chapter—tend to view the novel and its reception, particularly around censorship, from what Sedgwick calls, in *Touching Feeling*, a “paranoid” position, one that both anticipates and exposes the homophobia and heterosexism the queer critic locates (130). As I discussed above, for the queer critic reading Symons, one is doubly paranoid—aware of the homophobia inherent in the early criticism, but also of the problems of situating, uncomfortably, Symons’ own politics within a feminist-queer-postcolonial theoretical frame. Yet, as Sedgwick writes,

it is possible that the very productive critical habits embodied in what Paul Ricoeur memorably called the “hermeneutics of suspicion”—widespread critical habits indeed, perhaps by now nearly synonymous with criticism itself—may have had an unintentionally stultifying side effect: they may have made it less rather than more possible to unpack the local, contingent relations between any given piece of knowledge

and its narrative/epistemological entailments for the seeker, knower, or teller. (124)

If Symons' novel is a travel narrative, as Dickinson argues, the text arrives burdened with critical baggage, some of which I have unpacked in these introductory sections. Sedgwick's theorizing of the "reparative" reading practice—one that allows for pleasure, surprise, and hope, for example—seems particularly suited to a fraught text like *Place d'Armes*; moreover, Hugh's method for completing his "mission" in the novel shares some similarities with Sedgwick's description of reparative reading.

Surprisingly, in a text largely dependent upon scorn and bile for its tonal effects, Hugh claims "love" as a central component of his project. In the section "The Day Before One," the third-person narrator writes,

All he had to do was live La Place and he would end with what he needed—a novel that glowed with love, with his own love of his community, his nation, his people. A novel that glowed with love in a world whose final and last faith seemed grounded in hate. He wanted to share that love, and to show that only by that love do people live, really live. (46)

Yet this expression demands a sacrifice, as Hugh later writes in his journal: "To share my love I must humiliate me...must grovel. Stand waistdeep in the shit...and then sing" (92). In Leo Bersani's analysis of Jean Genet's *Funeral Blues*, another text in which national and social "betrayal is inscribed within homosexual love," the scatological functions in a similar way. In the text, Genet's fantasies of consuming the waste of his dead lover, Jean, signify, for Bersani, how Genet "[f]ar from simply

rejecting a homophobic emphasis on the sterility of gay love, joyfully embraces what might be called the anatomical emblem of that sterility” (*Homos* 159). Moreover, like Symons, Genet “repeats society’s accusation of him as a homosexual outlaw...wilfully offering transgressive spectacles to others” (*Homos* 161). When Hugh in *Place d’Armes* stands “waistdeep in the shit,” he proclaims his sacrificial role; that is, he is both sodomite and saint, sacrificing his privilege as a wealthy Anglophone heterosexual male by allowing himself to be emasculated by Quebec, allegorized here in the form of the male prostitutes.

Importantly, Hugh’s understanding of this love-hate changes after his encounters with Yvon, Pierrot, and André. Hugh realizes that while he came to La Place “to assault it,” he observes, “my assault has backfired. Strange. As though my open warfare procreates love out of hate. I’m not attacking the Square...I’m making love to it—even as I assault it” (187). At the conclusion of her essay, Sedgwick observes, “What we can best learn from such [reparative reading] practices are, perhaps, the many ways selves and communities succeed in extracting sustenance from the objects of a culture—even of a culture whose avowed desire has often been not to sustain them” (150-151). For Sedgwick (and, I would argue, Symons, as well) intertextuality offers evidence, “barely recognized and little explored,” of “reparative knowing” in LGTTBQ histories (Sedgwick 149). For examples of the latter, Sedgwick points to camp and its “juicy displays of excess erudition...the passionate, often hilarious antiquarianism, the prodigal production of alternative historiographies; the ‘over’-attachment to fragmentary, marginal, waste, or leftover products...the irrepressible fascination with ventriloquistic experimentation; the disorienting

juxtapositions of present with past” (150). While Symons work may not be camp, the antiquarianism and the erotic attachment to the material object (as well as the ventriloquistic narrators and temporal juxtapositions) recur throughout *Place d’Armes*—in fact, they are foundational to Symons’ poetics. At one point Hugh observes, perhaps coyly, “*I must have a love-hate relationship with Victoriana!*” (107), a statement almost Foucauldian in its implications regarding sexuality and expression. Reading Symons reparatively means that while contemporary queer critics may not want to take up his “mission,” we may still find aesthetic and political value in his alternative epistemologies and, especially, his literary forms for engaging with the nation, its laws, and histories—strategies that may be overlooked when reading through a strictly paranoid lens. As Hugh observes on the twenty-first day of his journal, “art is love—even an art of hate is love—the optimism of despair—creating despair in hope of hope” (361).

4. Bordering Obscenity in *Place d’Armes*: “A kind of sainting for sinhood”

While most critics note that *Place d’Armes* met with a hostile reception and was often *considered* obscene, less attention has been paid to the ways in which Symons uses obscenity as one of the central organizing tropes of the novel. The latter is achieved through metafictional strategies that allow Symons to both represent and comment upon objectionable material within the novel. Here, I use Hutcheon’s definition of metafiction as “fiction about fiction—that is, fiction that includes within itself a commentary on its own narrative and/or linguistic identity” (*Narcissistic Narrative* 1). The novel is also fiction “about” autobiography. Hutcheon has noted how postmodern literary strategies “[have] led to a general breakdown of the

conventional boundaries between the arts” as well as the division between fiction and reality. The blurring of art and life in postmodern fiction “marks a new move beyond the modernist novel’s need to assert its supreme independence and autonomy as art” (Hutcheon, *Canadian Postmodern* 78). Yet for Symons, a metafictional apparatus nullifies the taboo of representing, for example, sodomy in graphic detail, by ensuring the reader, critic, and potential censor recognizes the representation as ‘Art.’ At the same time, he ensures the maintenance of the line (between Canada and Quebec, forbidden and allowed representation, fiction and autobiography) by always drawing attention to his crossing it, through marking the gaps between the novel and the journal. In this section, I consider the ways in which Symons attempts to overturn definitions of obscenity by examining the novel’s thematic and formal elements, namely the textual borders produced through the journal and intratexts (maps, pamphlets, postcards) included in a pocket within the first edition.

For Symons, the attempt to self-censor is a kind of spectacle, never meant to succeed, and part of the novel’s larger project of inverting power relations in order to shatter bourgeois conventions. Symons draws upon the rhetorical strategy of paralipsis, or “The figure by which a speaker emphasizes an idea by pretending to say nothing of it even while giving it full expression” (Brogan & Halsall 877). In the many instances of potential redaction, Symons reveals both the problematic text (often as a ‘rough draft’ in the journal or novel notes) as well as the desire to remove it from the final novel; however, that indexing of objectionable expression results in preserving the obscene while also holding up to scrutiny the impulse to censor. Day Two provides an early example of Symons’ paralipsis. In the journal Hugh writes,

“These first days simply a first start. Completely wrong—the very opposite of what I wanted. Must eliminate them from Novel” (93). Yet the “Novel” includes not only this “first start” but a section entitled “The Day Before One” as well.

Throughout the text, Symons experiments with the temporality of redaction, lengthening or shortening the duration between the drafted speech act and its intended effect. In *Excitable Speech*, Butler follows J. L. Austin’s differentiation of illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts. Butler writes, “illocutionary speech acts produce effects” immediately, so that the moment of speech is also the consequence, i.e. ‘I sentence you to prison.’ In contrast, perlocutionary speech acts “initiate a set of consequences...but the saying and the consequences produced are temporally distinct” (17). Calls for censorship of pornography, for example, are perlocutionary speech acts (just because one calls for censorship does not mean the offending text is censored) typically based on the illocutionary argument that pornography’s consequences are bound to the moment of its representation, like hate speech (Butler 22). Perlocutionary arguments about pornography suggest, instead, that violent representations will cause violent actions in reality but at a moment distinct from the speech act. In the previous example from Symons’ novel, the narrator’s call for redaction is perlocutionary—the speech act (“must eliminate them from the Novel”) remains temporally apart from its consequences; however, because of the placement of the offending speech in the narrative, the consequence of the illicit speech has already occurred to the reader and the intended effect of the call for redaction is moot: we cannot un-read what we have read.

The duration between the ‘rough draft’ or offending episode and Symons’ call for its excision allow for moments of irony and critique. For example, Butler emphasizes the possibility of subversion in the spaces between speech acts and their effects:

Such a loosening of the link between act and injury...opens up the possibility for counter-speech, a kind of talking back, that would be foreclosed by the tightening of that link. Thus, the gap that separates the speech act from its future effects has its auspicious implications: it begins a theory of linguistic agency that provides an alternative to the relentless search for legal remedy. The interval between instances of utterance not only makes the repetition and resignification of the utterance possible, but shows how words might, through time, become disjoined from their power to injure and recontextualized in more affirmative modes. (15)

Although here Butler refers mostly to the gap between hate speech and its intended injuries, it is useful to consider the ways in which the gaps between Symons’ narrators alter the effects of the writing to be discarded. Symons writes in the space between process and product in order to critique not only the impulse to censor, but the very definitions of obscenity. Elsewhere, Butler writes, “The kind of speaking that takes place on the border of the unsayable promises to expose the vacillating boundaries of legitimacy in speech” (41). The latter suggests that it is the very boundary between acceptable and unacceptable speech that not only bars us from certain speech acts, but also allows us to point to the contingencies, what Butler calls

“the vacillating boundaries,” of obscenity. The maintenance of the line is central to Symons’ poetics of disclosure, as well. Considering that the novel frequently occurs on the edge between religious and sexual transcendence, a brief discussion of Bataille’s theory of transgression suggests why maintaining what Butler calls “the border of the unsayable” assists Symons’ project of national inversion.

Throughout *Eroticism*, published in France ten years prior to *Place d’Armes*, Bataille argues that transgression produces pleasure, in part, because a taboo always presents “a temptation to knock down a barrier” (48). Yet there is also a need to maintain the taboo, as it cannot be defeated anyway: “*The transgression does not deny the taboo but transcends it and completes it*” (63). Similarly, Bataille foretells Foucault’s critique of the repressive hypothesis when he notes that secrecy itself produces pleasure: “unashamed sexuality to sexuality with shame...gave birth to eroticism” (31). Indeed, Bataille argues that if we adhere to mores, we are “unconscious” of the taboo, “But in the act of violating it we feel the anguish of mind without which the taboo could not exist: that is the experience of sin” (38). Obscenity may also be made visible through its citation at border-crossings (quite literally, in the legal case discussed in my introductory chapter). In Symons’ novel, crossing the border between Ontario and Quebec begins an allegorical search for identity—of self and nation—a search for transcendence in sex and spirituality, “a kind of sainting for sinhood” as Hugh describes one of the male prostitutes (87). Hugh decides, in terms of Canada’s identity crisis, that “what we need is a national enema” over Royal Commissions (101); in fact, sodomy becomes the central means for achieving transcendence. Piggford notes that “[Hugh] realizes...that the only way for him and

other Anglo-Canadians to become completely masculine is to allow themselves to be sodomised by placing themselves physically in the passive, 'feminine' position in which English Canada has metaphorically placed Québec" (49). In the novel, sodomy and the taboo of the penetrated male body become inseparable from national border-crossings.

Yet sodomy in western culture has always been a sin about, and set beyond, borders. As the theologian Mark D. Jordan explains, sodomy has endured a long process of "abstraction" and "essentializing" that altered the word from the city of Sodom (importantly, a city *outside* Christendom) to one of its sinful inhabitants, to the essence of an act (sodomy) and finally the essential identity of one who performs that act (a sodomite) (161). Laws produced the language for speaking of previously unmentionable sins, but always in circuitous ways. As Jordan claims, "the immediate ground for abstracting the essence of Sodomy was provided by attempts to classify particular acts for the sake of punishing them" (41). Medieval penitentials include references to Sodom or Sodomites but such terms are "used both to conceal and to reveal," as one would need to know the referent to understand the sin (Jordan 42). Jordan argues that the penitentials discourage speaking of these sins "for fear of provoking them" which ultimately suggests that "their sinfulness, their unnaturalness, is in no way apparent. For some hearers, at least, a description of same-sex copulation induces not revulsion, but desire" (165). Giving "sodomy" a geographical name for an otherwise unspeakable act, the early church authors were attempting to police the space of transgression:

Of course, displacing a sexual practice by naming it geographically has its consequences. It sets boundaries not only on a practice, but on explanations for it. If the practice was invented elsewhere and imported, then it ought to be controllable by controlling the importation. It cannot be a possibility or temptation widely available to human beings. It needed to be invented before being transported.

(Jordan 7)

As I discussed earlier, Quebec nationalism of the 1970s incorporated, through constitutional amendments, gay and lesbian subjects; however, as Schwartzwald and Stychin discuss, homosexuality became a negative metaphor aimed at those Quebecers who supported federalism, with the latter viewed as a colonial contagion. As Stychin writes, “Those Québécois who support the Canadian federal system are constituted as passive, effeminate men,” allegedly corrupted in their youth, and indicative of an “old nationalism” within Quebec (25-26).

Indeed, as criminologist Patrice Corriveau points out in his comparative history of gay persecution in France and Quebec, “when socio-economic crises arise, the homosexual serves as a scapegoat to calm public opinion” (88). In the first half of the twentieth century, Quebec underwent rapid industrialization and urbanization in the period following World War II; in addition, the birth rate began to fall. The Quebec premier for much of this period, Maurice Duplessis, was “a great defender of the established order...and did not hesitate to use the judiciary, the police, and the legislature to combat the deviant minorities whom he considered dangerous and subversive” (Corriveau 91). Given its quickly rising population at mid-century,

Montreal, in particular, was a focal point of queer repression; in fact, Corriveau notes that mayor Jean Drapeau¹⁷ was elected to office, in part, by “promising to fight the scourge of homosexuality” (98). The Montreal Police were called upon to develop methods for locating and entrapping homosexuals, typically using “provocateurs...reminiscent of the use of *mouches* [snitches] in France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries” (Corriveau 98). Statistics indicate that arrests for “gross indecency” actually increased during the post-war period and only began to decrease around 1968, when the public debates regarding law reforms to decriminalize homosexuality began in Canada (Corriveau 97).

When it came to media representation of queer sexuality in Quebec, the repression was on par with the judicial climate. Corriveau points out that censorship of homosexuality in Quebec media went back to the nineteenth century, given church ownership of publications (96). Despite changes to media ownership in the twentieth century, censorship persisted: for example, publishing periodicals intended for a queer readership continued to be illegal until the Omnibus Bill passed in 1969 (Corriveau 96). The laws regarding sex acts and their representations were intertwined; thus, even if Symons’ novel had not been officially cited as obscene, it certainly piqued the majority of its readers in this repressive climate. In his introduction to the 1978 reprint of the novel, Buitenhuis notes that the book was greeted with “shock and anger” in 1967 and that “the intolerance of the reviewers

¹⁷ Of course, in Symons’ typically contrarian manner, Hugh praises Drapeau in his journal: “And Drapeau—M. le Maire—*is* a Man...the Montreal Man. The way none of my English-Canadian people are Man, in Ottawa...or even in Washington, for that matter (even Bobby Kennedy is just an understudy prick, so to speak). Drapeau is the Man-of-the-Town. So was [the previous Montreal mayor] Camillien Houde” (137).

seems to have been as much a political response [regarding Quebec] as it was a reaction against Symons' exploration of homosexuality" (n.p.). Symons' readers would consider him not only sexually perverse but also "nationally seditious" (Dickinson 81), given his impassioned defense of Quebec culture and his allegiance to the Quiet Revolution. The reaction to homosexuality in Quebecois literature and culture was similarly hostile. Aquin, for example, saw French-Canadian literature failing because it "overvalu[ed]...human situations that approach inversion" (qtd. in Schwartzwald 264). Schwartzwald explains,

For Aquin, the ease with which this ruse [representing deviant sexualities behind more acceptable stereotypes] was but a thundering proof of the identitary *underdevelopment* of the Québécois. He considered his compatriots to be inexperienced in "adult" love relationships, bereft of egos sufficiently coherent to enter into, and maintain, relations with the other. Their inability to distinguish between true and false *heterosexuality* signified an easy acceptance of the inauthentic that would become the incontrovertible sign of ontological alienation in a discourse that increasingly refigured the Québécois as a colonized subject. (264)

Not only were the laws governing sex acts and their representation interrelated, but also national—and cross-national—identity and sexuality were similarly conflated, and *Place d'Armes* sought to disrupt—and invert—both sides.

In *Place d'Armes*, crossing the Ontario-Quebec border allows Hugh to make otherwise illicit, even impossible, disclosures in another language. Hugh says to Luc

that he loves Old Montreal because it “forces [him] to flower” and then he notes “I could never say that in English you know...people would laugh! I want to communicate that in the novel” (97). Later, Hugh repeats the claim that only certain sentiments can be expressed properly in French: “I can’t say it in English, Luc...typically. But in French I can—‘j’incarne un énorme besoin du Canada français” (99). Elson argues that when Hugh makes claims such as declaring himself a “Canadian de langue française” he “not only establishes a relation to French Canada that is non-appropriative, respectful of its difference, and respectful of the ground of its attainments, but he cunningly-punningly situates his artistic project at the intersection of two languages and indirectly asserts a cultural entitlement to that Other” (“Introduction,” 25). Yet does merely speaking the language and living in Montreal for three weeks really give Hugh “all those additional forgotten attributes that are [his] by right as a Canadian de langue française” (96), *without* accusations of appropriation? In *Place d’Armes*, French is useful to Hugh insofar as it allows him to express aspects of himself that would be offensive, he presumes, to his fellow English-Canadians. Like the medieval scribes, casting sodomy over the borders of Christendom in their penitentials, Symons remakes Montreal as his own Sodom—but, as Martin points out, “Symons remains the tourist who can always go home” (208).

I must emphasize that while Hugh enjoys sexual encounters with men he does not consider himself, nor does he want to be, homosexual. On Day Eighteen, Hugh writes, “No—it is not the homosexual I want...it is the sentient man. A new kind of man. The man who thinks at the end of his fingertips. Like the homos...But I no more want to be mere homosexual than mere heterosexual” (301). While the meaning of

sodomy developed over centuries to join sex act and identity, Hugh wants to uncouple the association so that, as D.M.R. Bentley puts it, “‘homosentience’ is [Hugh’s] ideal, homosexuality a way into it” (127). Bersani emphasizes how “many gay men could, in the late ‘60s and early ‘70’s, begin to feel comfortable about having ‘unusual’ or radical ideas about what’s OK in sex without modifying one bit their proud middle-class consciousness or even their racism” (205). In Hugh’s novel, Andrew remains similarly averse to any one orientation: “**Andrew explained very simply that the problem was a simple one...he couldn’t see a woman if he couldn’t see a man if he couldn’t see a building [etc.]**” When asked if such a statement “necessitate[s] homosexuality”, Andrew replies, “**Homosexuality if necessary but not necessarily homosexuality,**” punning on the famous conscription speech of William Lyon Mackenzie King (211, bold in original). As Bersani observes, “While it is indisputably true that sexuality is always being politicized, the ways in which *having sex* politicizes are highly problematical” (206). Hugh believes that only being sodomized by French Canadians will truly “deconstipate” the nation he is trying to save; however, for such an inversion to work, both sides (Canada/Quebec, top/bottom) are reduced once again to conventional gender roles, with Quebec now in the active male position and English Canada effeminate and passive.

As Dickinson argues, Symons’ “‘textual nationalism’ is complicit with a kind of ‘sexual imperialism,’ the way in which, in order to rewrite ‘homosexuality’ (identity) as ‘mansex’ (mere activity), Symons repeatedly transforms all other differences (national, cultural, class, even architectural!) into fetishes” (Dickinson 93). Dickinson, following Goldie, Martin, and Piggford, points out that Hugh reduces

all of Quebec, allegorized by the French-Canadian prostitutes, to a rural essence. For example, Pierrot's unwashed body inspires the following passage in Hugh's journal:

oh at longed-for last this noble rot to cleanse me knowing how rightly
Moutarde de Dijon is gutted from the furrowed land while mere
Amurrican hotdogs are clotted with that quickblotted tang that kills all
taste of truth in Man so now I savour this sheer landmusk grateful that
Pierrot thighrides into me (91)

Pierrot's "landmusk" is natural whereas American men's "hotdogs" are, presumably, fake. The latter recalls the stereotype of the Quebecois as idealized agrarians following the British Conquest. As historian Guy Frégault argues,

During the years 1760-1763 Canada was not merely conquered and ceded to England; it was defeated. Defeat means disintegration... The Canadians, eliminated from politics, from commerce and from industry, turned back to the soil. If they came to boast that they were 'children of the soil,' it was because defeat had affected not only their material civilization but also their ideas. (qtd. in Dickinson & Young 50-51).

At one point in the exchange with Pierrot, Hugh describes being in "this Icarean Sea wherein Pierrot has engulfed us both" which ultimately reminds Hugh of Pieter Brueghel's *Landscape with The Fall of Icarus*. Pierrot-as-landscape, Pierrot-as-landscape-painting are similar commodities, and the latter is emphasized when Hugh pays him: "Give him his cinq piastres, plus un piastre parce qu'il est minuit passé, plus encore un piastre en souvenir de Pieter Brueghel (and his Icarus)" (91). By

writing Pierrot into the journal that will become the novel, Hugh reproduces his body once more as art; while Pierrot's presence in the text is part of Hugh's liberatory strategy, he is without voice or even any features which distinguish him beyond the narrowly defined Quebecois role Hugh/Symons envision. As Dickinson points out, Yvon, Pierrot, and André are described and behave so similarly they could be as interchangeable as Symons-Hugh-Andrew (93).

While Symons would likely never use the word, this *essentialism* regarding Quebec is largely the point, especially given the influence of George Grant's political philosophy on Symons' writing. In a 1980 diary entry recounting a visit to Grant, Symons calls him "one of the pre-eminent thinkers in Canada in my era—in my mind (and emotions) THE pre-eminent thinker and philosopher, bar none (McLuhan is a pop-thinker, compared with Grant; and Frye is a high dry intellectual *nun!*)" (*Dear Reader*, 184). Grant's *Lament for a Nation* was published in 1965, around the time of *Place d'Armes*' composition. In the essay, Grant analyzes the failures of John Diefenbaker's Conservatives and also considers the perceived threat of an increasingly commercialized American presence in Canadian culture. Grant argues that Diefenbaker's inability to recognize Quebec as a distinct society within Canada led to his inability to maintain the great popularity that had won him a majority in 1958. Diefenbaker failed to see that what Quebec in its distinctiveness offers all of Canada, in Grant's view, is an alternative to American commercialism and multinational corporations: "The only Canadians who had a profoundly different tradition from capitalist liberalism were the French Canadians, and they were not generally taken into decision-making unless they had foregone these traditions" (47).

In the most famous passage of his lament, Grant declares, “The impossibility of conservatism in our era is the impossibility of Canada. As Canadians we attempted a ridiculous task in trying to build a conservative nation in the age of progress, on a continent we share with the most dynamic nation on earth” (68). In Symons’ novel, Hugh notes the book without mentioning its title, but claims never to have read it: “...there’s that new book on Canada...lamenting our dead nation. Well, I’ve never dared read it. Because I’m simply a result of what it diagnosed. Why read it anyway? I know it all by heart already! That’s why I’m here” (101). Grant’s *Lament* then becomes a catalyst, or at least representative of the impulse, for Symons’ novel. Similarly, the novel’s epigraph is borrowed from LePan’s poem “Nimbus”: “Stranger, reconquer the source/of feeling/For an anxious people’s sake” (n.p.). In a highly romanticized representation of Quebec, one deeply connected to the land and its people, Symons “reconquers” his “source” in an attempt to conserve his own culture. However, just as transgression necessitates awareness of the taboo, embracing Quebecois culture from a position of power ends up revealing, perhaps even reifying, the difference of power between them.

The many inversions discussed here find expression in the novel’s journal form. As Cameron points out, Hugh sets out in his journal to collect the raw material that will inform his novel; however, he eventually realizes the limitations of the novel’s rationalizing form and the impositions it makes when translating experience. As Cameron notes, “Representing as it does a day-to-day account of the flux, the highs and lows, of his emotional life, the journal for Symons is a more honest account than the novel could ever be” (n.p.). While the journal is meant to be the private

working draft of the novel, it also becomes public through its inclusion in the ‘finished’ novel. Cameron argues that “although Hugh frequently comments that this or that entry into his notes or journal will be deleted from the novel” he ultimately determines the “apparently unstructured aspect of the journal form” best allows for the “ultimate experience” he seeks (n.p.). Yet, while certainly suggestive of an attempt to capture unfettered experience in language, these moments of possible redaction also indicate how the discourse of obscenity, and Symons poetics of disclosure, thread throughout the novel and largely depend upon the materiality of the text.

Even the assumption that Hugh’s journal was ever really private is questionable when Hugh recalls on Day Two how he purchased the book five years earlier in a Montreal shop. His companion points out to him the date of its production: “You’re a symbolist ... The date—1867!” Yet Hugh claims, he “hadn’t even noticed” which, given the laboriously detailed description of the journal that precedes this dialogue, rings false (68). The journal, a ‘symbol’ of Confederation, functions within the novel as a small-scale monument even before Hugh reaches the decision that his journal will eventually become part of the novel. After this interlude about purchasing the book, Hugh writes, “Stop yapping and write!” as if the memory of purchasing the book is yet another journal entry to be excised. At this moment he decides that he will keep the journal in duplicate form and mail it to Eric Newman (alias for LePan) because “he’ll see to it that it is published” (68). By Day Two, the private journal is already taking a public form, even if the narrators continue to debate among themselves about what will be kept or deleted. On Day Nine, Hugh realizes that by

writing the journal-novel, he is making public his private transgressions and, by writing them, now accepting them. He writes, “It makes my most obscene prior private acts seem detachable...Now I have a permanent conjugal involvement with life, though I am scarce ready for that yet” (185). Symons, through Hugh, emphasizes how writing makes obscene desires “detachable” or, in Butler’s phrase, provides “a loosening of the link between act and injury” (15). Writing, for Symons, does not only demarcate, then blur, the border between public and private but remains itself the borderline activity that allows for the rendering of transcendent experience into art in a continual process of transgression.

Thus, the formal slippage between the private and public text relates to the novel’s representation of homosexuality. Although its composition precedes the debates around the Omnibus Bill of 1968/69, the decriminalization of homosexuality was largely about changes to the spaces of sex policing. Before the Omnibus Bill, illegal acts such as “gross indecency” were illegal even if practiced in private (thus necessitating the use of informants, provocateurs, and entrapment schemes); the new laws decriminalized homosexuality between consenting adults *in private*—meaning that public spaces were still open to, and often witnessed, increased surveillance and policing (Kinsman 271). As Symons’ novel blurs the boundaries between fiction and autobiography, the text makes a useful case study for identifying textual disclosures between public and private representations of queer sex, and the attempts to reveal and conceal them simultaneously.

Perhaps the best example of Symons’ productive use of paralipsis, or a failed self-censorship, occurs on Day Twenty when Hugh awakes in bed with André. Hugh

realizes that André is stealing his wallet but instead of confronting him about the theft, he has sex with him, this time allowing André to penetrate him for the first time. With Hugh reaching the apex of his “mission” to penetrate La Place, the syntax begins to come further undone—reminiscent of the stream of consciousness and playfulness of diction in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*—and French and English comingle more frequently in the text, alongside Hugh’s neologisms:

André’s cock brushes my assmouth as eyeballs startle

“J’ai jamais fait ça...tu veux?” Broom brrrooom broom... “tu veux?”

cock bright at assoul

tu veux (323)

The entire ‘exchange’ between Hugh and André is an attempt by Symons, if ultimately an unsuccessful one, to overturn power relations between colonizer/colonized through inverting top/bottom sexual roles. To achieve this, Symons merges the cityscape with the sex act—elsewhere he coins the term “manscape” (89)—as Hugh looks out the windows of the room and describes the various streets and buildings. Then, his own body becomes the terrain of André’s sexual conquest, a reversal of the 1760 British Conquest of Quebec: “André’s hands clasp each buttress of my street and tongue high-tailing inner circuit thrusts in La Place of me deep” (326). Hugh’s body becomes allegorized as an Ontario being sodomized by Quebec:

And the rich furrowed earth of Brownstone covered in the smelt of snowseed is my Ontario land out the window of the Rapido as I left

my Other City a chastity ago...is my Ontario garden given and
 received in La Place...is the voice of La
 Balduc rampant Au Fournil, singing Le Petit Bonhomme au Nez
 Pointu. (328)

In this instance, ‘Upper Canada’ has become the bottom. Yet when they change positions, Hugh’s body is now the Rapido “trainbelling outside in, shunting freight to feed/our nation.” The latter recalls Day One when Hugh travels to Montreal from Toronto aboard “the Rapido—‘fastest commuter train in the world...360 miles in 4 hrs. and 59 minutes!’” (47). The train is a phallic symbol for Hugh’s overall mission to ‘penetrate’ Place d’Armes. The train is also inseparable from its symbolic function as a nationalizing technological force in Canadian history (cf. Harold Innis, *A History of the Canadian Pacific Railway*).¹⁸ As Hugh crosses over from Ontario to Quebec, he moves toward the geographical and historical source of both founding cultures—the Conquest—that he seeks to reclaim in Montreal’s central square. Indeed, Hugh says he wants to “fuck this little bugger...fuck back the money [André] stole...fuck this Canadien—fuck the French and Catholic out of him...and into me” (330).

Hugh has reasserted the dominant position (if only to, apparently, liberate himself) yet he realizes afterward that he had misjudged what André had wanted with his wallet to begin with:

¹⁸ As I discuss further in Chapter 3, the train as a sexualized symbol of colonialism also appears in Daphne Marlatt and Betsy Warland’s *Double Negative*. In the dialogue section, Marlatt writes, “[The train is] so often imaged from the outside as this powerful industrial monster whose rhythms and approach are seen as very much like the male orgasm” (108).

but it was wallet André filched, that I left empty
 (sperm treacles my rosegarden)
 checking wallet
 \$5
 Oh no that's wrong it was empty therewasn't
 any money in it all removed none at all \$ 5 \$
 Nonono mustn't be there, must not be
 Broom broom broom...tears smart the spermslip as my mouth
 belches silent laughter wracking my Place with roses
 André—our land—the man...donnant donnant
 Thank God. (332)

Once more, the French-Canadian “gives”—this time the hustler pays the “cinq piastres” to Hugh, the client. Although the staging of the sexual allegory prior to the latter exchange of money could be, potentially, a powerful if controversial way to demonstrate the ways in which bodily pleasure can be deployed to open and engage with painful histories, the final exchange of money—as if to invert once more the prescribed roles—ultimately forecloses any reversal by reifying Hugh as the dominant figure—he is both the one who takes and the one who receives the gift. A generous reading might suggest that André buying the attention of an Anglophone sex tourist gives him, at least symbolically, a form of retributive agency; however, even if one does not find the notion of a financially precarious young sex worker paying the client absurd, there remains the way Hugh ultimately likens André to the land: “our land—the man” (332). As Goldie and Dickinson argue, the use of the possessive

pronoun here is apt: André, an allegorical Quebecois, remains a colonized subject, reanimating the loss of the Quebecois' economic and cultural autonomy that historians such as Maurice Séguin and Frégault trace back to the Conquest, when the British removed the French colonial elite (Dickinson & Young 50).

The third-person narrator enters the text following this extended interlude with André and the rationalizing voice of realist fiction considers the night's events in relation to the novel being written:

Then he thought of the evening again...madness. He wouldn't use it for his book. Obscene, they'd say. Not that his book would be banned...it was Hugh who would be banned. Banned because he had declared his love...had had to find some mode of declaring it, had to, when everything else was closed in a closed community...Banned because he had dared name himself. Dared look his life in the face. Dared see. Banned because he knew Who he was. (334)

Not only does this passage foretell (perhaps even prescribe) Symons' own exile to Mexico upon the novel's publication, as well as the conflation between the objectionable text and the objectionable author, but it also reveals how Symons figures obscenity as a communal disclosure through truth-telling.¹⁹ Elsewhere, Hugh observes how "English Canadians' eyes when confronted with the obscene" suggest "evasive evasion of the obscene" (314). The moments of possible redaction voiced by the narrator show how the third-person narrator and the author of the journal are

¹⁹ Goldie points out that whatever else remains elusive or contradictory about Symons' gay politics, he does name himself as the author of the book—he is uninterested in the closet of a pseudonym (*Pink Snow* 119).

working, seemingly, at cross-purposes even if they are mirrored versions of the same Symons persona; however, the narrators ultimately work together to reveal both the obscene and the desire to conceal it while ultimately preserving the “mad” text. The border between the speech act of the journal and the call for self-censorship reveals the burden placed on queer subjects to disclose and redact, often simultaneously.

Throughout the novel, Symons’ narrators overturn the traditional understanding of obscenity: graphic depictions of queer sex are spiritually edifying while, for example, middle-class shoppers from Westmount are an “obscenity” (132). Symons suggests that both sides of the binary that obscenity produces—acceptable and unacceptable—are defined, even strengthened, by the opposite. On Day Three, Hugh eats dinner in a “sailor’s restaurant.” The third-person narrator observes, “The sailors eyed him as some obscenity—furtively taking him in, and he felt he was obscene. Not because of what he had done [sleeping with male prostitutes]. But because of what he was, and what he had never done. He felt hopelessly middle-classed, and his obscenity stemmed therefrom” (101-102). On Day Five, he eats with the sailors again and notes, for them, he is “as much of an obscenity as the [Quebecois] antiques are to the [Anglophone] Cubes. Curious reversal of roles” (132). Later on during his trip, sailors who “scent [his] obscenity” surround Hugh until “one of them eyes me for a quite different reason...and I chuckle. Tough titty, mack—I’m closed down today...battens screwed tight” (258-259). In the latter instance, his middleclass character remains the obscenity while whatever visual cues might mark him as queer to the cruising sailor are considered fondly by Hugh, and met with humour.

One further example of this inversion of obscenity provides a useful transition to considering the erotic boundaries of the book's physical design. Observing the Bank of Montreal in one of his many architectural surveys of the city, Hugh makes the following notes in the journal:

Detail: the doors either side of the building in front of me, #266—to the east of Molson Bank—the railings from sidewalk to door, they tell the tale. One a steep swerve of pliant brass, embracing the penetrant. Circa 1880? The other a toy—a ribbon of metal; you would never hang onto it! Circa 1950! The one commands the hand; the other amputates it, unfelt. Yet both are handrails. Which is the obscenity? Because one is. Both are? No—each defines the obscenity of the other, conversely.

(139)

Both handrails may be obscene because they are representative of what the other has shunned. The Victorian handrail is a symbol of the nation's past (and clearly Hugh's favourite) while the other is a weakened form, representative of the novel's present-day commercialism that has, necessarily, turned away from its heritage. In this passage, Symons offers a theory of obscenity that differs from arguing, for example, that the obscene simply breaks boundaries; in this case, an obscenity always needs its "[O]ther" in order to be defined, but the boundary is never fixed. As Bataille argues, no taboo and there is no transgression; thus, Symons pursues the edge on a "relentless search for transgression" (Martin 199). The Other is obscene, while the obscene makes the Other visible.

While obscenity takes on a broader and broader meaning in Symons' novel, as in the passage regarding the handrails, all objects maintain an erotic component for Symons, as he explores at length in *Heritage*. Objects are, in Symons' worldview, alive and able to give life. This erotic sense becomes apparent in the above quotation, when the tourist becomes a "penetrant," perhaps punning on the word "penitent" and further conflating sex and spirit in the novel. On Day Four, for example, Hugh recounts his trip to what he calls the "Flesh Market," a Quebecois antique shop, so named because he witnesses English-Canadian customers "drawing sustenance," as Briggs puts it, by running their hands over an armoire (81). Hugh writes in the journal, "'Sooo...that is it, Body and Blood. That is the reason for their presence here!'" (117). Not only does Quebec provide English Canada with an older material heritage the latter might re-claim from the former, but, historically, Quebec's linguistic and so-called ethnic otherness, as several thinkers have observed, allows English Canada to maintain a single, unfragmented identity (Stychin 19). Briggs argues that Hugh overturns the latter when he offers himself as "Host" in the communion scene that ends the novel: "It is only through this giving that he is made whole by being existentially open to all of the objects and people who surround him" (Briggs 84). Despite the novel being subtitled "a personal narrative," the text ultimately reaches outward—quite literally at the end of the novel. By the concluding communion scene, the metafictional structure consumes itself as Symons is writing Hugh writing Andrew writing Hugh:

**but still no one moved as he held his Host high up over La Place,
so that he knew that now there was only one possible solution, and**

taking the Host ate it alive till he embraced the Place and then turning to the first person he could see ran with his right hand outstretched, his forefinger out, to touch, to give this blood that spurted fresh out the open act as he ran to embrace them in this new life he held out at fingertip to touch they (397, bold in original)

That the novel ends, unpunctuated, on the third-person plural indicates Symons' desire not only to avoid narrative foreclosure but also to suggest a physical contact with his readers.

The materiality of the book's first edition, which included a pocket containing maps, pamphlets, and postcards, emphasizes the demand for touch. Stan Bevington, founder of Coach House Press in Toronto, designed the first edition and suggested the inclusion of the pocket materials. According to an interview with Bevington in *God's Fool*, he had visited Montreal after reading Symons' manuscript and became inspired to incorporate the found objects of the tourist, making the book resemble the nineteenth-century journal in which Hugh composes his notes. After Symons agreed, the writer went back and incorporated the objects into the text: "down thru city—Peel St—Dominion Square...Pick up tourist map, postcards" (65). The first edition's elaborate, antiquarian design emphasizes the novel as an *objet d'art* that circulates somewhat outside the mainstream publishing economy (even if it was first published by McClelland and Stewart.) More importantly, the novel's nineteenth-century design conceals the text's sexual explicitness; that is, by resembling an *objet d'art* the book circumvents potential censors, even as the book's aesthetic becomes fetishized within

the narrative. Martin refers to the pocket materials as “assemblages” that are “subject to constant manipulation...The various items, once removed from their pocket, have to be replaced, probably in an order different from the original order, and hence constitute a different text for each reading/handling” (206). Martin goes on to write that the items “[restore] the corporeality of the text” in that we touch what ‘Hugh’ has touched and by reading his words are similarly ‘penetrated’ by the experience. One is seduced by the pocket and what it conceals because, as Roland Barthes asks in *The Pleasure of the Text*, “Is not the most erotic portion of a body *where the fabric gapes?*” (9). Yet by penetrating the pocket, removing, and reordering the contents, the reader disturbs the ‘natural order’ of the text—the assemblage enforces an improper, even sodomitical, reading practice—a textual inversion to mirror the several thematic inversions discussed above. Moreover, as the reader picks the pocket of the book, we commit a metaphorical theft that recalls the central moment in the narrative when Hugh accuses André of stealing his wallet.

As Barthes writes, “It is obvious that pleasure of the text is scandalous: not because it is immoral but because it is *atopic*” (23), meaning out of place. Of particular note for a discussion of borders and obscenity, then, is the pullout map that reproduces Old Montreal, included in the first edition and over which “Hugh” has re-named various landmarks and establishments. The Lord Nelson monument becomes, for example, “Lady Hamilton’s Canadian Dildo.” Outside the orange “outer line” that Hugh has drawn to mark the frontier of the old quarter, an arrow points northeast marked “Eden Fuckingrock” for the bar, Eden Rock, where Hugh meets the first male sex worker, Yvon, on Day Two. Importantly, the bar exists outside Old Montreal’s

borders, as marked by Hugh. In contrast, Place d'Armes is marked by the red "inner line" which includes the Banque Canadienne Nationale that Hugh calls the "Brownstone Buggerbank." Hugh has his final transformative encounter with another prostitute, André, on Day Twenty in sight of the bank; thus, Hugh's mission reaches near completion when he is penetrated while penetrating La Place.

On Day One, Hugh describes how he will "*have to scout the quarter, foot by foot this next fortnight: reinterpret every map—translate them ... I'll have to devise my own map...prerequisite for safe encounter with Target [Place d'Armes]*" (66).

Later, Hugh situates himself in the city by marking the borders on the map:²⁰ "On earth, in North America, in the Dominion of Canada, in l'Etat du Quebec, in La Ville de Montréal, in the centre of the city, the old centre, by the side of the St. Lawrence" and the boundaries get smaller and smaller until "La Place itself, La Place d'Armes.....and within that again, of course—but that will have to wait" (73). Yet even the map and other tourist ephemera come under threat of redaction; they too are an obscenity to Hugh.

On the second day of the mission he approaches Place d'Armes but runs from it. Reflecting on the incident Hugh writes in the journal, "Idiot—because [Place

²⁰ This listing of ever-narrowing geographic points is perhaps another homage to James Joyce. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen Dedalus writes in the flyleaf of a textbook:

Stephen Dedalus
[...]
Sallins
Country Kildare
Ireland
Europe
The World
The Universe (12)

In Symons' novel, the order moves not from the specific to the cosmic, but to the cosmic *in* the specific: Place d'Armes.

d'Armes] looked you in the eye the way Yvon [the first male prostitute] looked you in the eye. It wanted you ... But I couldn't give me again. Not to La Place. Not that way" (93). Hugh equates the prostitute with La Place; though he wants a similar union with the square, which will be realized in the final communion sequence of the novel, he runs from it. Hugh blames the map and its impositions:

As I turn to bed I see IT—that map—that goddam tourist map...the fatal flaw...the moment of lack of faith, when I looked at it, instead of the reality, instead of the Object itself. Throw it out. Throw it out! Too late. Pick it up...and those abject postcards I wanton bought—I see it now—as substitutes, as mediators between me, and the Object Incarnate. Notre Dame Church, the old Bonsecours Market, La Place Ville Marie, Nelson's Monument, the Bank of Montreal²¹....Throw them out! No—insert them into Combat Journal. They are part of the Evidence...for and against. Ah—traitors! You betrayed me....You led me down the garden path—to smash against Eden Rock [the gay bar]. Well—you can stay now, to stand trial. Stick you in with the rest...over my marbled face. (93)

Hugh keeps the pocketed materials grudgingly; the reader is meant to understand that while the materiality of the text extends the novel's goal of an embodied celebration

²¹ The first edition included postcards or plate reproductions of the listed sites. There is also a 1960s tourist brochure for Place Ville Marie that promises a "magnificent view [that] extends over the city and harbour to the dramatic Expo 67 skyline ... Attractive, well-trained guides are on hand to answer all your questions" (*Place d'Armes* [1967 ed.]). On Hugh's map of Old Montreal he has drawn an arrow outside the boundaries, pointing south, marked "To Expo 69". The latter is both a sexual pun as well as a satiric reference to the fact that Montreal faced large delays—and great debt—in the lead up to Expo 67.

of Canadian heritage, it can never reproduce the lived experience of the actual “Object Incarnate” or the experience of “being lived by” La Place.

Symons’ use of the term “Evidence” in the above passage returns us to the topic of the law—indeed, the *topoi* of the law. By re-mapping Montreal “to include the hidden gay city” (Martin 201), Symons exposes not only national but also sexual boundaries and launches a queer assault on a city just coming to grips with a history of sexual repression via the church and hetero-patriarchal nationalist strategies. Yet while he penetrates the fortifications of Old Montreal, repeating the colonizing act of claiming and re-naming the land, he effaces boundaries by producing more borders: highly idiosyncratic and queer, the crossing of these new self-styled borders end up allowing, paradoxically, for disclosures Hugh cannot make at home.

5. Conclusion

In a June 1986 interview with Gerald Hannon for *The Body Politic*, Symons says he does not like the word “gay” but that he is “certainly a *devoted* homosexual. Nobody could doubt [his] credentials” (27). The latter equivocation reflects Symons’ nationalist politics in the late 1960s: a lover of Canada but also its self-professed “fugitive.” Symons and his novels have never ceased to offend and yet, perhaps because of his contrariness, he provides an early English-Canadian example of a pre-liberation queer poetics: an oppositional stance, a talent for staging spectacular transgressions, a discomfort with static identity positions—“I’m a cultural Tory who has voted NDP” (qtd. in Hannon 27)—and an insistence on formal innovation that also appropriates the forgotten objects of the past. The latter may be just matters of

style, as Martin rightly encourages critics to “be careful about estimating the power of [*Place d’Armes*] as a revolutionary agent” even if the novel “retains the frisson of the forbidden” (200); however, one goal of this dissertation is to consider how poetics make visible “the kind of speaking that takes place on the border of the unsayable” in order “to expose the vacillating boundaries of legitimacy in speech” (Butler 41). As Martin notes, “Symons’s textual play seeks to overturn the order more than to question order itself” (206-207), suggesting that even the “border of the unsayable” may be a politically limited space.

While *Place d’Armes* may not question the overarching cultural hierarchies it seeks to invert, the novel does question the meaning of obscenity; in fact, given its pre-1969 publication, the novel remains a useful case study for considering the ways in which an obscene text might simultaneously offer its own theory of obscenity. Not only does *Place d’Armes* reveal and attempt to overturn received meanings of the obscene, but its metafictional structure indexes the impulse to censor, and traces the possibility of redaction—what might be a *revelatory* redaction in the fully apocalyptic meaning of that word—on the page. The latter suggests why Bataille complements and illuminates Symons’ project. Bataille writes, “By introducing transcendence into an organized world, transgression becomes a principle of an organised disorder” (119). Symons’ border writing (imposing boundaries in order to breach others) provides one example of the “organized disorder” erotic transgression produces: the novel remains a fractured narrative in search of a unity that refuses to compromise the strength or essence of either side. In the following chapter, I turn to a discussion of the American-Canadian novelist Jane Rule. Though opposites in narrative form and

politics—aside from their commitment to the freedom of expression—Rule, like Symons, attempts to find an innovative structure, particularly in her writing of the 1970s, that allows her to represent the multitude of voices in a formative, if contentious, era of gay and lesbian activism.

Chapter Two

“The Only Lesbian in Canada”: Borderline Citizenship in Jane Rule’s *Contract with the World*

1. Introduction

The American-Canadian novelist Jane Rule (1931-2007) may be considered an example of what the legal scholar Brenda Cossman has called a “border speaker” (48), that is, one whose writing and activism takes her to the limits of legitimate speech without her “fall[ing] over the line...into the domain of the outlaw” (Cossman 48). Not only does Rule’s transnational citizenship imbue her fiction with narratives of border crossing, but her open depiction of queer lives threatens to cross the boundary of acceptable sexual expression as well (quite literally, as her books were held at the US-Canada border by Customs throughout the 1980s and 1990s). In this chapter, I consider how border crossing manifests in Rule’s fiction, essays, and critical reception in order to articulate her unique vision of sexual and cultural citizenship—a necessarily ambivalent or “borderline” citizenship that, while deeply critical of the state, also resists abandoning sociality altogether.

Both Rule and many of the characters in her novel *Contract with the World* (1980) remain borderline citizens—expatriates, draft dodgers, disappointed sojourners, artists, and queers—who are forced to work simultaneously within and against a nation-state that refuses to recognize their full membership. Continuing my argument that the discourse of censorship often incites cultural productions of itself, the chapter brings together Rule’s vision of sexual citizenship and her anti-censorship advocacy work as they inform both the ideology and aesthetics of *Contract with the World*. Set in Vancouver in the mid-to-late 1970s, the novel plays out the discordant

gender and sexual politics of the era in which Rule was a vocal participant. The narrative follows six emerging artists and writers in their early thirties as each comes to terms with their interpersonal and professional relationships, nationality, sexuality, and political commitments. The novel's form reflects the diversity of Rule's cast, as each of the novel's six sections is written from the perspective of a different character: "Joseph Walking," "Mike Hanging," "Alma Writing," "Roxanne Recording," "Allen Mourning," and "Carlotta Painting." Moreover, each part is written in the third person, often relying on free indirect discourse, except for Alma's chapter, which is written in a first person voice occasionally verging on stream-of-consciousness. The novel's form offers a nuanced representation of so-called alternative sexualities while resisting what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick calls the "minoritizing" view of LGBTTTQ identities (*Epistemology* 1). For Rule, various, even oppositional, desires and expressions of those desires must co-exist in order to sustain a politically viable sexual citizenship in the era not only of gay and lesbian liberation and its queerer afterlife, but in an increasingly globalized society allegorized in *Contract with the World* by a quickly changing Vancouver.

Yet perhaps the story of Rule and the censors begins three years before she was even born when, in the summer of 1928, the English publisher Jonathan Cape released Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*, widely considered to be the first extended fictional treatment of lesbianism, or "female inversion"²², in English. The

²² Hall was inspired by the sexological writing of Havelock Ellis, whose own *Sexual Inversion* had been banned in England in 1897 (de Grazia 170). Since its first edition, Hall's novel has included a very brief "Commentary" by Ellis, in which he emphasizes the text's "notable psychological and sociological significance," perhaps a preemptive strike against the censors (qtd. in Hall, n.p.).

novel would have a profound impact on Rule's awakening as a lesbian and development as a writer, and its fraught reception offers a historical parallel to Rule's own legal battles later in the twentieth century. When Rule first read Hall's novel at fifteen years old, she was "frightened" in a moment of self-recognition:

[I]n *The Well of Loneliness*, I suddenly discovered that I was a freak, a genetic monster, a member of a third sex, who would eventually call myself by a masculine name (telephone operators were already addressing me as 'sir'), wear a necktie, and live in the exile of some European ghetto. (*Lesbian* 3-4)

As Edward de Grazia details in *Girls Lean Back Everywhere*, a comprehensive study of literary censorship and Anglo-American obscenity law, Hall's novel was almost immediately banned upon its publication; however, Cape delivered the printing moulds to Paris, where the Pegasus Press soon began printing the novel, making it available once more to English tourists crossing the Channel (176-177). Like many obscenity trials before and after Hall's, including the Canadian cases involving Rule, the foreign printing of *The Well of Loneliness* actually spurred the novel's domestic trial, as British Customs seized a shipment of Hall's books upon its arrival in England. Though Customs eventually released the novel, the London police flagged the books as obscene and the publishers went to trial, ultimately losing their case (de Grazia 176-177). In a curious ruling, Sir Robert Wallace suggested that the novel's *lack* of explicitness proved its obscenity:

The court's view, which is unanimous, however, is that this is a very subtle book. It is one which is insinuating and probably much more

dangerous because of the fact. It is a book which, if it does not condemn unnatural practices, certainly *condones* them [despite the protagonist's suicide at the end], and suggests that those guilty of them should not receive the consequences they deserve to suffer....Put in a word, the view of this Court is that this is a disgusting book when properly read. It is an obscene book, and a book prejudicial to the morals of the community. (qtd in de Grazia 194)

While the novel was placed on Canada's list of banned imports, Hall's American publisher Covici-Friede went to trial in New York and won on appeal, even printing a special "Victory Edition" signed by Hall and supplemented with a proceedings of the trial (de Grazia 202). Like Rule's own fiction, for better or worse, Hall's writing and her reputation are inextricably bound to the legal and cultural discourse of censorship.

Indeed, there are several fascinating corollaries (and perhaps many more divergences) between the lives and writing of Hall and Rule. Both are expatriate writers: Hall moved to Paris in 1929 and, following the trial in England, disavowed her country, though she ultimately returned to England in the 1930s (de Grazia 195). Rule was born in New Jersey in 1931, educated in California and, briefly, in England, and ultimately emigrated to Canada in 1956, settling in British Columbia with her partner Helen Sonthoff and disavowing her American citizenship (Schuster 7). Both writers' fictions provide transnational narratives, as Hall's protagonist Stephen emigrates to Paris and many of Rule's characters crisscross the American-Canadian

border.²³ Like Hall, Rule's censorship battles largely centred on Customs detaining her books which, due to the publishing climate at the time, could only be published or reprinted in the US and England and imported back to Canada.

In her 1975 critical study *Lesbian Images*, Rule admits that while reading *The Well of Loneliness* allowed for an instance of sexual self-awareness, she remains critical of Hall's politics, noting the joy Stephen takes in serving England during the First World War as an ambulance driver and the relief she finds in serving God in church: "[Hall] worshiped the very institutions which oppressed her, the Church and the patriarchy, which have taught women there are only two choices, inferiority or perversion" (*Lesbian* 61). Rule's own relationship to the "institutions" of citizenship are much more complicated, especially given her early and ongoing commitment to anti-censorship activism and her belief, somewhat counter to the mainstream of early gay and lesbian politics, that sexual minorities should not be demanding the right to privacy, but rather for a space in public life. In one of her essays for *The Body Politic*, Canada's gay liberationist newspaper, Rule concludes, "Whether we like it or not, our

²³ The fiction of Hall and Rule even share a tenuous Canadian connection. In Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*, Stephen (a woman, though her parents named her after the son they were expecting) develops a friendship at eighteen with the Canadian Martin Hallam, who regales her with stories of the "mighty forests" of his home in British Columbia, and "that new country that was yet so old" (100). Stephen is disgusted when Martin professes his love for her, though they later reunite as friends in Paris during the First World War. Martin ends up falling in love with Stephen's lover, Mary, and believing she can never give Mary a proper life, Stephen orchestrates their union before committing suicide. Martin had told Stephen that he planned to take Mary back to Canada, what Stephen sarcastically describes as "a safe distance" (493)—free from both Stephen and, arguably, the queer enticements of Parisian nightlife that absorb Mary. Thus, Canada haunts the novel's tragic (and misogynistic) conclusion, representing an ideal wilderness to be conquered only by a 'properly' masculine hero. Stephen, though an accomplished rider and hunter, can never achieve true mastery over the mighty forest (or Mary) because of her so-called inversion.

sexuality isn't a private matter and the altruism of some good citizens hasn't changed the government's mind" (*Hot-Eyed* 65).

Yet Rule was personally familiar with the difficulties that could befall LGBTTTQ professionals who chose to live openly before anti-discrimination laws protected their employment. For example, Rule's first novel *Desert of the Heart* was published by Macmillan Canada in 1964 while she was teaching English at the University of British Columbia. The novel's depiction of a lesbian love affair between a university professor seeking a divorce and the young casino cashier that she meets in Reno threatened Rule's own employment, as she recalls, "When my reappointment as a university lecturer was challenged because of the book, my more liberal colleagues defended me with the argument that writers of murder mysteries were not necessarily themselves murderers; therefore it followed that a writer of a lesbian novel was not necessarily a lesbian. I was reappointed" (*Lesbian* 2). Such equivocations would cease in the following decade, as Rule became an increasingly public advocate for gay and lesbian rights.

In terms of her activism, Rule may be best remembered for her passionate and articulate testimony during the Little Sister's trial. As discussed in more detail in the dissertation's introductory chapter, beginning in December 1986, some of Rule's novels were detained by Canada Customs as they crossed the border into Canada en route to Little Sister's Book and Art Emporium, Vancouver's gay and lesbian bookstore. In particular, Rule's 1977 novel *The Young in One Another's Arms*, copies of Donna Deitch's acclaimed film *Desert Hearts* (based on Rule's *Desert of the Heart*), and her 1980 novel *Contract with the World*, first published in New York by

Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, were all seized at the border (*Detained* 16-19). In fact, Rule had not even been aware that *Contract with the World* was detained at the border in 1993 until the day before she gave her testimony at the BC trial (*Detained* 17).²⁴

The court transcripts reveal that like Hall's dangerously "subtle" novel of 1928, the difficulty of identifying the sexual politics of Rule's work seemed to make it *more* subversive to Customs agents. In the BC Supreme Court trial of 1994, Customs Commodity Specialist Corrine Bird was cross-examined by Joe Arvay, counsel for Little Sister's and the BC Civil Liberties Association. When Arvay asked Bird why she detained *Contract with the World*, Bird replied, "My colleague and I, when we saw that title, we actually didn't think that it might have a sexual theme... We were actually more concerned... that it might be hate propaganda" (qtd. in Stuart and Blackley 129). When Arvay pressed Bird on why she drew the conclusion the book was hate propaganda, she admitted, "[T]here's nothing there. But [the back cover synopsis] does discuss eroticism, so I continued to detain it to ensure that it didn't contain any sexually explicit material" (qtd. in Stuart and Blackley 129). Only when Bird's supervisor saw *Contract with the World* "among a pile of detained books" and recognized Rule's name as belonging to a "fairly mainstream author" was the novel admitted into Canada (Stuart and Blackley 129). In her own testimony at the same trial, Rule argued,

²⁴ When Vancouver's Arsenal Pulp Press inaugurated their "Little Sister's Classic" imprint, "reviving lost and out-of-print classics of gay and lesbian literature," one of Rule's detained books, *The Young in One Another's Arms*, was the first selection (Rule, *Young*, n.p.). Like the "Victory Edition" of Hall's novel, this edition of *The Young in One Another's Arms* includes a discussion of the book's critical and legal reception.

I have to carry a reputation created by this charge from which I have no way of defending myself. Every time this issue comes up, whether I were testifying in this trial or not, my name would come up over and over again as that woman whose books are seized at the border, and I have no defence against it. And I bitterly resent the attempt to marginalize, trivialize and even criminalize what I have to say because I happen to be a lesbian, I happen to be a novelist, I happen to have bookstores and publishers who are dedicated to producing my work. The assumption... that there must be something pornographic [in my writing] because of my sexual orientation is a shocking way to deal with my community. (qtd. in *Detained* 18)

In her testimony, Rule indexes how the influence of explicit censorship reaches beyond the Customs office or the courtroom to colour the reading public's pre-conception of both an author and her literary work; that is, censorship becomes detached from the specificity of a single legal citation and circulates both author and text beyond the mechanisms of the law within new discursive spaces. Yet even before her own books were implicated in obscenity cases, Rule advocated for the rights of the gay and lesbian press, particularly through her association with *The Body Politic*, where, starting in 1979, she authored her column, the provocatively titled "So's Your Grandmother."

While ostensibly a broad gay and lesbian publication, *The Body Politic* was predominantly written and read by gay men (Schuster 224). The gender politics of queer activism were so divisive at the time that Rule must observe in one essay, "I

would not like to count the number of times I've had to defend myself for writing for *The Body Politic* against the view that I should spend all my time on women's publications" (*Hot-Eyed* 114). In another essay entitled "Why I Write for *The Body Politic*," Rule responds to fellow middle-class gays and lesbians who were dismayed with her association with a sex-radical publication. Rule writes that some of her friends "really don't see how [she] can appear in a paper whose policy is to advertise and support sexual behavior which can only damage the homosexual image in the eyes of the majority and increase prejudice against us" (*Hot-Eyed* 64). Rule counters, "policing ourselves to be less offensive to the majority is to be part of our own oppression," and that "if the newspaper is found to be obscene, I am part of that obscenity" (*Hot-Eyed* 64). In the latter essay, Rule alludes to the court case that first inspired her column following a 1977 raid on the newspaper's offices—and the seizure of their subscription lists—after the publication of Gerald Hannon's controversial article "Men Loving Boys Loving Men." Hannon's article would embroil the newspaper in a five-year legal battle over obscenity charges in the Ontario courts during which time the Crown lost their initial case and two appeals.

As I will discuss in further detail, Rule directly draws upon the 1977 case in *Contract with the World*. In fact, what makes the Canada Customs seizure of this particular novel so ironic is that the text is largely concerned with the contemporary artist's commitment to political life, reconciling one's personal relationships and sexuality with an increasingly fractious Canadian society. Thus, *Contract with the World* provides a fascinating hinge between two of this country's most debated

LGBTQ censorship cases: the novel mirrors *The Body Politic* case as it was happening while becoming itself an exhibit at the Little Sister's trial.

2. "The Negative Guilt of an Ex-Patriot": Crossing the Border with Rule

In one of Rule's essays from the 1980s, she writes, "1954 was the last year I celebrated the 4th of July" (*Hot-Eyed* 198). By 1956, Rule was living in British Columbia with her partner Helen Sonthoff, both of them lecturing at UBC. Rule recalls, "I left the country, and for thirty years I have not marked the date" (204). While Rule would continue to travel to and from the United States, she considered herself a Canadian "by choice" (Billingham 262). Though strange literary bedfellows, one might compare Rule with her contemporary Scott Symons, the subject of the last chapter. Rule and Symons were both expatriate writers, but Rule differed from Symons by immigrating to Canada rather than seeking a way out of it; however, both used their fiction and essays to launch political critiques of the state (albeit with very different ends) from a culturally nationalist standpoint; moreover, both novelists continue to have unsettled positions in the Canadian literary canon.

Susan Bingham observes that Rule's "oeuvre resists easy categorization" because "much of her fiction was written and published at a time when the Canadian academy was seeking to legitimate itself and establish a distinctive voice" (262). If Rule's bi-national fiction made interventions into the mainstream of CanLit difficult, her sexual politics have often left her on the outside of feminist, lesbian, and queer studies as well. Bingham notes, "[Rule's] writing has frequently been castigated as apolitical, or perhaps as not political in the correct ways: her texts have been regarded

(variously) as too humanist, too assimilationist, and too realist at a time when (lesbian) literary trends favoured separatism, utopian role models, or postmodern linguistic experimentation” (262). *Contract with the World* was a particularly contentious novel in the feminist and LGBTTTQ press. In her review for the *Gay Community News*, for example, Karla Jay refused to consider the book as lesbian fiction because Rule focuses the novel’s first two sections on “unrepentantly heterosexual males” (qtd. in Schuster 234). The perceived failure of Rule’s writing to meet the demands of various constituencies—cultural nationalists, the avant-garde, lesbian-feminist activists—suggests another form of implicit censorship. Various boundaries—national, political, legal, sexual—have placed limits on Rule’s critical reception since she first began publishing in the early 1960s.

Not surprisingly, the politics of crossing national borders provides a recurring trope in Rule’s novels, short stories, and essays, particularly as border-crossing affects the reception and circulation of artists and writers. In *Contract*, the American-born would-be sculptor Mike leaves Vancouver after the dissolution of his marriage to Alma, who has come out as a lesbian. Earlier in the novel, he complains that Vancouver is a “hick town” (55) and that “nothing in [Canada] is ‘open’ to a Polack bouncer with an education degree and minus twenty cents in the bank. And even if it was, when you look at the shit the ‘experts’ call sculpture...If only I had *space*” (49). During his divorce, Mike drives down the west coast, stopping in Los Angeles. While he remembers being mistaken for a plumber during his only visit to the Vancouver Art Gallery, in LA he wears a suit when he visits galleries and does not present himself as an artist but “pass[es] himself off as a prospective buyer” (118), though he

ultimately finds “masquerading in the trappings of power [doesn’t] give him any” (119). Mike continues on to his family in Arizona and, abandoning sculpture, ends up working with his brother on a successful real estate venture “as soon as some details are sorted out with the Indians and the government” (128). While Mike’s narrative may be read as a critique of American imperialism, or the encroachment of global capitalism on contemporary art, Rule complicates the latter when Alma’s lover Roxanne, a talented sound artist whose regional art is largely rejected by Vancouver audiences and critics, attends a music centre in San Diego and only then learns to articulate her aesthetics (319). The narrator asks, “Did Canadians always have to go south of the border or across the ocean to learn how to talk?” (319). The question remains open and unanswered.

While financial and critical success may exist elsewhere, Canada often remains a welcoming, if fraught, sanctuary in Rule’s writing. In *The Young in One Another’s Arms* (1977), for example, a young, gay, African-American draft dodger who goes by the name Boy Wonder disrupts many of the assumptions held by the novel’s socially progressive characters. When Boy meets Ruth Wheeler, leader of the boarding house at the novel’s centre, he asks, “You a little bit crazy, or is Vancouver really the Promised Land?” (98). As Billingham points out, Boy’s migration to Canada, and Ruth’s support of Vietnam draft dodgers, evokes Canada’s history of the Underground Railroad (268), yet Boy consistently undercuts the easy conflation of Canada with freedom. Ruth is uncomfortable with the name Boy has taken for himself because of its racist legacy, yet he claims, sarcastically, “This way, everybody knows my name” (99). When Ruth encourages Boy to get his Canadian

citizenship he responds, “White folks is always wantin’ to be legal. No piece of paper ever goin’ to make me legal ‘less somebody wants it to, and somebody don’t” (116). When the municipal government marks the boarding house for demolition, Ruth’s group of outcasts move to Galiano Island, setting up a commune and running a restaurant together on the same land where Rule and Sonthoff lived for much of their lives. Only Boy points out the irony underlying their newfound freedom when he observes, “Wonder how many Indians and niggers is buried here” (150). Boy’s question suggests that the narrative promoting Canada as sanctuary is based on faulty national memory, what Rinaldo Walcott has called a “brutal forgetting” (vii). Boy’s sanctuary proves temporary when the police seek him as an illegal immigrant and criminal. He disappears at the novel’s conclusion, traveling from British Columbia to “the Ontario bush” where he changes his name to “Luther Baldwin” (217-218), perhaps an amalgam of Martin Luther King, Jr. and James Baldwin, the gay African-American novelist and essayist.²⁵ Boy might have escaped the United States, but he also resists conforming to the institutions of Canadian citizenship. Perhaps the latter is why Rule sets the novel’s final scene, appropriately, in the interstitial space of “the waiting room” of the ferry dock at Galiano, where Ruth meets another draft dodger seeking asylum, sent to her by “Luther Baldwin” (219).

In her short fiction, too, Rule engages with the ambiguities of transnational citizenship. In “My Country Wrong,” a story from the mid-1970s set in San Francisco

²⁵ Baldwin is a recurring presence in the novel. Elsewhere, Boy calls himself “a James Baldwin reactionary” as a way of coming out through literary allusion (Rule, *Young* 102). The latter is perhaps a reworking of a key moment in E.M. Forster’s *Maurice* (1913; unpublished until 1971), in which the titular character expresses his homosexuality by saying “I’m an unspeakable of the Oscar Wilde sort” (159).

during the Vietnam War, the narrator returning home wants to resist “the negative guilt of an ex-patriot” (*Theme* 141). As Billingham notes, “ex-patriot,” rather than “expatriate,” emphasizes “an active rejection of allegiance to the country of origin” (264). Unlike the characters in *Young*, who are living the reality of life on the other side of the forty-ninth parallel, the potential draft dodgers in “My Country Wrong” still assume that Canada offers a simple sanctuary. As one character boasts, “They’re not going to get me...As soon as I get my degree, I’m going to Canada” (*Theme* 146) and another wistfully considers, “I think about getting out, going to Canada, but there’s not much for me [there] yet” (*Theme* 150). Rule complicates such assumptions when she points out the irony that even if gays and lesbians wanted to join the American army or work in the war industry, they are excluded from participating in that particular institution of citizenship through gender or sexual orientation. Lynn, the narrator’s friend, identifies the problem of gaining security clearances: “When the security people come to ask me about friends I had in graduate school, they ask two questions: is he a homosexual and has he ever been to a psychiatrist” (*Theme* 150). Such ambivalence regarding patriotism threads throughout nearly all of Rule’s portrayals of transnational citizens.²⁶ Neither the United States nor Canada is the Promised Land; in Rule, the nation-state promises nothing at all.

²⁶ In Rule’s penultimate novel, *Memory Board* (1987), the US-Canadian border provides a gateway to sanctuary, yet this time the migration occurs in reverse. Elderly siblings David and Diana, along with Diana’s partner Constance, who suffers from dementia and memory loss, travel from Vancouver to California’s Salton Sea. Years earlier, Diana and Constance had vacationed there, though the memory is lost to Constance. Nonetheless, the desert provides a physical release:

Diana could hardly believe how agile she was as she got out of the car and nearly strode into the store. Her liberated body was still connected to Constance by a taut string, but she was a kite in the sweet desert air,

Indeed, a prolific essayist who tempers optimism with keen skepticism, Rule presents a range of opinions regarding the border that change and develop throughout her career. In the essay “Border Crossings,” first published in the early 1980s before the Customs seizures, Rule describes an encounter she and Sonthoff had at American Customs. The immigration officer, noticing the women live at the same address, asks, “Are you two related then?” and Sonthoff replies, “No...Just *very* good friends” (*Hot-Eyed* 83). Though Rule observes that she is aware of “reports of harassment at borders, particularly the American border” (*Hot-Eyed*, 84), she notes that they are sent on their way without further trouble. On the return to Canada, the immigration officer turns out to be a gay man who recognizes Rule and waves across the office at Sonthoff, waiting in another line:

“Who was that?” [Helen] asked [afterward].

“A gay brother.”

“Beautiful Canada!” Helen said. “Isn’t it wonderful to be home?”

(*Hot-Eyed* 84)

Rule concludes her essay by noting that while she has received literary awards and recognition in the States, “[I]t is obvious that lessons, at our borders anyway, are being better learned in Canada” (86). The latter anecdote regarding Canadian Customs and Immigration provides an intriguing contrast with an essay Rule would contribute to the *Index on Censorship* a few years later. Writing in 1990, Rule

not a fish straining into the hurting dark. She could hurry. She could be extravagant. (216)

Rule’s mapping of the desert as a site of physical liberation recalls the way Nevada is figured in her first novel, *Desert of the Heart*, as a utopic space of lesbian eroticism, which I discuss at greater length in the next chapter.

reflects, “Canada is not as homophobic as either England or the United States... But at the borders of my own country, my books are subject to special customs surveillance if they are being sent to gay bookstores in Canada” (“Lesbian literature” 10). Rule connects the border issue to implicit censorship of Canadian women’s writing more broadly, through its relative absence in secondary and university curricula, publishing houses, and bookstores. The problem is exacerbated for a lesbian *and* Canadian author as she notes that when attempting to publish *Desert of the Heart* in the 1960s, “the Canadian audience for Canadian novels was so small that publishers had to find either an American or British publisher for a joint venture” (“Lesbian literature” 10). Both of the latter essays reveal Rule’s tempered Canadian nationalism—Canada may be less homophobic in Rule’s eyes, but the state silences lesbian expression in other, perhaps more cunning, ways.

Rule’s discussion of the difficulties of publishing Canadian fiction in Canada recalls the emerging artists in *Contract with the World*. Pierre, the partner of a successful Canadian photographer, tells Alma,

“[T]he most successful gallery in Vancouver [is] one nobody ever hears of because it doesn’t handle anyone local, only the international giants. There are no opening nights. The place isn’t even open to the public during the day. Investors make appointments and fly in from Montreal and Toronto, even from Los Angeles and Houston and Atlanta.” (159).

The gallery suggests a visual corollary to the problems of literary distribution Rule discusses in her essay for *Index on Censorship*. Allen, the most financially successful

of the group, refuses to identify as an artist for most of the novel, despite “accepting more and more American and European assignments” (56). Later in the novel, Allen tells Alma, an aspiring writer, “Freedom is *money*, Alma, not art” (185). Yet the question remains, for Alma as for Rule, how does an LGBTTTQ Canadian writer advocate for political or social change within the nation-state when those national and sexual categories (*queer/Canadian*) are indeterminate, transitory, or perhaps even mutually exclusive?

3. Theorizing Borderline Citizenship

In 1994, the same year Rule testifies at the Little Sister’s trial, queer theorist Lisa Duggan writes, “It is time for queer intellectuals to concentrate on the creative production of strategies at the boundary of queer and nation—strategies specifically for queering the state” (“Queering” 3). Rule had been negotiating such a boundary for at least three decades by that point, and both her fiction and essays form an archive of texts that offer us several strategies for sexual citizenship. Yet it is important to consider first how Duggan’s injunction for scholars to “queer the state” points to the fact that there *was*, and *is*, a “boundary” between “queer and nation,” a line that has blurred, opened, closed, or moved for various LGBTTTQ subjects in the intervening decades. Ten years after “Queering the State,” for example, Duggan would introduce the concept of “homonormativity,” a term that articulates a new political borderland where neoliberalism and LGBTTTQ rights discourse meet:

[T]he new homonormativity...is a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds

and sustains them, while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption. (*Twilight* 50)

With the passage of same-sex marriage and other laws, “the homosexuals have arrived,” as Walcott puts it (vii). Indeed, building on Duggan’s work, Jasbir K. Puar’s *Terrorist Assemblages* offers a critique of “homonationalism,” a form of “sexual exceptionalism” that allows *some* gay and lesbian subjects to be folded into the nation (through whiteness, class mobility, same-sex marriage and military inclusion, for examples) while excluding trans or racialized others from that same national belonging. Puar writes, “While liberal underpinnings serve to constantly recenter the normative gay or lesbian subject as exclusively liberatory, these same tendencies labor to insistently recenter the normative queer subject as an exclusively transgressive one” (22). The boundary, then, between “queer” and “nation” continues to be drawn (and re-drawn).

Scholarship on sexual citizenship frequently returns to this conflict between transgression and inclusion, often settling upon the ambivalence familiar in Rule’s political essays. Sexual citizenship is itself an ambivalent concept, as citizenship has been traditionally reserved for the public realm and sexuality for the private. Jeffrey Weeks defines the “sexual citizen” as “a hybrid being, breaching the public/private divide which Western culture has long held to be essential” (36). Weeks argues that the social revolutions that produced the sexual citizen, such as gay and lesbian liberation, may be temporally defined by a “moment of transgression” and a “moment of citizenship” (36). Transgression for Weeks is a process of “constant invention”

which challenges those “inherited institutions and traditions” that keep sexual minorities from full inclusion within the nation-state (36). The public demonstrations of Queer Nation, such as kiss-ins, for example, “use[d] alternating strategies of menace and merriment...[to] conquer places that present[ed] the danger of *violence* to gays and lesbians, to reterritorialize them” (Berlant & Freeman 155). Yet Weeks’ transgression is neither Michel Foucault’s with its temporal detachment, “incessantly” returning to “the horizon of the uncrossable” (“Preface” 34), nor is it aligned with Georges Bataille, discussed at greater length in the previous chapter, for whom transgression is “organised disorder” (119). In Weeks’ model, transgression is not recursive but linear, with a fixed end-point: citizenship. He argues,

The aim of such carnivalesque displays, whether conscious or not, is to challenge the status quo and various forms of social exclusion by exotic manifestations of difference. Yet contained within these movements is also a claim to inclusion, to the acceptance of diversity, and a recognition of a respect for alternative ways of being, to a broadening of the definition of belonging. (37)

Transgression demands citizenship, Weeks claims, because without it, “difference can never find a proper home” (37). Yet inclusion as the natural end-point of transgression proves problematic when belonging, particularly within the nation-state, is anything but inevitable for those subjects who cannot fold their difference into an acceptable way of life, or choose to resist such liberatory strategies.

David Bell and Jon Binnie argue that Weeks’ emphasis on citizenship as transgression’s “home” resituates citizenship within the private sphere, which can

“render it vulnerable to other, unintended forms of political interrogation and intervention” (32). Particularly at the crossing of national borders, which “serve many purposes in defining citizenship” (Bell & Binnie 110), those LGBTTTQ subjects who find themselves unable to, in Weeks’ terms, “transcend the limits of the personal sphere by going public” (37), will ultimately be denied belonging by those very mechanisms of citizenship which legitimate or delegitimize behaviour at the public/private limit. In the introduction to their recent volume *Disrupting Queer Inclusion: Canadian Homonationalisms and the Politics of Belonging*, OmiSoore H. Dryden and Suzanne Lenon argue, informed by Puar, that we must “disorder, unsettle, and disturb such facile binaries of the liberal ‘good gay’ and the radical ‘bad queer’ by speaking to the complicated and uneven relationships between exclusion and belonging, complicity and community.” Such a critique, they observe, “engages uncomfortable places and spaces of flux, fluidity, and instability while grappling with the tenuous nature of inclusion, (un)belonging, (dis)location, and home” (5). How, then, might a critical mode of sexual citizenship operate in such a necessarily uncertain space?

In *Sexual Citizens*, Cossman usefully conceptualizes the border as a metaphor for articulating sexual citizenship, “an ambivalent practice, simultaneously subversive and disciplinary” (9). She writes of gays and lesbians as subjects “in the process of becoming citizens, a complex and uneven process of crossing borders, reconstituting the terms and subjects of citizenship as well as the borders themselves” (9). Though we often speak of crossing borders in terms of recognition, Cossman argues such crossings are also moments of refiguring, as queer subjects are “reframed within the

privatizing, domesticating, and self-disciplining discourses of contemporary citizenship” (23). Cossman’s discussion of censorship is particularly productive as she views the regulation of speech as a process of creating new borders which, over time, allow “a broader range of representations to cross into the realm of legitimate speech” (45). Cossman draws upon, and extends, Judith Butler’s concept of “speakability” in *Excitable Speech*. In the latter, Butler frames speech in spatial terms, as a “domain...governed by prevailing and accepted versions of universality.” She goes on to ask, “What will constitute the domain of the legally and legitimately speakable?” (88). Cossman expands Butler’s term to consider what she calls “border speakers,” or those “subjects who speak at the borders of legitimate, rather than utterable, speech” (48). For Cossman, speakability is a border marking “the contested lines between legitimate and illegitimate speech,” which also “produc[es] legitimate and illegitimate subjects, citizens, outlaws, or something in-between” (48). In this view, censorship not only legitimates certain forms of speech, but certain kinds of citizens.

For Cossman, “border speakers can cross the lines into legitimate citizenship and reconstitute themselves in the language of sexual citizens, while others cannot. Those who cross do so by respecting the existence of the border” (68). The latter differs somewhat from Weeks’ teleological model in which sexual citizenship arises from transgression because, in Cossman’s framework, as in Bataille’s, the border must remain:

Border speakers may push the borders or cross the borders, but they cannot dissolve them, for it is borders that produce them as legitimate

citizens, or not. The self-disciplining citizen needs an unruly subject against which to emerge, an obscenity against which it can be produced as normal. (68)

Borrowing Cossman's model of sexual citizenship, I suggest that Rule is a border speaker, or a borderline citizen, who carefully negotiates the uneasy limits between nations, feminisms, and queer politics, advocating for change within the nation-state, rather than against it, while refusing many of its privileged institutions (such as same-sex marriage.) Through her writing and her testimony, Rule emphasizes the need to preserve a multitude of contrasting, even conflicting, expressions of sexual citizenship.

Storytelling, in particular, recurs in the critical discourse around sexual citizenship. Weeks, for example, suggests that new forms of sexual belonging are "cultural creations" or "fictions, individual and collective narratives which we invent to make sense of new circumstances and new possibilities" (46). Like Rule's writing for *The Body Politic* and her testimony at the Little Sister's trial, these stories of sexual citizenship "place new demands on the wider community for the development of more responsive policies" (Weeks 47). In *Intimate Citizenship*, Ken Plummer similarly calls for "more cooperative ways of talking" (72) that also recognize "a plurality of multiple public voices and positions" (71). We might consider, briefly, Rule's testimony at the Little Sister's trial as one form of storytelling. As Lauren Berlant notes in her theorization of "diva citizenship," personal testimony is closely related to the literary genre of autobiography:

Diva Citizenship occurs when a person stages a dramatic coup in a public sphere in which she does not have privilege. Flashing up and startling the public, she puts the dominant story into suspended animation; as though recording an estranging voice-over to a film we have all already seen, she renarrates the dominant history as one that the abjected people have lived *sotto voce*, but no more; and she challenges her audience to identify with the enormity of the suffering she has narrated and the courage she had had to produce, calling on people to change the social and institutional practices of citizenship to which they currently consent. (Berlant 223)

Drawing on the case of Anita Hill and other examples, Berlant compares the role of the witness to that of the autobiographer who must always “negotiate her specificity into a spectacular interiority worthy of public notice” (244-245). Like the sexual citizen inhabiting the public/private borderline, the diva citizen is contradictory or ambivalent, as she is both “exemplary” of the community she represents but also “distinguished...from the collective stereotype...and at the same time, she is also read as a kind of foreign national, an exotic representation of her alien ‘people’ who reports to the dominant culture about collective life in the crevices of national existence” (245). Rule was doubly “foreign” in this country, American-born and a lesbian, and often quipped that after the publication of *Desert of the Heart*, the media seemed to consider her “the only lesbian in Canada” (Cole n.p.). The latter phrase implicitly parses Rule’s antagonistic relationship to the nation-state, as she does not, importantly, refer to herself as “the only *Canadian* lesbian.”

If Rule is a borderline citizen, she is also a diva citizen, revealing the trace of the nation's regulation on both her private and public life. The diction she employs in her testimony suggests the weight of the law on her body. When she observes that there are more people who know that *The Young in One Another's Arms* was detained at Customs than those who know it was awarded the Canadian Author's Association Award, she observes, "And that is what I have to carry. I have to carry a reputation created by this charge from which I have no way of defending myself" (*Detained* 18). As Berlant writes, "sexual knowledge derives from private experiences on the body and yet operates as a register for systemic relations of power; sexual knowledge stands for a kind of *political counterintelligence*" (245, emphasis added). By the end of her testimony, Rule shifts from speaking of her personal experience into the third-person plural, inhabiting the borderline between the queer 'nation' and Canada: "We are a community speaking with our passion and our humanity in a world that is so homophobic that it sees us as nothing but sexual creatures instead of good Canadian citizens, fine artists, and brave people trying to make Canada a better place for everybody to speak freely and honestly about who they are" (*Detained* 19). The latter suggests a form of strategic essentialism that allows Rule to bind, temporarily, a divisive LGBTTQ community into a cohesive—and recognizable—political agent *for* Canada.

Berlant notes that diva citizens "insist on representing the continuous shifting of perspectives that constitute the incommensurate experience of power where national and sexual affect meet" (245). Similarly, in his call for "more cooperative ways of talking," Plummer imagines modes of speaking "that are messier, less linear,

and more emotional than the rationalist models championed in the past. We will need to become more aware of the distinction between the *forms* of talk and the *contents* of talk” (73). In some ways, Plummer seems to desire a poetics of disclosure. Indeed, when he asks, somewhat rhetorically, “[W]here can we find generally accessible spaces where roughly ‘equal’ voices can speak, debate, and deliberate in a fairly constructive, concerned, and public manner about what does go on, and indeed should go on, in personal life?” (73), literature might provide one answer. Certainly in Rule’s writing, and particularly in *Contract with the World*, fictional narrative becomes a way of formalizing (in the aesthetic sense) diverse expressions of sexual citizenship. Yet as an avowed social realist (Strobel 299), Rule’s fiction remains deeply woven into the contemporary socio-political moment of its composition, echoing the divergent voices of its time.

4. The Summer of ’77: *Contract with the World* in Context

In her testimony at the Little Sister’s trial, Rule argues for the importance of understanding social context when assessing a literary text:

As scholars and critics, we try to read a book and let the book dictate how we will deal with it... We try to ascertain the intent of the novelist if we’re dealing with a novel, not only the artistic intent, but often the social intent, the insights that the novelist calls to our attention.

Therefore, we don’t, if we’re good critics, fault Jane Austen for not dealing with the French Revolution. (*Detained* 5)

While Rule's comment risks falling into the New Critics' critique of the intentional fallacy²⁷ here she is referring specifically to the assessment of books for their potential obscenity, where intention divides literature from pornography (though, as I discuss in the introductory chapter, attempts at policing the limits of each genre are fraught with ideological pitfalls). While authorial intention remains unknowable, or undesirable, as a realist novelist who mirrors the turbulent sexual politics of her era, Rule and her writing must be understood within their socio-historical context.

Contract with the World is a fruitful case study for examining the productive-discursive nature of literary censorship because it was Rule's first novel to directly engage with LGBTTQ politics (Schuster 224) and much of its narrative can be traced to an especially formative moment in queer Canadian history: 1977.

That year, Anita Bryant's "Save the Children" campaign had successfully overturned a gay rights ordinance in Dade County, Florida that was intended to protect gays and lesbians from housing and employment discrimination. Bryant, the singing spokesperson for Florida Orange Juice and an evangelical Christian, started Save the Children in order to make it illegal for gay men (who, she argued, were all pedophiles) to work as teachers, as she believed they were using the schools as "recruitment sites" (Graydon 326). Not only was Bryant's campaign successful in overturning the Miami ordinance by a wide margin, Save the Children went on to block anti-discrimination ordinances in three other American cities, capitalizing upon the heightened fears of a post-war sex crimes panic as well as the increased attention

²⁷ In their influential essay "The Intentional Fallacy," W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley argue that "the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art" (201).

on child pornography in the 1970s (Graydon 327). In Canada that August, the Ontario Human Rights Commission had just delivered its first recommendation that “sexual orientation” be added to the human rights code when, four days later, the body of twelve year-old Emanuel Jaques was discovered on the roof of a Yonge St. body rub parlour (Graydon 314).²⁸ Jaques, a Portuguese-Canadian who had been selling shoeshines on Yonge St., had been sexually assaulted and murdered by three men. Toronto’s gay community bore much of the city’s scorn for the murder, especially after Bryant visited Toronto the following January as part of her campaign (Koul n.p.). Yet the influence of Save the Children had already crossed the border, as many newspaper commentators supported the change to the human rights code as long as legal precautions were in place so that Ontario school boards could prevent gay men, specifically, from teaching (Graydon 314).

In the midst of these intersecting events, *The Body Politic* published Gerald Hannon’s article on adult-child relationships, “Men Loving Boys Loving Men.” The article profiles three men in sexual relationships with adolescent boys as young as twelve. While merely the contents of Hannon’s article would be controversial, his formal choices no doubt contributed to the backlash as he eschews any journalistic objectivity by blending reportage with the editorial and the personal essay, even participating in a camping trip with some of his subjects. Hannon carefully parses the difference between consensual sex and molestation (though he neither defines consent, nor allows that consent might operate differently in relationships with an uneven distribution of power). Hannon concludes the article by arguing that Bryant’s

²⁸ Anthony de Sa revisits the murder and its impact on Toronto in his 2013 novel, *Kicking the Sky*.

hate tactics may be the true molestation of gay children (159). In the editorial collective's preamble to Hannon's article, the editors attempt to situate the socio-legal context of his writing, noting the rampant success of the Save the Children campaign, and the fact that the age of consent for gay men in Canada (twenty-one) was higher than for straights (eighteen), as well as the fact that gay and lesbian parents were routinely losing custody of their children in divorce cases based solely on the matter of sexual orientation (Hannon 147). The editors observe, "The decision to run the article was not taken lightly nor without debate within the editorial collective. We have had it on hand, typeset and laid out, for nearly six months, but we have hesitated, sensitive to the feeling that 'the climate was not right'" (Hannon 148). The editors' anxiety proved correct when, in December 1977, the article was negatively discussed in two *Toronto Sun* columns by Claire Hoy and the offices of *The Body Politic* were raided on December 30th, with charges filed a week later: "Use of the mails for the purposes of transmitting or delivering anything that is obscene, indecent, immoral or scurrilous" (Jackson and Persky 146). In addition to the newspaper's manuscripts and correspondence, the police seized all lists with the names and addresses of subscribers. While *The Body Politic's* editorial collective, including Hannon, were acquitted, the Ontario Crown attempted two more appeals over five years which also failed, though cost the newspaper over \$60, 000 in legal fees (Jackson and Persky 147).

The obscenity case, which began in January 1979, brought considerable attention to *The Body Politic* and even gained the periodical the support of mainstream public figures like Margaret Atwood and June Callwood, who were

among those who signed a *Globe & Mail* ad in support of the newspaper (Rule, *Hot-Eyed* 65). Not surprisingly, the article received an array of letters to the editor, including one from Gayle Rubin in March 1978, who praises the publication for “get[ting] the rest of us to understand our biases, so that we may better defend each other” (Jackson and Persky 160). That year, the newspaper risked further censure by re-publishing the original essay alongside articles by Hannon’s critics and other interlocutors, including Rule. In “Teaching Sexuality,” Rule offers some much-needed nuance to the debate:

The choice is not really between child-rape and chastity into late adolescence, nor is it between perversion and orthodox heterosexuality. We do have the further option of accepting our own sexuality and therefore that of our children as a complex blessing which we and they must learn neither to exploit nor deny but to enjoy with sensitivity and intelligence. (“Teaching” 164)

While Rule may not have agreed with Hannon’s argument in full, writing that the article had “posed hard political questions for [her],” she continued to adamantly defend *The Body Politic*’s right to editorial control (“Teaching” 162). In fact, in an act of solidarity, Rule agreed to pen her column, “So’s Your Grandmother,” until the end of *The Body Politic*’s trials, another example of how censorship often proliferates an abundance of discourse (Billingham 262).

As I discuss at greater length in the next chapter on Daphne Marlatt and Betsy Warland, the late-1970s and 1980s were a particularly fractious era in LGBTTTQ politics, especially around the issues of pornography and censorship, with lines often

being drawn between queer and feminist camps. Rule, ever the “hot-eyed moderate,” navigated many of these debates in her writing for *The Body Politic*, arguing in an essay simply titled “Censorship,” that “one of the basic failures in recent debates in *The Body Politic* about pornography and censorship is some women’s inability to see that censorship won’t work and some men’s inability to see that pornography is as important an issue as, and separate from, freedom of expression” (*Hot-Eyed* 125). In “Sexuality in Literature,” perhaps her most revealing statement of aesthetics, Rule, anticipating Butler’s argument in *Excitable Speech*, writes, “Pretending self-righteously violent men do not exist will not make them go away... Entirely censored, they are given a different sort of freedom to exist in secret” (*Outlander* 152).

Yet when it comes to the regulation of literary expression in Canada, Rule was acutely aware of the differences between implicit and explicit forms of censorship. In “Fucking Pariahs on the Schoolroom Shelf,” she describes the “ironic consolation” that while “friends like Margaret Laurence and Alice Munro battle with the would-be book banners over the inclusion of their work in the school curricula... nobody has ever suggested my books be read in schools in the first place” (*Outlander* 199). As she demonstrated in her testimony at the Little Sister’s trial, Rule is particularly adept at strategically binding ‘mainstream’ and queer political concerns. In the latter essay she concludes,

Though the censorship of our own forum, *The Body Politic*, is a dramatic issue we must all actively involve ourselves in, the job is far larger. We must be vocal in our communities, on our school boards, in our schools, to see that not only Margaret Laurence and Alice Munro

are available to students, but that even I am there, not only with my own small contribution about violence but with the hundreds of pages I've written about human relationship. (*Outlander* 200)

Rule views queer writing as an essential component of social change, arguing that in her work for *The Body Politic* she “refuse[s] to be a token, one of those who doesn't really seem like a lesbian at all” (*Hot-Eyed* 64). As Schuster discusses at length in *Passionate Communities*, reading is a crucial component of lesbian and feminist consciousness-raising, yet Rule also saw queer writing as potentially speaking to an audience beyond its base. In her novel *Memory Board*, for example, David, the heterosexual brother of a lesbian, “discovered he could read [*The Body Politic*], bit by bit, if he made the effort” (149). In one of her essays on *The Body Politic* case, Rule argues, “In challenging basic attitudes toward sexuality... [*The Body Politic*] threatens the state's power over other men as well as women and children. It is seen as a threat, a political threat to established order” (*Hot-Eyed* 125). In the latter, Rule forwards that queer writing and publishing has an oppositional relationship to the state. The obscenity trials faced by *The Body Politic* brought greater urgency to her political commitments as expressed in her fiction: Rule was going public.

Many of the pivotal events in the latter half of 1977—from the murder of Emanuel Jaques to the *The Body Politic* raid—appear as brief intertexts in *Contract with the World*, yet they cast long shadows over the novel's politics and, as I argue in the following section, the novel's poetics of disclosure. Rule completed a draft of the novel on July 15, 1978 and her revisions for Harcourt Brace Jovanovich by the fall of 1979 (Schuster 223-224). The latter suggests that Rule was drafting and revising the

novel during the time of *The Body Politic* raid and in the lead-up to the first trial, in addition to composing her first columns for the newspaper. *Contract* marks a turn in Rule's fiction as she critically, sometimes disparagingly, engages with organized queer politics for the first time. *The Young in One Another's Arms* was published in 1977, yet by the publication of *Contract* just three years later, we are very far from the utopian community that coalesces at the end of the former novel. In *Contract*, Mike picks up two hitchhikers on his drive down the American west coast:

[H]e stopped for a young couple, dressed in jeans, ponchos, boots, and beads. He should have known by their costume that they would be his age, veteran dropouts, on their way to yet another commune, where they'd find again nobody ever got round to planting anything but grass or making anything but each other's women. (115)

In *Contract with the World*, anyway, the sexual revolution is officially over. Yet rather than turning away or inward, Rule finds her form in the galvanizing conflicts of the era.

5. Borderline Citizens and Rule's Poetics of Disclosure in *Contract with the World*

For a writer well known as an ardent anti-censorship activist, Rule makes the somewhat surprising observation in "Sexuality and Literature" that, when dealing with sex, at least, some form of implicit censorship is inevitable. She writes,

Though there are obvious institutions to blame for our prudery and squeamishness about sexuality...there are *fundamental ambiguities* in our nature and condition which would never allow us the innocent and

simple sexual pleasure we can think is out there beyond all the negative morality. (*Outlander* 149, emphasis added).

These “fundamental ambiguities” recall the ambivalence of borderline citizenship, and suggest that the discourse regarding how we should or should not express ourselves on that fraught line between the public and private spheres will be in a constant state of negotiation. Rule’s poetics, then, begin in conflict not only in terms of representing diverse points of view, but also in articulating (or not) her own opinions within and against the social, cultural, and national ‘communities’ in which her writing circulates. Rule views the latter as the particular challenge of the realist novelist as, in the composition of diverse characters, she “may often be faced with offenses against her own taste and morality, or at least a very hard balance among the requirements of aesthetics and truth must be struck” (*Outlander* 151). The will to represent a diverse array of viewpoints in her writing makes Rule’s fiction particularly compelling, but the latter has also led her to being misread by the very communities she supported.

Perhaps anticipating the heated reception of *Contract*, Rule published “Reflections” in *The Body Politic* ahead of the novel’s release (Schuster 224). She writes of the “inevitably disappointed” readers whenever she publishes a new book who “want literature to be not only a mirror but a flattering mirror of themselves and their way of life” (*Outlander* 203). Just as those “fundamental ambiguities” inflect our reception of sexual expression, Rule finds “within the gay community there are not only different but morally and politically conflicting tastes” and that any writer who attempts to appease them all is “doomed to failure” (*Outlander* 203). Rule

adamantly vows that she will “not apologize for us” nor “will [she] dress up as the silverware ads of the 80s” or “even give us [her] exclusive attention” (*Outlander* 204). As Schuster observes, *Contract with the World* “in its characterizations and multiple narrative lines, stages the problems that ‘communities’ present to the people who move in and out of them by chance or by choice” (224). The novel, then, offers us a manifold vision of censorship and citizenship occurring within and without the LGBTTQ community at the time.

In several ways, *Contract with the World* is the apotheosis of Rule’s interest in multiple points-of-view and her search for a successful multivalent form of narration. As Schuster points out (226), Rule’s third novel *Against the Season* (1972), provides an early example where an omniscient third-person narrator shifts point-of-view among the inhabitants of a small American coastal town, sometimes jumping perspectives mid-scene. Yet *Contract*’s form also finds an antecedent in one of Rule’s most experimental short stories of the 1970s, “Theme for Diverse Instruments,” in which a first-person plural voice narrates the story from the perspective of the children—both male and female—of a deceased matriarch. Rule appears to be working through the aesthetic and rhetorical problems of communal fiction when the narrator of the story responds to a challenge from one of the siblings,

NO? Is that a protest vote from the majority opposition? Or is it several individual counterclaims against the editorial we? We are trying to let all flowers bloom, but, of course, prose is not a flower bed, a space, but time, one thin line of it, an Indian file of syllables which can explore the field only moment by moment. Or fence it? The

we is the fence, defining our limits. Some of us are climbing it, trying to get out. But point of view is a concentration camp of time, not space, and nobody can go until we are released. (*Theme 67*)

The latter suggests the narrator's (and perhaps Rule's) frustration with point-of-view as a "fence" or "limit" barely containing the conflicting ideas of the characters she represents. Rule observes how perspective is not only spatial but temporal, only allowing the author to reveal her characters' response to the action "moment by moment." Instead, Rule would prefer a method of simultaneity, or overlapping points-of-view. In *Contract*, Rule tries to break free of the "one thin line" of time by juxtaposing different versions of relationships and debates in each of the novel's six sections, though, importantly, all of the characters are the same age, turning thirty at the beginning of the novel and about to enter what Joseph calls "the terrible decade" (34). Moreover, in the sound map that Roxanne produces, which I will discuss in further detail, Rule suggests another way of reorienting point-of-view—even queering it—so that it becomes a field or "domain" of "the legitimately speakable," in Butler's terms, rather than "a concentration camp of time."

If Rule struggles to find a way of representing multiple voices within a community, Alma, the aspiring writer in *Contract*, seeks a mode of *self*-expression. After she leaves Mike for Roxanne, Alma begins to write in a notebook that forms her section of the novel. Just as the journal operates in Symons' *Place d'Armes* as a way to border obscenity and thereby critique and invert its subjective foundations, Alma's "notebook" allows for sexual expression through the crafting of a public/private text. The notebook is not Alma's 'real' writing, the stories she sends out to literary journals

and magazines, she claims, but rather more of a writer's notebook reflecting on and responding to the other writing she attempts for public consumption. Similar to the false redactions that border so-called obscene moments in Symons, Alma consistently negates her work: "This isn't writing. This is to writing what masturbation is to making love" (*Contract* 162). Elsewhere, she writes, "In this notebook, I touch my imagination as I do Roxanne's body" (171), and though she allows herself to write about sexual encounters with Roxanne, she disparagingly self-censors in retrospect: "And now I'm trying to be Violette Leduc, writing with one hand, masturbating with the other" (136).²⁹ Later Alma observes, "No one would be interested in reading the self-doubt and moral dilemma of a woman living safely at home with her two children, protected by indulgent parents" (164). Indeed, part of the reason Alma struggles to write is because she is bound by silence in her personal life. While Alma leaves Mike for Roxanne, she continues to live under a legal threat: "He could so easily, if he wanted to, take the children away from me, have me declared unfit as a mother...[Roxanne] knows, because of the divorce, I have to be very careful, and even once that's over, we can't possibly live together, not while I have the boys" (135). While she and her sons Tony and Victor live at her parents' house, Alma borrows books from Roxanne and hides them in her bedroom, "as [she] hide[s] so much of [herself] to be the wholesome daughter of a wholesome father who is waiting

²⁹ Leduc (1907-1972) was a French feminist novelist and autobiographer, known for her confessional and explicitly erotic writing. In *Lesbian Images*, Rule observes, "[Leduc] has produced the most exact, sensual, emotional, and psychological record there is of a woman defined and diminished by her sexuality. By means of it, she can, even in the extremes of her degradation, reflect in fact what is perhaps true only in the horrified and secret imagination of most of us" (139).

patiently for [her] downstairs” (137). Text and sex are conflated for Alma, who self-censors both her writing and her reading.

Alma struggles with expressions of embodiment and sexuality even within the private space of the notebook: “The problem is that I have no language at all for my body or Roxanne’s body that isn’t either derisive or embarrassing” (139). Rule, too, describes a similar problem when she writes, “A language adequate to express our sexual experience must be able to describe negotiations far more complex than the entrance of penis or finger into vagina” (*Outlander* 149). Alma is a borderline sexual *and* cultural citizen, inhabiting a space in between the privacy of the closet and public self-expression. When at Roxanne’s, she reads magazines such as *A Room of One’s Own*, *The Body Politic*, *The Advocate*, and *Christopher Street* and observes, “I read them in the way I used to read *Vogue* or *Redbook*, trying to imagine myself glamorous or matronly, even occasionally the writer of one of the stories” (163). While she draws on personal experience to craft her short stories, Alma reverses the gender of her characters not only to remain closeted but “to keep [her] general attitudes and [her] specific feelings and behavior as far from meeting as possible since they can’t meet; they don’t even speak the same language” (171). Similarly, throughout the novel Alma is described as spatially disoriented or distant. When Roxanne takes her to a women’s liberation meeting, for example, one of Roxanne’s lesbian friends asks if Alma is new in town: “She doesn’t look...local,” the friend concludes (220). At one point in her notebook, even Alma writes, “Being lesbian is a great place to visit, but I wouldn’t want to live there” (161). Schuster observes, “Becoming a writer and becoming a lesbian are fundamentally joined, and [Alma’s]

task is to give a textual reality to her sexual discoveries. Her chapter in *Contract* traces that double quest and is deeply ironic. In the end Alma fails at both; she is neither a successful writer nor a successful lesbian” (66). As other characters will demonstrate, expression becomes a form of successful orientation in both the sexual and spatial senses of the word, as the characters struggle to rationalize their professional aspirations with their regional, national, and sexual identities.

Allen and Roxanne succeed where Alma fails because they forge different ‘contracts’ with the nation-state. As their names subtly suggest, Allen and Alma are mirrored characters in the novel, as both enjoy a lifestyle of relative material privilege and live in a semi-public closet. While Alma ultimately quits writing, in one of her stories she writes herself as a man and calls him “Alan,” a “moderately successful businessman...[though] less cynical than [the real] Allen” (169). Describing his photography to Joseph, the ‘real’ Allen says, “[Photography is] business, Joseph, not even big business. I can live like a millionaire on the job, but I’ll never be one” (56). While he claims he wants to be “a dirty old man and the greatest pornographer on the job,” he is described as “prudish,” a man who “never told dirty jokes and was not an admirer of parts of the human bodies” (18). Indeed, at one point he complains to Joseph about Roxanne, saying, “Oh, I knew she was gay, of course, but she wasn’t vulgar about it. Now she can’t stop talking about Alma’s...breasts, and she doesn’t even call them breasts. It’s disgusting” (47). In contrast, Allen considers his and Alma’s ‘passing’ a marker of their good upbringing, quipping to Alma, “It takes a certain amount of breeding to be morally trivial” (157). Just as Alma assumes a

version of Allen's persona in one of her stories, Allen proposes that Alma serve as his beard, allowing them a mutual cover:

If I go to friends' second and third weddings with you and we're occasionally seen at an opening, that should take care of our need to pass and give Tony and Victor the option of thinking of you as heterosexual if either of them needs it. That way each of us earns the right to an immodest and indecent bed. Do you know, I'm nearly the only man I know who goes home for sex? I attribute it to my impeccable heterosexual behavior in public. I deserve my vice. (158)

Allen avoids 'vulgarity' by pretending to be straight in public and sharing a mostly monogamous, domestic life with his partner Pierre in private, with Allen "the man" and Pierre "the boy wife, adoring, dependent" (17).

Allen and Pierre's relationship suggests some similarities to the sexual geopolitics operating in Symons' *Place d'Armes*. While in the latter, Hugh, the wealthy Anglophone tourist, visits Montreal and buys sex from ostensibly under-aged French-Canadian sex workers, Rule's narrative inverts that migration: Allen moves Pierre from Montreal to Vancouver and the latter experiences a moment of transnational disorientation, with some dangerous consequences. As Pierre tells Joseph,

I started wandering around [Vancouver]—not at night, just in the daytime. I don't really know Vancouver. [Allen] doesn't understand why I wasn't frightened in Montreal, but I know Montreal. I'd never get arrested in Montreal. I got busted at the men's room at The Bay [in Vancouver]. It was awful. It cost him a terrible amount of money, and

he wasn't even angry with me. He never even let me explain, and he bought me this diamond ring. (19)

The narrator continues, "It was a diamond of the sort advertised in the Hudson's Bay department store ads under the caption 'Diamonds are forever'" (19). Through the normative symbol of the diamond ring, Allen circumscribes the 'vulgarity' of Pierre's queer transgression, and his failure to correctly 'map' the gay city as he cruised. At the same time, the exchange of the ring suggests a particularly Canadian sexual economy. That Rule ironically sets this exchange at The Bay, the trading company integral to Britain's colonization of Canada, refigures Allen and Pierre's relationship as a queer national allegory, punning on one meaning of "trade" in gay slang: a man who exchanges sex for material benefits.

Later in the novel Allen says that when he started dating Pierre, who was sixteen, their relationship was "a criminal offense," due to the age of consent laws (158). Allen explains, "[Pierre] would have been beaten to death years ago if he hadn't found someone to take him in" (158). The illegitimacy of their early relationship foreshadows the scandal that ruptures Allen's careful negotiation of the borderline between his public and private lives. When Allen is on assignment in Toronto, he becomes embroiled in a sex scandal that receives national media attention. Back in Vancouver, Alma's ten year-old son, Tony, reads that morning's headline aloud: "Pederasts' Party Over" (237). The article recounts how

the vice squad [broke] into the apartment of a prominent Toronto businessman to find a number of men in the company of boys as young as twelve. An MP and a college professor were named. So was Allen

Dent, one of Canada's best-known photographers, who attempted with his camera to jump out a twelfth-floor window before he was apprehended and taken into custody. (238)

Allen and several other men are eventually released without charges; Allen claims to the police that he was only in attendance at the party for professional reasons, and the police take his film, which will potentially incriminate others in attendance at the party (243).³⁰ Unbeknownst to Allen, the news has travelled as far as Vancouver, despite his outdated notion of the city as a safe outpost with "the Rocky Mountains between him and the public world" (245). In its rapid globalization, Vancouver has failed Allen in a different way than it failed Pierre. While Roxanne attempts to find Pierre before he hears the news about Allen, she is too late: Pierre has committed suicide by gunshot in his and Allen's living room (239). Later, Allen interprets Pierre's method of suicide as an act of sexualized self-harm: "And Pierre put it in his mouth, took it like a lover, killed himself, and might as well have castrated Allen with the same bullet, for he would never again as long as he lived aim his desire at other human flesh" (258-259). While Allen's construction of domestic space was meant to save Pierre from violence, Allen's strict bordering of his public and private lives ultimately brings violence into the home. Like Alma, Allen—at first—fails as a

³⁰ In some ways, the event recalls the discovery of the powerful Club of Men in Timothy Findley's 1993 dystopian novel, *Headhunter*. The Club of Men are "a circle of influential masked males who meet to watch and eventually participate in sexual acts involving children" which are inspired by paintings and recorded in photographs (Cohen 47). Cohen critiques Findley's strict anti-censorship stance and suggests that the events in *Headhunter* ultimately counter the novelist's own arguments by showing how some discourse does "bad work" and must be censored (Cohen 48).

borderline citizen, unwilling to negotiate the demands of being “one of Canada’s best-known photographers” (238) with his private life.

Rule exercises a great deal of narrative distance in regards to the Toronto arrest. She reveals more of the fallout than the incident itself, allowing different characters to comment upon and reason with the events. For example, Alma reacts to the news by forbidding him from entering her house and calls Allen “a pervert,” while Roxanne replies, “We all are!” with “tears streaming down her face” (242). Roxanne admits she received several charges for “morals offenses” when she was underaged. Alma writes, “Roxanne was in and out of jail until she was twenty-one and became a consenting adult. After that, she was careful not to associate with anyone under age, not only to keep herself out of trouble, but not to risk jail for someone who had never been” (181). Roxanne’s criminal history arises because she is charged for illegally accessing the recording equipment after hours in the record shop where she works (180-181). After learning of Roxanne’s background, Alma writes, “I am appalled...I don’t want someone with a criminal record around the children” (181-182). Though she manages to keep Roxanne, like Allen, out of her house for a time, she finds Roxanne’s transgressions exciting: “Simply because I’m scandalized by her, I am more obsessed by her than ever. I grill her with sexual questions. I want to hear exactly how women intimidate, rape, keep in bondage other women” (182). Alma’s arousal at the thought of “bondage” relates to the boundary between the public and the private, as well. Allen’s arrest breeches the careful border Alma sets between the public and private and to maintain this distinction, she physically bars him from entering her house. Yet at the same time, Roxanne’s delinquent past and her sexual

knowledge—seen as a secret to uncover by Alma—titillates the latter because such knowledge exists beyond the bounds of middle-class respectability. In Alma, Rule reveals the brutal hypocrisy of the sexual censor.

Once word of his arrest has spread, and despite being released, Allen loses photography assignments, as several of the editors he works with are closeted and must protect their own integrity by damaging his (244). When police question Allen after a teen-aged boy is found murdered in Stanley Park, he becomes enraged at the accusation until Carlotta reminds him, “It’s because of that homosexual murder in Toronto not that many years ago—a boy” (262), an allusion to the Emanuel Jaques case. Eventually, Roxanne confronts Allen’s apathetic approach to queer politics, even after he has been pulled out of the closet by the media: “You’re as much a cock-sucker as anyone in the want ads. You’re as much a fairy and as much a victim. If even Pierre’s killing himself isn’t enough to jar you loose, maybe nothing is” (273). The seizure of Allen’s film at the party mirrors the 1977 raid on *The Body Politic*. As Peter Dickinson argues, just as the obscenity case prompted Rule’s column, “so does Allen’s arrest and his lover’s suicide newly politicize [Allen]” (87). Allen eventually develops a retrospective of his work in order to publicly avenge Pierre’s suicide—no longer “just business,” politics makes Allen publicly claim the role of artist for the first time.

That his revenge takes the form of a photographer’s retrospective allows Allen to queer national space (as the show tours across the country) as well as national history. Like the painter Carlotta who concludes the novel with her own show, Allen is a portraitist, and has photographed both the public and private moments of

prominent, if closeted, men, including several politicians, university presidents, and doctors: “It had been a source of great amusement to many of them that the man who had done their most nobly exposed public faces, the portraits that inspired the nation, also had photographed their private pleasures” (277). Allen conceives his retrospective as an exercise in outing hypocrisy, selecting only portraits of closeted gays and lesbians alongside well-known gay figures, with the gallery serving as the borderline between the public and the private. The medium allows Allen to ‘out’ without speaking or writing a word, and thus escape accusations of libel. In another instance of false redaction, Rule writes, “To anyone at all aware, the principle of selection would be obvious, and the show would be the talk of Canada without a newspaper’s or magazine’s ever mentioning the testimony it was” (278). Allen must find such a subtle “principle of selection” because he at first fails to attract the attention of any media, even the gay media, as part of his revenge.

Allen even travels to Toronto and visits the offices of *The Body Politic* where he finds “the militants, about whom so much was written, were a small minority even among college kids,” as the latter “might read *The Body Politic* or *The Advocate*, but their own outward and visible sign was to be a little too impeccably heterosexual” (256). Here, Rule presses the social effects of explicit censorship, directly drawing a parallel between quotidian expressions of queer identity, and the state’s regulation of speech: “Since the raid on *The Body Politic*, when the police had seized even the newspaper’s subscription list, fewer of the cautious young even subscribed” (*Contract* 256). Allen finds the editors unsympathetic to his project as one says, “We bully the shit out of people to come out, but we don’t witch-hunt our own” (256). Rule was

also personally opposed to the political tactic of outing, writing in her essay “Closet-Burning,” that it is “neither true nor kind to suggest that [closeted people’s] silence is necessarily part of our oppression. The ideal must be, instead, a climate so changed that there really is no danger even for the most vulnerable” (*Outlander* 201). In her novel, one of *The Body Politic* editors expresses a similar argument in cruder terms, telling Allen, “[I]f this is a closet, it’s your closet, don’t shit in it. If you want to break out, don’t kill your fellow prisoners; shoot the guards” (276). Yet many of the men Allen wants to expose are responsible for the institutional policies and laws that oppress LGBTTTQ subjects; in some cases, outing may be a legitimate political strategy. When Allen fails to gain the agency of speech, he turns to image, instead: “Behind each portrait there must be one indisputable fact: homosexual experience. Those famous and self-confessed should be placed strategically near those famous and closeted” (279). For example, Allen includes a picture of Alma. When he refuses her request to remove the photograph she has her father intervene twice, first with an offer of money, which Allen refuses, and then by secretly having the fire department shut down Dale Easter’s gallery in which Allen had intended to launch his show (283-284). Allen must leave Vancouver to launch the retrospective in Edmonton. When the press positively receives his show, the critics praise its ambiguity. The *Globe & Mail* reviewer, for example, finds that Allen “explored the essential bisexuality in all of us... We are all revealed as creatures not so polarized as the bra burning, etc. etc. etc.” (312). Rule uses free indirect discourse, rather than direct quotation, to insert the fictional intertext into the narrative, allowing her to comment ironically on the tone of the review and its implicit critique of radical politics: a gay artist can present gay

themes and so long as the expression is not *too* explicit, he may be positively received by mainstream critics.

Linda Morra, in her extensive analysis of Rule's archival documents at the University of British Columbia, reveals the author experienced a similar double bind when working with major publishers. While Rule's editor at Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Carole J. Meyer, accepted *Contract* after it had been rejected by Macmillan and Doubleday (two publishers who had previously released Rule's fiction and criticism), as well as Collins, she rejected Rule's subsequent collection of stories and essays, *Outlander* (ironically a collection that deals, in part, with various forms of literary censorship.) In her letter to Rule, Meyer writes,

I don't think HBJ is quite ready for it. They are advanced enough to publish a novel with homosexual themes, but I think this might be a bit much...*Outlander* is certainly *not erotica*, but so much of the book has to do with lesbian sexuality that I doubt the more 'straight' publishers (and here I am using the word to mean conventional) will know what to do with it. (qtd. in Morra 120)

Contract with the World succeeds with a "straight" publisher because Rule weaves gay, lesbian, and bisexual characters—and, it must be noted, not very likeable or sympathetic characters at that—into the larger (i.e. heterosexual) fabric of Vancouver. Yet that same acquiescence is interpreted as a transgression by some of Rule's queer readers, demonstrated by the reviews discussed earlier.

Schuster argues, "Rather than privilege gay identities and idealize community, Rule create[s] characters, straight, gay, or bisexual, who are all capable of intolerance,

pettiness, and overblown egos as well as sensitivity, generosity, and genuine talent” (“Introduction” 10). For example, the novel opens from the point-of-view of heterosexual Joseph, the mentally ill schoolteacher who seams the disparate group of friends and artists together through his walking “hundreds, gradually thousands of miles through the city of Vancouver, out into the university grant lands, down along the beach, among the dog walkers, scavengers, and natural solitaries” (15). Joseph’s walking anticipates Roxanne’s citywide project in the latter half of the novel. Though neither queer nor an artist, Joseph’s mental illness marks his difference, and, like Boy in *Young*, he disrupts the facile assumptions of his friends.³¹ Joseph’s illness manifests in an abundance of language in times of emotional distress—either outbursts of memorized poetry and song, or other people’s words typeset on his printing press. Rule writes, “If only [Joseph] had been good with words, as he was with his hands, perhaps what seemed an illness would have been a gift. What came out of him could not be called poetry, unless found poetry, everything from biblical quotations to lines of popular songs, juxtaposed in a way that seemed to soil as it clarified” (15). Learning that his wife is pregnant triggers a particularly serious episode, and Joseph is committed to a mental institution on his thirtieth birthday. That Rule opens the novel from Joseph’s point-of-view emphasizes her refusal to write

³¹ The recurring trope of disability and its complex relationship to gender and sexuality in Rule’s writing deserves further study. A few examples include: Ruth Wheeler in *The Young in One Another’s Arms*, who lost an arm in a work accident; the elderly characters in *Memory Board* contrasted with Richard, the first-year university student dying of AIDS; the so-called “lame” Amelia in *Against the Season*; and the nameless protagonist in the story “If There is No Gate,” who returns to visit the mental institution where she once stayed as a patient. In Rule’s posthumously published autobiography, *Taking My Life*, she describes the profound impact her volunteering as a swimming teacher for mentally and physically disabled children had on her when she was a student at Mills College (184).

exclusively queer characters, and also reveals the inherent flaws in reifying the boundaries of sexual identities. For example, Carlotta ‘queers’ Joseph when she says to him, “I used to think mental hospitals were filled with melodramatic neurotics like me, but they’re not. They’re filled with mild, kind souls like you, most of whom are, of course, women” (39). When Joseph’s medication fails, he undergoes shock therapy treatments (67). As Schuster points out in an analysis of the essay “The 4th of July, 1954,” Rule was aware that mental institutions routinely housed and treated gays and lesbians in the post-war period of her adolescence (Schuster 54-55). By opening the novel with Joseph’s narrative and shifting “from an assumption of male-defined heterosexuality to an assumption of multiple sexual possibilities” (Schuster 236), Rule can index parallels of experience that cross the divide of sexual identity without reducing any one point-of-view. In all of her fiction, though especially in *Contract*, Rule seeks a poetics of disclosure, leaving her characters, as she observes in one essay, “so much still alive with so many options left that readers often write to me suggesting sequels in which finally justice is done. They often don’t want to reward the characters I would choose or punish those I find most reprehensible” (*Outlander* 153).

Indeed, several critics suggest that in her compositional aesthetics of non-judgment, Roxanne represents Rule’s own method. A sound artist and composer without formal training, Roxanne’s major project in the novel becomes a “sound map” for all of Vancouver, which will provide a visual corollary to the recordings she takes around the city. As Richard Cavell writes, Rule’s text is a “process novel,” similar to Roxanne’s map, as both forms are representative of “the fleeting nature of

the oral that, paradoxically, support[s] intensely powerful community relations” (167). Like Rule, Roxanne seeks forms that disturb the line between the public and private:

That evening Roxanne established the basic grid of streets across the [dining room] wall she faced domestically twice a day... At first she intended only to make notes, a word or two to remind her of the sound she had recorded or wanted to record, but because the wall was first an issue and then a curiosity, Roxanne began to see the map as a thing in itself as well as a score for work to be done. She cut pictures out of magazines, everything from air-conditioning units to national flags. Directions were color-coded, green to indicate what did happen on that particular corner, red to indicate what might happen, gold to suggest what should happen. (200)

Schuster suggests that Rule writes *Contract* in a similarly “hyperrealis[ti]c” mode, “[with] carefully and precisely observed details from the world around her... arranged... in a composition that forces the readers to reconsider themselves and their relation to the world” (235). More successfully than any other character, Roxanne maps the queer city and fully inverts the division between public and private space.

As in *Place d’Armes*, where Hugh draws new boundaries over a tourist map of Old Montreal as a way of reterritorializing the city, Roxanne reorients Vancouver in image and sound. Yet while Hugh’s borders are idiosyncratic and masculine—his personal “mission” to “penetrate” La Place—Roxanne expands her vision to include

the entire city and titles the project “Mother Tongue” (210). Like Hugh, however, Roxanne imagines her project as inherently illicit. When she is filling out a Canada Council grant application for the first time she thinks, “Confessing on a paper to be sent to an agent of the federal government what she would like to do to Vancouver was like submitting a master plan for robbing every bank in town. If she had to tell the truth, she had in mind a cast of thousands, involving everyone from schoolchildren to professionals” (211). Roxanne’s grant application further destabilizes the boundary between the public and the private. Indeed, homophobic critics have capitalized on Canada’s public funding of the arts (robust, especially when compared to countries such as the United States) in order to discredit queer art through economic critique. For example, the *Toronto Sun* headlined one of Claire Hoy’s editorials regarding the Hannon article, “Our taxes help homosexuals promote abuse of children” (Bebout and Giese n.p.). Though Roxanne’s map attempts to represent “everyone,” it remains decidedly queer. When Alma’s son Victor becomes angry with Roxanne, for example, he vandalizes the wall so that one morning, “Roxanne found ‘FUCK’ printed in a small, childish hand in a dozen places on the map, mostly in park and beach areas where there was still room to write. [Roxanne] wished she had thought of it herself and told Victor so” (230). Unknowingly, Victor has labeled the city’s likeliest cruising grounds. As Bell & Binnie demonstrate in *The Sexual Citizen*, “The city is the prime site both for the materialization of sexual identity, community and politics, and for conflicts and struggles around sexual identity, community and politics” (83). Roxanne, the former foster child and sexual delinquent, needs to re-map Vancouver in order to locate a space for herself within

“the domain of the legally and legitimately speakable” (Butler 88). That Roxanne often opts for sounds—even unpleasant ones—over legible speech, or layers them over top of each other, becomes another instance of productive self-censorship, similar to Allen’s mute “principle of selection” (Rule, *Contract* 278), that allows Roxanne to make disclosures of lesbian or queer identity while still maintaining access to all of Vancouver’s communities. After Alma and Roxanne separate, Alma moves the sound map into her bedroom, where Roxanne had wanted it to be in the first place (314). With all of Vancouver in the intimate space of Alma’s bedroom—symbolizing, in effect, Alma’s eternal closet—she produces a spectacle of the public/private inversion she will never attempt in her daily life.

Contract with the World concludes, perhaps inevitably, in the back of a police wagon. Carlotta’s portraits—including one each of Joseph, his wife Ann, Mike, Alma, Roxanne, Pierre, and Allen—are vandalized when a man enters the gallery and throws red paint on her work, shouting at Allen, “There’s the faggot who does it to kids” (340). In another moment of irony, the vandal turns out to be the man Carlotta had met at a hotel bar a few weeks earlier: “He was the trick who had paid her last month’s rent” (340). The vandal then says to Carlotta, “That will teach you...not to bring your filth into this community” (340). Importantly, Carlotta’s show does not occur in a private Vancouver gallery but in nearby Surrey’s publicly subsidized art space. Dickinson notes that the novel allows us to see how “the city, as an instrument of the state, functions to regulate both artistic practices and bodily desires” (86). A fight ensues, subsequently broken up by the police, and all of the characters are arrested together. Allen, Surrey-born, says, “The people of Surrey care enough about

art to start a riot! Things like that don't happen in Toronto" (342). Viewing them in the police wagon, Carlotta sees her subjects, whom she had painted in the privacy of her studio, now in a particularly fraught public space, "survivors who had already grown far beyond her fixed ideas of them" (343). As Cavell writes, "[Rule's novel] suggests that queer cultural memory derives its power precisely by avoiding the notion that its value lies in an abstract future" (169), while at the same time, the novel's traditionally comic conclusion uniting its disparate cast of characters suggests "that a new society might emerge out of this social reconfiguration" (171). Though still deeply conflicted within themselves, Rule's conclusion suggests they are each, in different ways, suspect under the law; in location, occupation, and sexuality, they are borderline citizens in negotiation with a nation-state that does not fully recognize them. Earlier in the novel, Carlotta says, "We all have our contracts with the world" (294). In Rule's title, the *Contract* has become singular, but contains multitudes.

6. Conclusion

Realist fiction risks becoming reduced to the moment of its composition. Rule's novel arrived at a critical juncture in queer Canadian history, at the end of the hedonistic liberation era. Composed during the aftermath of the Emanuel Jaques murder and *The Body Politic* raid, while gay and lesbian activists were still defining the limits of the movement, and published almost exactly one year before *The New York Times* would report the first deaths of what would become the AIDS epidemic in July 1981, Rule found a poetics to mirror the indeterminate politics of the era. Yet not

only does *Contract with the World* provide a portrait of queer and artistic communities in a particular time and place, the novel offers a still-viable alternative to identity politics and separatism that I have called, drawing on Butler, Cossman and others, “borderline citizenship.”

In many ways, *Contract* anticipates later works such as Dionne Brand’s 2005 novel, *What We All Long For*. Brand’s similarly fractured narrative about a group of struggling young artists in Toronto who try to reconcile their immigrant or second-generation Canadian identities with artistic aspirations recalls many aspects of Rule’s work while also revealing how much has changed in queer politics in the intervening decades. The issue of race, for example, is largely absent from *Contract* though appears in Rule’s other fiction such as *The Young in One Another’s Arms* and *After the Fire*. Both Rule’s and Brand’s novels are deeply attuned to the passage of years and the desire to mark the particularities of time and place. For example, Brand writes, “How does life disappear like that? It does it all the time in a city. One moment a corner is a certain corner, gorgeous with your desires, then it disappears under the constant construction of this and that” (183). Published the same year that same-sex marriage was legalized in Canada, Brand’s characters are, unsurprisingly, consumed with questions about familial obligation and new, even queer, articulations of kinship. A quarter-century apart, both Rule’s and Brand’s novels engage in a conversation of what it means to be a queer citizen in a city and a nation that continues to negotiate the terms of belonging.

“I have discovered my subject matter in the world we share in common,” Rule writes in her essay “The Practice of Writing.” Cavell notes that Rule, as a realist

novelist, “poses questions concerning those excluded from cultural memory” (158), limning the boundaries of sex, nation, and legitimate speech. In the next chapter, I consider the collaborative poetics of Daphne Marlatt and Betsy Warland, Vancouver contemporaries of Rule, and how they respond to the same debates regarding the recuperation of cultural memory and the freedom of expression in the latter half of the 1980s.

Chapter Three

“words my only boundary”: Borderland Utopia and the Limits of Expression in Daphne Marlatt and Betsy Warland’s *Double Negative*

1. Introduction: Going Nowhere

The word “freedom” appears no fewer than three times in a 2015 Amtrak advertisement targeting the readers of *Out*, an American gay lifestyle magazine. Above an image of a passenger train speeding through a mountainous southwestern landscape, with pointers noting the “Kid-friendly tray tables” as well as the “Panoramic windows” and “Sightseer lounge,” the headline declares: “THE FREEDOM OF TRAVEL, REDEFINED.” More specifically the copy states, “*Freedom of expression* is a vital part of any great journey. At Amtrak we respect and celebrate the diversity of our travellers by providing them the freedom to go where they want. We welcome LGBT travelers to journey with us. See where the train can take you” (9, emphasis added). The ad invokes the American constitutional right, protected by the First Amendment, to the “freedom of expression” while the “Kid-friendly tray tables” hints at the then-recent Supreme Court ruling on same-sex marriage. Trading in the heterosexual romance associated with traditional railway advertising, Amtrak entices with all the romance of a diverse, if desexualized, “Kid-friendly” journey through an idealized landscape.³²

³² As M. Jacqui Alexander points out in a discussion of gay men’s travel marketing, “[The gay man] can be invoked—that is, summoned—to consume through advertising, yet be made hidden, which means that his sexuality does not have to be the subject of his consumption” (288). The latter strategy invites gay consumers

While the ad links both patriotic and LGBTTTQ causes, one might ask why specifically “the freedom of expression is a vital part of any great journey.” The ad conflates leisure travel *with* sexual expression so that both the train and the southwestern frontier it traverses are the site of “freedom.” As Jasbir K. Puar suggests in her analysis of LGBTTTQ tourism advertising, “what signals as transgressive is not just the right to sexual expression but the right to mobility through that sexual expression” (11). At the same time, the ad’s copy invites us to “see where the train can take you,” suggesting that the freedom of expression is also always deferred, a place to look forward to at the end of the line. Of course, this is a conditional form of “freedom” as only those who can afford leisure travel, and those who conform to the ad’s configuration of the train as a “Kid-friendly” space (with all the attendant meanings of respectability firmly attached), get to participate. The ad’s setting in the expansive Great West folds LGBTTTQ subjects into the United States’ centuries-old nation-making project: Amtrak may be willing to carry us westward toward “the freedom of travel” but the journey also inscribes queer passengers as parents rehearsing a colonial migration being invoked, if “redefined,” in the present. The frontier then takes on a dual role, as both the site of transgression and the leading edge of liberal democracy. As the historian Frederick Jackson Turner observed in 1893, “American social development has been continually beginning over again on the frontier,” which Turner describes as a place of “perennial rebirth” and “fluidity” (2). The Amtrak ad provides a useful example of the ways in which “the freedom of expression” becomes cathected by a range of affective, economic, and political

through desexualized advertising that simultaneously avoids offending heterosexual consumers.

strategies that position LGBTQ subjects (and, notably, tourists) as both always-oppressed (in need of *acquiring* freedom) and yet almost-liberated. Thus, the freedom of expression becomes a temporally indeterminate ideal found simultaneously in the ‘past’ of the landscape, the continual ‘present’ of the journey, and the ‘future’ of the destination.

While in their collaborative hybrid-genre travelogue, *Double Negative* (1988), Daphne Marlatt and Betsy Warland travel through the Australian desert, and not the American Southwest, they also re-envision the train as a dynamic locus of lesbian expression; however, while the Amtrak ad revels in its promise that consumerism allows for seemingly unfettered national participation for queers, Marlatt and Warland pursue an alternative route to freedom that attempts to disavow the proscriptive narratives of consumer tourism and imperialism altogether. As I discuss further, even “the freedom of expression” is found suspect in this text that evades any liberatory strategy that emerges within the existing economies of heteropatriarchy—including the untroubled replication of the traditional lyric genre. Composed of three parts, *Double Negative*’s first and longest section is a sequence of experimental love lyrics that take their titles from the place names and time stamps of the poets’ four-day train journey across Australia’s Nullarbor Desert from May 29 to June 1, 1986. The middle section, “Crossing Loop,” is a prose dialogue between the poets regarding their writing and revision process. The final part, “Real 2,” is a sequence of associative prose poems that interrogate the earlier lyrics, recycling lines from those poems as the titles of each prose section. In a short essay prefacing an excerpt of *Double Negative* in *Tessera*, the writers claim, “Our common motive in writing was

to invent a woman's version of the long train poem and discover how the train, traditionally a phallic symbol, might be imaged in female sexual terms" (116). In order to revise the train's symbolic associations, and mitigate the risk of reviving settler-colonial territorializing, the collaborative text works against the singularity of lyric expression, the linearity of narrative, and a stable or unified network of imagery. For a travelogue, *Double Negative* is remarkably recursive and while the scenery might change across Australia or when the speakers return to Canada, since the text recycles itself between the first and third sections, a traditional narrative is frequently denied: the text paradoxically "goes nowhere" with great purpose.

The many ideological disavowals operating in *Double Negative*, compounded by an equal amount of theoretical and literary allusion, produce a poetic form that is both disorienting and difficult to read; moreover, given the text's commitment to an arguably essentialist lesbian-feminism, often expressed through landscape and animal imagery, the question arises of how—or *where*—one situates Marlatt and Warland in a queer theoretical project? To read with the text could easily result in reifying those very categories ("man/woman," "straight/lesbian") queer theorists have been attempting to dismantle in their pursuit of the "'subjectless' critique" (Eng, Halberstam and Muñoz 3).³³ Yet to simply impose a queer frame on a text that

³³ In "What's Queer About Queer Studies Now?" David L. Eng, Judith Halberstam and José Esteban Muñoz write, "What might be called the 'subjectless' critique of queer studies disallows any positing of a proper subject *of* or object *for* the field by insisting that queer has no fixed political referent. Such an understanding orients queer epistemology, despite the historical necessities of 'strategic essentialism' (Gayatri Spivak's famous term), as a continuing deconstruction of the tenets of positivism at the heart of identity politics." Eng, Halberstam, and Muñoz disavow the dismantling of the subject, arguing "it is crucial to insist yet again on the capacity of

seriously attempts to articulate what Susan Billingham identifies as a “legitimate subject position for lesbians” (4) risks not only ahistoricism, but could also foreclose instances of what José Esteban Muñoz calls, in *Cruising Utopia*, “an anticipatory illumination” (49), or moments of potentially queer resistance and subversion already operating in the past text. To criticize a text for not being “queer enough” would only continue the process of rationalized categorization that “queer” is already undergoing as a kind of aspirational, and therefore closed, identity position³⁴. As I will discuss further, one response to these concerns may be found in yet another configuration of the borderland.

While in the previous chapter on Jane Rule, I discuss how that writer’s various public lives (in both her own life and in her literary representations of queer artist figures) demonstrates a commitment to anti-censorship activism and sexual citizenship that crosses the aisle of a coalitional LGBTQ politics, Marlatt and Warland instead, as Holly Laird argues, “emphasize the female gender over and against the male and evoke a lesbian ‘utopia’ that appears to be separatist in impulse not only from defensively male and ‘straight’ postures, but [also] from alternative sexual perspectives (gay male, bisexual, transsexual, ‘queer’)” (220). Yet the utopic destination, like so many other objects in Marlatt and Warland’s text, is neither stable

queer studies to mobilize a broad social critique of race, gender, class, nationality, and religion, as well as sexuality” (3).

³⁴ I agree with Shannon Winnubst when she writes, “Whether through class or race specificity, academic elitism, or market fetishization, the term queer has, despite its attempts not to do so, produced exclusionary effects in localized sites of its signification. It has, in many arenas, become a site of privilege *par excellence*, positioning itself as the refusal of identity that only the most privileged can afford or achieve.” Instead, Winnubst considers queer as a “site” or “a space in which signification contests its own occurrence” (135).

nor finite. In this chapter, I argue that the writers interrogate, indeed inhabit, the limits of lesbian expression through the revision of the train and the desert as borderland utopias. For Gloria Anzaldúa, whose book *Borderlands/La Frontera* was published just one year before *Double Negative*, “a border is a dividing line” while “a borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and the forbidden are its inhabitants” (3). The spatial, and I argue, temporal, indeterminacy of the borderland is particularly relevant to Marlatt and Warland’s collaborative writing, especially in their problematizing of expression and representation as the ‘natural’ other to what Anzaldúa calls “the prohibited and the forbidden” (3).

Yet as Annamarie Jagose points out in *Lesbian Utopics*, the impulse to stage or imagine lesbianism as a utopia is fraught with unintentional returns to dominant systems, so that a one-way escape ends up becoming a round-trip: “given the utopic site’s disavowed dependency on those very economies from which it distinguishes itself, all these [utopic] spaces converge in the impossible dream of exteriority” (2). Jagose, for example, cautions against too easily interpreting Anzaldúa’s *mestiza* as a “utopic hybridization” that is “neither male nor female but lesbian; neither American nor Mexican, but Mexican-American” (137). She argues,

in order to reclaim the border as a utopic site, *Borderlands* must disavow the border’s difference from itself ... This nostalgia for the *mestiza* as the site of a utopic intermixture, hybridization, and confluence merely inverts the privileging, in the discourses of

colonialism, homophobia and phallocentrism, of the slash of the border as the site of taxonomic closure. (138)

Jagose instead suggests a different kind of “passageway between the two positions” of “liberation as proceeding fairly unproblematically from liberatory desire” without accounting for “continually changing . . . mechanisms of domination” on one side, and a strategy that “rules out the possibility of emancipation” altogether (161). Jagose writes that “locating the lesbian body as a site of discursive contestation allows a middle path” between these poles (161). In her reading of *Borderlands/La Frontera*, for example, Jagose emphasizes how the border is less a binary than a “tripartite structure” that accounts for the border and “the two oppositional categories it paradoxically conjoins in an elaboration of their distinctiveness” (139). By maintaining the “distinctiveness” of each ‘side,’ while allowing for the subversive dynamism of the border, this structure makes visible the “at times simultaneous . . . opposition, codependence, and even coincidence of those categories” (139). Drawing on this discussion, my usage of the term “borderland” operates in two senses simultaneously, as both that “undetermined” space between cities, settlements, points on a map (the train as a transitional line, the desert as so-called empty space to be crossed and not inhabited) and a temporal frontier marking what Muñoz identifies as a utopic futurity that is “not quite here [yet]” (7).

Responding to the anti-social turn in queer theory, attributed to scholars such as Leo Bersani (*Homos*) and Lee Edelman (*No Future*), and building on the utopian theory of Ernst Bloch, Muñoz writes,

[Fredric] Jameson's Marxian dictate 'always historicize' is not a methodological call for empirical data collection. Instead, it is a dialectical injunction, suggesting we animate our critical faculties by bringing the past to bear on the present and the future. Utopian hermeneutics offer us a refined lens to view queerness, insofar as queerness, if it is indeed not quite here, is nonetheless intensely relational with the past. (27)

So too, in *Double Negative*, the collusive histories of colonization, capitalism, ecological damage, and lesbian erasure are brought to bear on the present in order to imagine a utopic site that may, or may not, be in the future. As Marlatt and Warland, and other feminist writers of the desert demonstrate, the desert is the past in the present, so much as it continues to be colonized and mined for resource extraction even while it is seen as "given out" (Rule 105). By conflating, through imagery, the desert as lesbian space—even, perhaps problematically, as the lesbian body itself—Marlatt and Warland recuperate the desert's perceived lack of utility as a site of resistance and a locus of expression. As Elizabeth Freeman asks in *Time Binds*, in a discussion of the lesbian-feminist as the so-called "big drag" of queer theory, "How can we know for certain that something is securely done with?" (42). This chapter seeks to locate what "anticipatory illuminations" may be found in Marlatt and Warland's collaborative lesbian-feminist poetics, particularly in their problematizing of visibility and expression. As Jagose observes, if the desire for exteriority really is "a phantasmatic projection from the inside" of regulation, then figuring "'lesbian' [as inherently subversive] is quite literally a utopic space, *ou-topos*, no place" (163). I

argue that Marlatt and Warland attempt to articulate a paradigm outside heteropatriarchy, one that might appear utopic, at the same time they suggest that such a project must be, if not impossible, then always dynamic and always deferred: “we had not wanted it to end” they write—twice (33 and 56).

In the next section, I contextualize *Double Negative* by positioning the text within contemporaneous debates on sexual expression. I continue the discussion of space as it relates to the theory and criticism of collaborative writing in order to demonstrate how literary property and “the freedom of expression” are mutually implicated, and how collaboration troubles the discourse of ownership. I extend the latter argument when I turn to a discussion of travel writing, transgression, and *Double Negative*’s literary intertexts (Rule’s *Desert of the Heart*, Nicole Brossard’s *Mauve Desert*, and Robyn Davidson’s *Tracks*) and demonstrate how each text figures state regulation of the desert as a prohibition of lesbian and/or feminist expression that must either be exceeded or, in the case of citation, co-opted. The chapter concludes with an analysis of *Double Negative*’s innovative form, which produces a text that seeks to “reread” itself in order to “reverse” and ultimately “resist” heteropatriarchal erasures of lesbian desire in colonized space.³⁵ In *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault writes, “Where else could [categories] be juxtaposed except in the non-place of language? Yet, though language can spread them before us, it can do so only in unthinkable space” (qtd. in Winnubst 8). Shannon Winnubst, in *Queering Freedom*, considers “these spaces as ‘queer’—spaces where meaning is not preordained as a useful or recognizable *telos*, and the possibilities of other sorts of

³⁵ The epigraph to *Double Negative*, by Lola Lemire Tostevin, begins “rereading reverses to resist” (n.p.).

meaning, often those lost in the past, are still viable” (9). Using Winnubst’s theorization of limits, I posit that Marlatt and Warland, while engaging with the socio-politics of their present, ultimately invoke the desert as a borderland utopia, as an “unthinkable space” at the very limits of expression.

Billingham writes that almost three decades on, we must not underestimate the importance of *Double Negative*’s eroticism in its historical moment: “Marlatt and Warland’s intensely sensuous lesbian love poetry risked censure. The project of making lesbian lives visible was still clearly needed in 1988 in Canada, judging by the relative silence with which the book was greeted” (20). In one of Marlatt and Warland’s later collaborative texts, “Subject to Change,” they write that their goal may be

something in between lesbian pulp romance and politically correct
silence (each puritanical in impulse). the reader needs more. we read
these words with a double voraciousness. coming out // of our shells.
the writer lesbian, the reader lesbian shell shocked? sexing the page
lesbian. in our profound plurality (168)

Marlatt and Warland’s collaborative writing offers a poetics of disclosure, divulging both erotic and compositional moments to the reader in innovative forms that disavow syntactic or semantic closure. This “something in between” presents an alternative to definitions of the freedom of expression that otherwise subject those already at odds with the law back to the law’s own script. In “17:00 coming into Port Pirie,” Marlatt and Warland write,

off the map
opening up the Subject
hands a manual alphabet
i sign your V

PROHIBITED AREA

CONS: “French, cunt”

the imaginary

two women in a birth (21)

By reframing the specifically lesbian subject—in language and off the map—Marlatt and Warland create an exclusionary site that ultimately allows for a vibrant expression not *in* or *against* the letter of the law, but in-between, the “prohibited area” at the limits of expression.

2. “the lines are drawn”: Collaboration, Literary Property, and the Freedom of Expression

In her ground-breaking 1984 essay, “Thinking Sex,” Gayle Rubin astutely observes that each era of sexual panic, from the Victorian crusade against masturbation to the 1950s persecution of North American homosexuals, “leave[s] a residue in the form of laws, social practices, and ideologies which then affect the way in which sexuality is experienced long after the immediate conflicts have faded” (144). Reflecting on the year in which she writes, Rubin prophesies, “The settlements that emerge from the 1980s will have an impact far into the future” (144-145). Indeed, more than any other decade in recent history, the eighties remain a bellwether epoch in the history of North American sexual censorship, and one that continues to inform our contemporary debates regarding gender and sexual expression, privacy, and the anxiety of crossing the boundaries of nation, gender, and “morality”—scare quotes still very much intact. The eighties were particularly productive, if volatile,

due in part to what became known as the “Sex Wars,” or the divisive movements and counter-movements within feminist activism regarding sexual expression and legislation in both the US and Canada. While the *R. v. Butler* Supreme Court decision came down in 1992, the theoretical and juridical antecedents to the Canadian court’s redefinition of obscenity based on its potential to harm may be found in a strand of radical feminist thought with its roots in the 1970s. While civil libertarians and liberals in the late 1960s—alongside many feminists, gays, and lesbians—defended pornography as another means of escaping repressive tradition, by the end of the seventies, pornography—and, importantly, a perceived rise in violent hard-core imagery—was increasingly viewed as a dangerous excess of sexual liberation (Lacombe 20). As I discussed in the previous chapter, Rule subtly represents this attitudinal shift toward pornography in her novel, *Contract with the World*, when the photographer Allen Dent becomes embroiled in a scandal that recalls *The Body Politic* raids.

Into the 1980s, American feminists such as Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon began to reconceptualise the critique of pornography, shifting its focus from morality to power, “from the representation of sex per se to the representation of sexism” (Cossman and Bell 21). This line of critique culminated in attempting, and largely succeeding in Canada’s *Butler* decision, to reify the link between imaginative or simulated representations and real-life sexual violence. In other words, these activists sought to prove that pornography posed real harm to society, namely women. As I have discussed at greater length in the dissertation’s introductory chapter, the Little Sister’s case revealed how the *Butler* decision led to the broader classification

and detention of gay and lesbian cultural materials, including erotic writing and imagery, as obscene. Yet as Brenda Cossman and Shannon Bell point out, following Foucault, “power is productive...[and] power produces resistances” (23). A range of activist and artist collectives and collaborations—Marlatt and Warland among them—were borne of this period of increased feminist and lesbian visibility, debate, and creative production. As sociologists Mariana Valverde and Lorna Weir argue in their contribution to the 1985 collection *Women Against Censorship*, “Throughout most of [the twentieth] century, lesbians have existed in a limbo somewhere between invisibility and persecution” (99). While laws against “gross indecency” were increasingly used against gay and bisexual men in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for example, Queen Victoria “[refused] to sign a law against lesbianism because, she said, women just didn’t do that sort of thing” (Valverde and Weir 99). The authors go on to write, “Since the word ‘lesbian’ was coined, we have struggled for the right to define ourselves and create our own image of who we are” and this right extends to, even necessitates, “the attempt to create, invent and imagine our own self-image as lesbians through lesbian song, poetry and art” (102).

In “the white page,” one of Warland’s theorograms³⁶ collected in *Proper Deafinitions*, she writes,

I, like many feminist artists, have not come to my position of anti-censorship easily, but I have come to realize that in asserting my right to write openly as a feminist lesbian, I must also accept the

³⁶ Warland defines a theorogram as “a written shard of memory and of theory, highly condensed and suggestive, pointing to new thought, eluding precise definition, inviting each reader to come in and share its imaginative potential” (n.p.).

pornographer's right. For ultimately, no governing body within patriarchy could ever be trusted to understand the difference between the two. (61)

This passage provides an intriguing entry into a discussion of free expression and literary property. For Warland, expression is a spatially oriented “right” with freedom defined as writing outside the regulation found “within patriarchy.” Yet this assertion of freedom is not merely about exceeding prohibition but rather inhabiting the uneasy site between writing as a “feminist lesbian” and a “pornographer,” with the implication that the boundary, or “the difference between them,” is blurred for both the writer and the potential censor. The latter also extends to the breaking down of aesthetic and generic boundaries, as Warland considers language-centred writing—the experimental, disjunctive mode that allows her “to question the nature of [her] relationship to the English language” (*Proper* 35)—a borderland poetics: “this is my script: my inherited *limits, limes, borderlines between fields*. These are my de/marcations; the sites of my vision” (*Proper* 37). Warland’s use of the first-person possessive pronoun, and the invocation of rights discourse, indicates how our conception of the freedom of expression is bound, implicitly, to the individual speaking and writing subject in a particular space. In this section, I discuss the relationship between expression, particularly in an anti-censorship context, and the individual within liberal-democracy, in order to consider what happens to the freedom of expression if we multiply its subjects.

Double Negative marks the first co-signed and book-length collaboration by Marlatt and Warland, originally published by Gynergy Books in 1988; however, the

authors' collaborative writing extends across the decade and into the early 1990s. In 1994, *Two Women in a Birth* collected Marlatt's "Touch to My Tongue" (1984) and Warland's "open is broken" (1984), two long-distance poems addressed to each other, as well as the co-written "Reading and Writing between the Lines" (1988) and "Subject to Change" (1991). As Billingham points out, Marlatt and Warland have demonstrated a commitment to building and sustaining a wide-reaching network of women writers throughout their careers. After first meeting at York University's Dialogue Conference, organized by Barbara Godard in 1981, both Marlatt and Warland served on the editorial collective and journal, *Tessera*, "the most sustained outlet for feminist explorations, especially as a point of exchange between anglophone and Québécoise writers" (Billingham 1-2). The emphasis on reading and writing across borders continued with 1983's *Women and Words/Les Femmes et les mots* conference, coordinated by Marlatt and Warland, as well as the conference and book *Telling It: Women and Language across Cultures* (1990), which Marlatt and Warland co-edited with Sky Lee and Lee Maracle (Billingham 2).

As Laird points out, collaborative texts are often "preoccupied with collaboration in relation to, at times as a path to, various kinds of equity, both socioliterary and erotic" (1). Yet "equity" is a particularly loaded term, as it suggests "the quality of being equal or fair" and, beginning in the eighteenth century, the value of land ownership and personal property (*OED*). Winnubst discusses at length how our current understanding of equity has, over time, become conflated with enclosure—especially the individual's ownership of him or herself. Winnubst refers to "the logic of the limit" or "a kind of logic that binds classical liberalism to

phallicized whiteness through the shared value of individualism—a cornerstone, in turn, of advanced capitalism” (18). She goes on to write,

In classical liberalism, freedom holds itself out as the transgression of boundaries and liberation from constraint. For example, we might think that we will liberate ourselves from domination if we engage in transgressive behaviors that violate our designated race, sex, gender, class, nationality, or religion. But the logic of the limit shows, as Bataille and Foucault among others also see, that such notions of freedom as the transgression of boundaries or liberation from constraint only enmesh us further in the very systems of domination we seek to resist. (18)

Yet these boundaries, as Winnubst points out, are what make us individual subjects through the delineation and containment of the self: “The individual deserves and requires rights because it exists as a demarcated, separable unit unto itself; conversely, the individual also emerges as a product of the idea of rights” (25). Thus, Winnubst demonstrates, “the role of the law becomes to vigilantly protect this ahistorical unit, the individual, from the discriminations and violences of historical vicissitudes.” The individual’s use of his or her power remains “its expression of freedom” (41). The individual owns the product of his or her labour, so that, as Winnubst puts it, “To labor is to extend the property that is one’s body into the property of the world. To labor is to appropriate” (29). In this framework, then, expression becomes inevitably bound not only to the claiming of rights, but also to the claiming of space.

More specifically, I argue, by extrapolating Winnubst's analysis, the freedom of expression and literary property are mutually implicated. One might assume that collaborative compositional modes inherently disrupt the latter trajectory by evading the enclosure of the individual genius in favour of communitarian models of ownership. Yet as Lorraine York points out, collaboration can instead make "property anxieties" visible in productive ways (*Rethinking* 8). Or, as she phrases it elsewhere, alluding to Marlatt and Warland directly, in "[the] cramped and overcrowded quarters of two or more women authors 'in a birth,' ... instead of an easy harmony, [there is] the much more absorbing cultural spectacle of women who are differently engaged" (*Rethinking* 37). Indeed, as Wayne Koestenbaum argues in *Double Talk*, a study of homoerotic and homosocial male collaboration, the word "collaboration" already carries an inheritance of combative struggle for territory: "In wartime, collaborators are traitors who join the enemy. The very word 'collaboration' connotes moral bankruptcy, stratagems exercised in the face of national defeat" (8). While Koestenbaum suggests that "double writers bear the stain" (8) of the word's political history, Marlatt and Warland identify its potential power, too:

i find it difficult to use the word collaboration with its military censure, its damning in the patriot's eyes (the Father appears here with his defining gaze, his language of the law). collaboration implies that who we are collaborating with holds all the power. the lines are drawn. but perhaps it's the very subversion implicit in collaboration that i might see in our favour were we to move between the lines. when i see us working together reciprocally, then what i see us working at is this subversion of the definitive. ("Reading and Writing" 133)

In fact, lesbian collaborators might explicitly seek a kind of "national defeat," in Koestenbaum's words, by intervening in a legal discourse that has erased them, when it is not litigating against them.

Laird suggests that in teasing out the patriarchal roots of collaboration as it is generally understood, Marlatt and Warland find that “the resistance fighter may be she who can find *double talk* in ‘collaboration,’ its ‘implied’ ‘subversion’; she can ‘move between the lines’ drawn by the law” (203-204). Collaboration’s twentieth-century shadow of resistance and spying is heteropatriarchal in its implications, but as this discussion suggests, collaboration’s political subversion is open to feminist and queer appropriation as well. Collaboration offers a form of coverage, as in ‘going undercover’ and ‘spreading the word’ simultaneously. Canadian performance artist Shawna Dempsey observes, “It is no coincidence that so much contemporary Canadian lesbian artwork is collaborative. The double marginalization of gender and sexual orientation makes voicing our positions difficult, indeed dangerous” (qtd. in *Kiss & Tell, Her Tongue* 27). Dempsey points to the irony that collaboration both calls attention to itself as transgressive at the same time it allows for the possibility of concealment and diversion.

As Bette London suggests, collaboration is “a borderline phenomenon, demarcating the boundaries of respectable authorship” (119). The question of respectability extends to the borderlines, both national and poetic, as well. The Kiss & Tell Collective, Vancouver-based contemporaries of Marlatt and Warland, similarly engage questions of national and sexual expression in their exhibition and book, *Drawing the Line: Lesbian Sexual Politics on the Wall*, developed in response to the debates regarding pornography and lesbian erotica in the 1980s. Kiss & Tell provides a useful corollary to Marlatt and Warland as each collaborative project explores the limits of lesbian sexual expression in transnational contexts. The *Drawing the Line*

exhibit featured one hundred erotic photographs by Susan Stewart (collaborating with Persimmon Blackridge and Lizard Jones as co-creators and models). During the exhibit, the photographs were arranged on the wall “from less to more controversial” (*Drawing* n.p.), so that soft embraces led to the increasing presence of sexualized roleplay, additional partners, and bondage. Visitors to the exhibition were encouraged to express their thoughts and reactions to the photographs in writing; female visitors wrote their responses on the wall around the photographs and male visitors wrote comments in the pages of a book. The latter strategy offers a major point of difference between the collaborative practice of Kiss & Tell—largely accessible to the public and popular in form (the erotic photograph)—and Marlatt and Warland’s more challenging experimental poetics that seek to create an exclusive space for lesbian-feminist expression. As Kiss & Tell explain, “Interaction happens on many levels: between the models, between the photographers and the models, between the viewers and the photographs, between the viewers and other viewers’ comments” (*Drawing* n.p.). The exhibit draws attention to the subjective contingency of the line between acceptable and unacceptable representation; moreover, by viewing erotic or pornographic photography in a public, even sanctified, space of high culture, the division between what is appropriate for public or private consumption dissolves.

When Kiss & Tell published *Drawing the Line* as a book in 1991, the format highlighted the fact that the exhibit had travelled throughout Canada, the US, and Australia: the creators selected forty of the one hundred photographs and arranged the book as a series of postcards so that readers could share the images, reorder the exhibit, or even “tear up the ones [they] hate” (n.p.). The form has its pornographic

antecedents in the erotic postcards purchased on travels to exotic locales in previous centuries (Martin 207). The postcards also point to how the postal service has been used as a censorship mechanism by the state, as I discussed in terms of *The Body Politic* raids in the previous chapter. The blank space on the back of the postcard allows for the conversation on the gallery walls to continue; however, the creators also include some of the original commentary in the book. The visitors' responses to the photographs vary in tone from the humorously banal ("I love sex and nature. Too bad I have allergies") to the personal ("I wish my lover didn't live in Ohio") to more pointed political commentary that questions why, for example, so many LGBTTQ people place such emphasis on the inherent positive value of sexual representation: "Is this private obsession with sex and its variety a way that we are turning in on ourselves and ignoring the problems in the world at large? What does this imagery do to help me think about myself in relation to my community?" (n.p.). Some comments suggest that no men or "straights" should be allowed to view the photographs while others oppose any representation of simulated violence. Dialogue between commenters is particularly revealing. One woman writes, in response to a scene of BDSM, "I am a lesbian and I am not into rape and violence. This to me is BULLSHIT" while another responds, "*I am a lesbian, not into rape and violence, and this turns me on*" (n.p.). As Kiss & Tell reflects on their medium, "Photographs have a wonderful ability to traverse the edge between what is commonly known as reality and the invented, making it unclear which is which" (*Her Tongue* 14). The writing may be on the wall, but the message is anything but clear: the line between good and bad sex is always being redrawn.

Kiss & Tell queer the tension between individual and collaborative cultural property when they write, “The idea of an artwork ‘belonging’ to an individual artist is hard to get rid of. It’s kind of like when you’re non-monogamous and everyone wants to know which one’s your ‘real’ girlfriend” (32). Marlatt and Warland are similarly resistant to readers’ attempts at “‘parsing’ the collaboration,” York’s term for the critical desire to identify who wrote various parts in a text (“Crowding the Garret” 292). Indeed, Marlatt and Warland claim, “all writing is collaboration [and] here we question the delineation between the collectivity of conversation and the individual’s ownership of the written” (“Reading and Writing” 141). For York, this resistance is always spatially inflected as she argues, “the shared collaborative space must be territorialized so that the single, individuated authors can remain intact” (“Crowding the Garret” 293). Pushing this notion of territory further, London suggests “exoticism...plays a constitutive role in the collaborative project” (119). Colonialist tropes recur throughout the theory and criticism of literary collaboration. Perhaps this is because, as Manina Jones argues in her discussion of Rudy Wiebe and Yvonne Johnson’s *Stolen Life: The Journey of a Cree Woman*, “Colonialism, as Marxist critics insist, is at base about property.” Jones goes on to question in Wiebe and Johnson’s work, “How, then, might [colonialism] be implicated in the negotiation of *literary* property rights in this collaborative enterprise?” (218). A similar question needs to be asked of *Double Negative* as well, as the poets bring together a critique of lesbian erasure, erotic confession, and the politics of decolonization in Australia.

As York points out, the question of property and women’s collaborative writing is already intriguing, “especially since women’s historical relation to property

has been, in many cultures, a tenuous one to begin with” (*Rethinking* 124). Yet York and others caution against interpreting collaboration as inherently progressive, radical, or decentering, especially when it comes to issues of property and the ‘grounds’ of self-expression: “collaborative art departs from the constructed centrality of individual authorship, property, or power relations, only to find that centres replicate themselves” (York, *Rethinking* 136). York’s comments echo Winnubst and, especially, Jagose, who critiques the notion that the lesbian identity position (and, arguably, the categories gay and bisexual as well) carries inherent subversion:

The transgressive potential of this category [lesbian] proceeds logically from its alleged location beyond culture and discourse; its triumphant excess of prohibitive laws. Consequently, the project of feminist utopics that aims to secure a space beyond phallogocentric prioritizations of masculinity and heterosexuality often depends upon the category ‘lesbian’; indeed, frequently the category ‘lesbian’ is assumed to be always already implicated in that project. (Jagose 2)

Both Jagose and Winnubst argue that we must historicize the categories that enclose us, even if those same identities claim to liberate us from prohibition. According to Winnubst, “To queer freedom is...to deepen our grasp of the historicity of these categories” (17) because “the logic of the limit shows how these concepts of identity and difference are ultimately two sides of the same coin” (18). Similarly, queer collective creation—though arguably staging an intervention against dominant ideologies of property—risks too easily being considered a utopic compositional mode that escapes questions of territory.

As I have argued throughout this section, individualism is central to both the freedom of expression and literary property. Yet it is important to remember that the individual's right to free speech is particularly complicated under Canada's constitution where expression is both a "fundamental freedom" *and* a limited category under section 1 of the Charter, which allows the government to place "reasonable limits" on speech in cases of treason, obscenity, and hate speech, for example. Unlike other democracies such as the United States with its First Amendment right, Canada does *not* protect the absolute freedom of expression. Instead, the "fundamental" freedom of expression attempts to balance the rights of the individual against the community or, rather, communities within the nation-state. If collaboration attempts, and not always successfully, to disentangle the individual from the discourse of literary property, how does collaboration alter our understanding of the freedom of expression, particularly as the latter is equally indebted to the inheritance of individualism and rights discourse?

Just as York and others have reconsidered the radical politics of collaboration, and Jagose, Winnubst, and others have offered critiques of identity-based politics, we can question the way the freedom of expression has been too often viewed as a total escape from prohibition, which, as Winnubst shows, is an impossible feat. She writes, "When we desire freedom, we may be seduced by systems of domination" (2). York, Winnubst, and Jagose all draw upon Foucault's writing on transgression, deeply indebted to Georges Bataille and subsequently informing Judith Butler's arguments on hate speech and performativity. In "A Preface to Transgression," Foucault writes, "Transgression incessantly crosses and recrosses a line which closes up behind it in a

wave of extremely short duration, and thus it is made to return once more right to the horizon of the uncrossable” (34). Following Foucault, an alternative conception of the freedom of expression may view it not as a single ahistorical line to be crossed, but a moveable frontier in which those very limits are constantly being drawn, contested, renegotiated, and transgressed. Truly ‘free’ expression may then be very ‘queer,’ and thus, to echo Muñoz, not quite ‘here.’ As Butler writes in *Excitable Speech*,

Indeed, as we think about worlds that might one day become thinkable, sayable, legible, the opening up of the foreclosed and the saying of the unspeakable become part of the very ‘offense’ that must be committed in order to expand the domain of linguistic survival. The resignification of speech requires opening new contexts, speaking in ways that have never yet been legitimated, and hence producing legitimation in new and future forms. (41)

The struggle, particularly apparent in a collaborative project, remains that while “limits constitute property and propriety” they also “constitute legibility” (Winnubst 23-24) and provide “the site of identity forming through its relation with otherness” (Winnubst 116).

By writing collaboratively, Marlatt and Warland inhabit the limit, what Foucault calls the “horizon of the uncrossable” (34), and attempt, through appropriation and subversion of the lyric, travelogue, and language itself, to produce “legitimation in new and future forms” (Butler 41). Yet rather than reading Marlatt and Warland’s collaborative poetics as a clean break from heteropatriarchy, I instead find in *Double Negative* a keen awareness of the historical contingencies of the freedom of

expression discussed above, as well as a suspicion of a rights discourse borne of the same system they are attempting to critique. Even as Marlatt and Warland take on what appears to be a strategically essentialist position in order to write out against lesbian erasure—the dominant ideology that reads two women as a “double negative”—they write in a self-consciously delimited position which allows them to both exceed sexual prohibition and critique representation simultaneously: “this is not description this/power of the other/(half of the world/spelled out” (*Double* 9). In the next section, I consider Marlatt and Warland’s engagement with travel as it recurs in their collaborative project to demonstrate how the crossing of inter- and intranational borders prefigures a transgression in language.

3. “between the already spoken and the unspeakable”: Travel and Transgression

As Kristi Siegel points out, the popular appeal of women’s travel writing throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (and arguably our own), was based on the transgression of the woman abroad, whose narrative must maintain a “decorum of indecorum, a fine balance in which they [strain] the conventions of femininity, but [do] not break them” (Siegel, “Introduction” 3). Siegel discusses what she calls “the rhetoric of peril,” or the notion that women’s travel, in almost any circumstance, is perceived to be inherently dangerous (“Women’s Travel” 61).³⁷

³⁷ This peril is almost always sexualized and racialized. Siegel points out that while Davidson’s *Tracks*, one of *Double Negative*’s key intertexts, was marketed for its story of a woman’s solo journey across the desert, in the memoir Davidson describes how she is repeatedly warned by white Australians to forego the trek alone because of the perceived threat of rape by the desert’s Indigenous inhabitants (Siegel 68).

Across their collaborative projects, Marlatt and Warland draw upon the sexual politics of travel and expression in order to articulate a linguistic space beyond the regulation of borders. In “Touch to My Tongue,” for example, Marlatt writes, “we meet in these far places we find in each other” (9). Throughout the long-poem there is a merger of space, place, and the distances between (and inside) the erotic, language-mediated body. In “Hidden ground,” Marlatt anticipates the metaphors of movement, and particularly the track, that emerge later in *Double Negative*. She writes, “though moon and the maps say always I am on the right track, the Trans-Canada heading east—everything in me longs to turn around, go back to you” (17). These poems of long-distance yearning suggest how desire, and here a particularly lesbian desire, reorients spatial understanding by countering the directionality of the highway, the map, and even the moon’s gravitational pull. In her essay “Musing with mothertongue,” included in “Touch to My Tongue,” Marlatt articulates how her lesbian-feminist language poetics are interdependent with issues of location: “it is both place (where we are situated) and body (that contains us), that body of language we speak, our mothertongue” (25). Even desire is figured for its potential movement and ability to, literally, attract, as association is rendered as “a form of thought that is not rational but erotic because it works by attraction” (26). In Marlatt’s “Musing with mothertongue,” it becomes clear how this location-within-language relates to expression. Articulating a “new woman writer,” Marlatt calls her an “inhabitant of language, not master, not even mistress” who exists “on that double edge where she has always lived, between the already spoken and the unspeakable...inside language she leaps for joy, shoving out the walls of taboo and propriety, kicking syntax,

discovering life in old roots” (29). The latter is similar to what Butler refers to in *Excitable Speech* as the “border of the unsayable” where “agency is derived from limitations in language, and that limitation is not fully negative in its implications” (41). Indeed, for Butler, such limitations are a recoverable form of “unofficial censorship,” because language always “constitutes the subject in part through foreclosure...or primary restriction in speech that constitutes the possibility of agency in speech” (41). As Butler argues, one must “offen[d]...in order to expand the domain of linguistic survival” (Butler 41) and such offenses, as Foucault and others have argued, depend upon limits.

Like Marlatt, Warland’s poetics are equally concerned with tropes of mobility, yet more explicit in their engagement with censorship. In “open is broken,” Warland writes that English “tongue-ties” her and that this “‘restricted mobility’ was most apparent in [her] attempts to speak of [her] erotic life.” She observes, “few erotic texts exist in north american women’s writing. is it taboo?” (33). To emphasize how this “restricted mobility” relates to the page’s literal boundaries, Warland utilizes the margins of the page, placing “TABOO” and “ROMANCE” beneath the previous commentary. In her recent book on writing and pedagogy, *Breathing the Page: Reading the Act of Writing*, Warland refers to the page as “a public space” and argues that a writer’s “habitual manner of occupying and not occupying public space influences how they routinely inhabit and refuse to inhabit the page” (91). For Warland, in “open is broken,” writing is always situated at the limits of propriety, and like Marlatt “discovering life in old roots,” she traces a personal etymology:

‘rite.’ RITE: ‘retornare, to return.’ RETURN: ‘turn, threshold, thread.’
the thread knotted around our tongues—untied, spirals us to the edge.

MARK: ‘merg-, boundary, border, marking out the boundary by walking around it (ceremonially ‘beating the bounds’). (“open is broken” 36)

For both Marlatt and Warland, location is more than merely the subject of their writing; rather, language itself can be thought of as a liminal space to inhabit, a space of imminent transgression.

In the previous section I argued that claiming the freedom of expression is based on individuating one’s self and, by extension, one’s literary labour. In *Double Negative*, such a gesture is problematized through collaboration and yet still bound to issues of property. The desert is re-claimed and, arguably, re-enclosed as a space of expression: the crossing and re-crossing of lines, to echo Foucault, on the land and in language. When Marlatt and Warland merge the landscape and lesbian sexuality, they attempt to explore both as almost-utopic spaces; however, travel writing and tourism are fraught with gender, race, and class assumptions that are difficult to undo. As Puar observes,

A culturally defined and driven homophobia does not, after all, deflect the lure of an exotic (queer) paradise; instead, it encourages a continuity of colonial constructions of tourism as a travel adventure into uncharted territory laden with the possibility of taboo sexual encounters, illicit seductions, and dangerous liaisons—a version of what Renato Rosaldo terms ‘imperial nostalgia.’ (113)

As I will discuss further, Marlatt and Warland remain keenly aware of this specifically queer ‘tourist trap’ even if their “risky” (Billingham 2) associations

between women, lesbians, landscape, and Indigenous people threaten to reify the very hierarchies they attempt to unhinge.

4. Intersexting the Desert

“The desert is indescribable,” Brossard writes at the beginning of her 1987 novel, *Mauve Desert* (1). In *Double Negative*, Marlatt and Warland seemingly concur: “i had wanted to be less descriptive/be as the Nullarbor ‘not any tree’/no syntax only syllables” (28). Despite this desire to write against description, Marlatt and Warland find rather “the urge is to gather as a wave to the sea/handwriting waving as eye passes through” (29). Brossard, too, writes, “I wanted [the desert] both in focus and out of the frame” (18). The paradox of the desert as both “indescribable” and yet an idealized landscape ‘framed’ for representation points to its utopic figuration both in *Double Negative* and the collection’s intertexts. As the word inherits a doubled etymology from the ancient Greek, “utopia” is both ou-topia, “no place” and eu-topia, a “good place” (*OED*). The desert, as I suggested at the outset of this chapter, is also a borderland or frontier, as it is often portrayed as a transitional though ultimately uninhabitable zone, a barren space one traverses on the journey to a specific place. In this section, I extend the earlier discussion of collaboration and property to an analysis of Marlatt and Warland’s reclamation of the desert as a new site of lesbian expression. This territorializing is not without ideological risks, especially the essentialism inherent in equating the lesbian body with the landscape, and the threat of reanimating the appropriation of Indigenous land and culture in Australia.

In *Double Negative*, Marlatt and Warland recuperate the desert's forsaken past³⁸ when they reimagine Australia's Nullarbor as a potential "paradise" for lesbian-feminist expression: "we've been here before making a home in the desert dreaming more than survival dreaming domestic paradise in the heart of the lost [...] as if *as if* (wishes were camels and we could ride) off in our own making" (45). The recuperation of the desert's negative space becomes dependent on Marlatt and Warland's near-conflation of the landscape with the lesbian body; however, I hesitate to read these moments as always-foreclosed mergers between the body and the land, particularly due to the use of enjambment in the lyric poetry. Certainly the imagery feminizes the landscape so that the desert is described as "the womb of the continent" (13) painted in "red ochre menstrual stain" (24). And throughout the text, spaces within the train, figured as a bedroom (berth) but also, as Marlatt writes in "Crossing Loop," "a berth/birth/byrth" (36), the writers insist upon a shared female-centred interiority. Elsewhere, the earth is called "the Great Womb" (33). Most explicitly, in "14:50 Peterborough" they write, reflecting back on viewing Katoomba's "falling waters", "you said they were us, the mountains" (17) and now the "wheat fields" near Peterborough correlate to "stubble legs on the table in the sun" (17). Yet such moments often indicate a difference between the desire to be *in* the landscape and to render the body *as* landscape. Particularly in describing sexual contact, enjambment subtly marks the boundary between these desires. For example, they write, "image cattle climb the/soft mound of a hill lost/dip or cleft a/V to view" (18) and later, in

³⁸ The etymology of "desert," from the Latin "desertus" meaning "abandoned, forsaken, left or lying waste" (*OED*), reveals a past disavowed in the present: a space must have been at one time inhabited if it is now "abandoned."

“15:25 Zanthus,” they write of the “Indian Ocean at dawn/your Mound of V pulling me” (28). The line break, like all borders, becomes a site of separation and suture so that viewing the tides of the “Indian Ocean at dawn” and the eroticism of “your Mound of V pulling me” may be read as distinct though semantically interrelated objects.

Billingham points out that this erotic landscape and animal imagery is indicative of the essentialism which became a “source of controversy” in Marlatt criticism of the 1990s (Billingham 2). Critics such as Barbara Godard, Frank Davey, Lola Lemire Tostevin, and Lianne Moyes debated and problematized Marlatt’s nature-based “feminine” imagery and “a nostalgia for origins or the mother” (Billingham 2). In *Double Negative*, animals are invoked to suggest an ecological eroticism that traverses the human/nature divide, represented by the safe confines of the train; that is, the speakers’ imagine their bodies as fully merged with the landscape. For example, after viewing a line of emu in the desert, Marlatt and Warland write

we are

full of them
 their power
 that of the momentary
 we dream into
 synchrony

touching you
 i touch kangaroo
 lick my way through
 your red fur

the emu walk my lips do
 at your blowhole

breathing stars, moon
saltbush scrub (27)

Billingham advocates for a partly strategic view of this essentialism, as “To achieve political and social change, some form of difference must be posited, based on categories such as ‘women’ and ‘lesbians.’” Yet Billingham goes on to write, “Warland and Marlatt’s writing also resists the rigid prescription of any one ‘essential’ identity, viewing the subject as an entity that must be constantly questioned and restructured” (6). To this end, while the lyrics frequently feminize and eroticize the landscape, many of the prose poems in “Real 2” end with a form of the same question: “what is woman (on a train)?” (42), “what is woman (in the desert)?” (44), “what is woman (in her own fiction)?” (47). By literally bracketing the contingent locations (in the world, in language) that affect, even alter, “womanhood”, the category of gender itself becomes destabilized.

In order to reclaim the desert as a site of this decentering process, the writers must first embrace its negativity, which they equate with the perceived “double” negation of lesbian partnership:

negative feminine space

walking into the diner
“are you ladies alone?”

“no”

“we’re together”

i look out the window
déjà vu:

nothing looking at nothing (20)

The speakers as a lesbian couple are paradoxically ‘alone together’ because their relationship forecloses the status-giving presence of male heterosexuality. When the view turns toward the desert, where they are “‘watching nothing going by’” (22), Marlatt and Warland suggest a correlation between the erasure of lesbian desire and the geo-political concept of *terra nullius* (land belonging to no one), a concept rooted in colonialism and expressed in landscape painting and photography. Winnubst points to Locke’s writing on utility and property, i.e. the notion that we claim rights to land only by enclosing it and making it useful, and the way the latter was used for a defense of colonialism:

In their failure to use—or master or dominate—the land, Native Americans suffer from a faulty mode of appropriation [in the Lockean system]. They fail to constitute the land as property and thereby fail to own it. And this failure confirms their inferior moral and rational state: they have failed God’s mandate to exercise rationality and reduce wild nature to human utility. (27)

By invoking *terra nullius* in terms of the female body, Marlatt and Warland make a complicated rhetorical gesture: they want to claim the desert as a site of desire and woman-centered creativity, overturning the notion that the lesbian body is empty or without use, while at the same time avoiding repeating the erasure of Indigenous peoples over whose land they trespass.

One of *Double Negative*’s enduring critical controversies remains the writers’ engagement with Australia’s colonial history and its Indigenous peoples. Brenda Carr’s “Collaboration in the Feminine,” published in *Tessera* in 1990, is the first

critical engagement with the work. Carr largely focuses on how *Double Negative* serves as an example of women's collaborative writing that "re-verses literary and socio-cultural grounds to facilitate the emergence of a female-defined collaborative subject position on which female agency, or the ability to change oppressive social practices and structures, may be contingent" (112). Carr also raises what has become a central concern in the text's reception by pointing to how the writers connect "the colonization of women and minority groups with that of the earth and its creatures" and argues that by listing several of Australia's Indigenous place names the writers participate in a form of "linguistic decolonization" (116). In *Double Negative*, Marlatt and Warland express an awareness of "the royal we/glancing off, gazing out//but we are not/apart from it" (17). In other words, as white Anglophone tourists, the speakers recognize they are participating in the same capitalist structures of imperialism they mean to critique. In an attempt to decolonize this vision, the writers list Indigenous words: "Yunta, Paratoo, Ucolta, Yongala / [...] 'the oldest living language' shaping our tongues lips/to speak it out (though we do not know the meanings)" (23). Mix acknowledges the ways in which "the intensely private, erotic moments of the love lyric [serve] as a way to engage public issues such as colonialism and gender politics, thus deconstructing the potential divisions between public and private" (292); however, she diverges from Carr by observing that Marlatt and Warland's expression of "solidarity with aboriginal peoples seems overly romanticized and perhaps even condescending" (309). Billingham similarly problematizes the Indigenous words being used as "arbitrary signifiers ready to be refilled with meaning" (23). Both acknowledge that Marlatt and Warland's coalitional vision attempts to bring together

uses of the land, language, and feminism that lead to some “risky” (Billingham 2) associations.

Yet according to Warland, such risks are necessary. In her theorogram “the white page,” her statement on censorship is grounded in the debates on cultural appropriation and transnational feminism occurring in the late 1980s, when feminists of colour issued “a deeply felt and clearly stated directive [to white authors]....to desist from writing out of their cultures” (Warland, *Proper* 61). Warland recognizes the risk of cultural appropriation while also observing that the further erasure of women of colour in white feminist writing would be problematic; moreover, she notes that some writers might interpret the directive to desist as yet another form of censorship (*Proper* 62). Ultimately, Warland concedes that she cannot write from the perspective of a person of colour, arguing “it is very perilous to think we can speak authentically from this point of view” (*Proper* 64). While in *Double Negative* Marlatt and Warland express their desire to abscond into a desert out of time, where “it could have been any century/it could have been before our counting” (10), in “the white page,” Warland identifies the problematic implications of such utopic desires: “I wonder if we white women are feeling our culture is so stained and depleted that we long to escape it, or at least mitigate it with the newness of another culture. If so, I think we must be vigilant about the possible connection of this urge with colonialism” (*Proper* 64). Indeed, in *Double Negative*, Marlatt and Warland write,

“from the beginning”
ab/original

we use their words for things, places
and they are different in our mouths

the oldest living language group in the world

we don't know where they come from
we can't go back
not to the roots we know

Indo-European words, dead wood
sentences tracking
across the untracked, the
intractably here (14-15)

The writers express a desire to enter the landscape, to resettle the desert as a utopic site, at the same time they are critical of this impulse. While I largely agree with Mix and Billingham's assessment of the authors' invocation of Indigenous place names, it is important to note that Marlatt and Warland do not consistently represent the desert as a 'pre-historic' space outside of settler-colonialism and heteropatriarchy (even if they concede a desire to find such a site). They do not represent the landscape as untouched but rather attempt to show the "palm trees grain elevators/signs mutating like mixed metaphors" (19) and later they note the "visual evidence of someone's/passing through" (22), including their own. Yet writing in English in a settler-colonial space results, inescapably, in sending out more "sentences tracking" (15) over the land.

In fact, in *Double Negative*, the desert becomes filled with more voices. In the "Crossing Loop" dialogue, Warland observes, "there is some kind of a North American lesbian tradition of exploring the feminine in relation to the desert which is usually seen as an arena for *male* activities. I find it quite exciting that there's this female movement into the desert saying 'this is mine too and i relate to it in a different way'" (*Double* 38). Through allusion, citation, and quotation, Marlatt and Warland bring together a community of contemporary women writers sharing this

tradition: “Jane [Rule] at her table (in the desert) u and your table (in the desert) Nicole [Brossard] at her table (in the desert) and me at this table (in the desert) not there but there writing” (54). Later, they write, “we are ever dependent on Robyn [Davidson] in the Gibson Desert finally *present*” (54-55). Davidson’s memoir, *Tracks*, documents the writer’s 1700-mile journey by foot and camel across the continent. Brossard’s *Mauve Desert*, a translation of a novel within a novel, offers a specifically lesbian exploration of the desert as a space of female-centered intra- and intertextuality, at the same time the Nevada desert is rendered as both an “exhausting solitude” (28) and “a real danger” (184) to the young woman, Melanie, who drives through it. Similarly, in Rule’s 1964 novel *Desert of the Heart*, Evelyn Hall, a Berkeley English professor, travels to Reno for several weeks in order to secure a divorce from her husband and ends up falling in love with a younger woman, Ann Childs. At first Evelyn views the desert with “an irrational fear” (21) and as “an open emptiness” (67) with “nothing to support civilization but the man-made railroad and highway, built not to reach the desert but cross it” (183). Yet when she drives into the desert with Ann she “[finds] it hard to remember what it was in the desert that had so terrified and appalled her” (168). The desert offers the lovers their only privacy, and a lake where “[they] can swim without suits” (168). The desert, as it does in Marlatt and Warland and Brossard, comes to represent a space of seemingly liberated lesbian desire. Through an inversion of society’s disavowal of the desert, each of these writers claims the desert as a site of erotic and textual intimacy, a place of solitude and literary communion.

I write above that desire is “seemingly liberated” in the desert because in each text, whether fiction, poetry, or memoir, the vision of the desert as a feminist and/or lesbian utopia is problematized through witnessing instances of male violence or state regulation. Importantly, a helicopter, here emblematic of the male gaze, appears in all three intertexts. In *Desert of the Heart*, one of Evelyn and Ann’s desert idylls comes under an extreme form of state surveillance:

Then suddenly, not around the cliff but over it, came a helicopter, no more than a hundred feet off the ground. Evelyn could see the two men quite clearly. They were in uniform. It was an army plane. The men saw her, grinned and waved. She did not wave back. The plane dropped fifty feet and hovered right over her head. Then it shied off, leaving her in a storm of sand, and went out over the water. They had seen Ann [swimming naked in the water]. Through an open window, they were shouting and waving, the plane not twenty-five feet above the water, hanging there like an obscene, giant insect. (172)

Although Evelyn shouts at the pilots to “Get away from her!” she finds her “fury” both “ridiculous” and “ineffectual” (172). The description of the helicopter, focalized through Evelyn, suggests Symons’ similar attempts to invert the obscene in *Place d’Armes*: Evelyn finds neither Ann nor her own desire obscene, but the helicopter. In Brossard’s *Mauve Desert*, the horizon Melanie drives toward becomes similarly interrupted by “the glare of a tourist helicopter” (167) that recurs throughout the novel’s many intratexts. For Davidson, a helicopter interrupts a moment of self-reflection toward the end of her journey in *Tracks*: “And just as I was eulogizing

about the wilderness, the untamed pure quality, the magic and freedom of this country, we turned a corner to see a helicopter perched on a creek-bank. Uranium prospectors. Was nothing sacred?" (240). In *Double Negative*, Marlatt and Warland claim: "We'd decided not to fly so that we could be *in* the landscape" (36). These textual correspondences demonstrate how these writers simultaneously point to the desert as a paradise while also noting its inevitable impossibility: various structures of power collude to simultaneously disavow the desert while maintaining it as a site of control.

Intertextuality offers a way to evade regulation and the demarcations of property: the physical desert, which has failed as a place of unfettered communion, becomes reimagined in language³⁹. As Marlatt and Warland claim in *Double Negative*: "it's not words/it's in words" (45). They go on to write, "to cite to quote is to move into fiction as if it isn't here she stares back unseen sighted/sited" (45). The literal desert is "moving into fiction" and here Marlatt and Warland signal how citation 're-sites' texts, making new meanings contingent upon a different 'location.' Quoting Davidson near the conclusion of *Tracks*, they later write, "'I too became lost in the net and the boundaries of myself stretched out for ever' where all points of view converge where eyes close signaling bodies to trust the turning as we float off the page held tender & fierce in our terrifying difference what is woman (in her

³⁹ Susan Holbrook also points to what she calls "creative translation" in collaborations by Brossard and Marlatt as another subversive mode. "Creative," rather than literal, translation "celebrat[es] the impossibility of equivalence." Holbrook argues that "such an attitude...begs the imagination of a new translator-author relationship that refuses both the popular scenario of a translator abjected before an author...and the colonial model of an imperial translator subordinating an original text...[E]roticism is one possible inflection of that newly imagined relationship of artistic mutuality" (n.p.)

ecstasy)?” (55). Through intertextuality, Marlatt and Warland transgress even the boundary of the page, yet as York points out, “the tell-tale quotation marks reinscribe the boundaries of textual property” (*Rethinking* 145). York concludes, “Allusion, like collaboration, or like the desert, may tempt one with dreams of sameness and identity, but difference needs to be acknowledged” (*Rethinking* 145)⁴⁰. Yet the quotation marks also suggest the kinds of textual (and potentially erotic) appropriations fundamental to reading more generally, both ‘for pleasure’ and scholarship. In Rule’s novel, Evelyn reads Ann’s marginalia in her books “to find the candid or posed moments of Ann’s mind” (159). In *Mauve Desert*, Maude Laures (also, notably, a teacher) translates Laure Angstelle’s novel, “her whole being plunged into a book” (51). As a character in *Mauve Desert* says, “But reading is necessary. Reading is food” (Brossard 74). Marlatt and Warland’s text suggests as much an erotics of collaborative reading as writing, or rather blurs the boundary between the two acts. Intertextuality then counters the various forms of implicit and explicit censorship that attempt to seize and silence lesbian literature. By citing this community of women writers, Marlatt and Warland recirculate that which has been censored, particularly in

⁴⁰ Yet difference is not always acknowledged, especially in the case of plagiarism. In Kenneth Bleeth and Julie Rivkin’s analysis of the controversy surrounding the publication of David Leavitt’s 1993 novel *While England Sleeps* (alleged by poet Stephen Spender to be plagiarized in part from Spender’s earlier memoir *World Within World*), they discuss “the complex work done by copying and identification in the making and transmitting of gay culture” (1350). Bleeth and Rivkin write, “a mimetic model for the transmission of culture works to blur the distinction between authenticity and plagiarism and offers a way of thinking about a gay writer’s use of his precursors as a means of discovering and articulating desire” (1351). The latter has some fascinating implications for sexual expression as they conclude, “Being out is as much a performance as being in the closet, and thus the act of self-disclosure becomes part of a gay repertoire, no closer to some essential truth than imitation” (1352).

Rule's case. The collaboration extends to the reader as well, as Carr writes, "I find myself as a woman written into the lesbian text" (121), suggesting that other subject positions (male, gay, bisexual) are "written out." The latter becomes, especially in *Double Negative*, a strategic inversion that privileges expressions of those subjects who have been suppressed.

The uneasy alliances Marlatt and Warland make in the desert further emphasize the collection's engagement with borderland conceptions of time and space, where different, sometimes competing, bodies and texts meet and conflict. York observes, "Marlatt and Warland remain, like Jane Rule's Evelyn, 'doubtful' at times, describing a Utopia which is both a no-place ('no place free from this violent taking') and a place which is, itself, desire" (*Rethinking* 153). She goes on to note, "Desire, however, since it inevitably works on a ground of contesting desires, is never extricated from the negotiations of power" (153). In the next section I turn to a discussion of *Double Negative*'s most recurring image, the train, as a way of understanding the text's form that pushes against the limits of expression. If the desert is the space of wider (though still present) bounds, where Marlatt and Warland conceive of a new literary tradition, then the train is a site of intimate collaboration. Linear, future-oriented, and carrying them over a desert they would rather, even temporarily, inhabit, the rail line becomes the line of prohibition that cannot be crossed, but must be "re-versed" in form and language.

5. The End of the Line? Innovating Form at the Limits of Expression

As a handful of critics have pointed out, the train is a recurring trope in Canadian writing, particularly poetry, perhaps since the railroad's conflation with

Confederation and the nation-building project in this country. Writing in 1984, Douglas Jones observes that in the railroad, “the romance of technology is joined to the epic theme of the founding of a nation to produce a national myth” (33), perhaps best exemplified by E.J. Pratt’s 1952 long poem, *Towards the Last Spike*. Yet Wayne H. Cole identifies “ambivalence” in the literature regarding both Confederation and the railroad’s “conquering of the Canadian wilderness.” He writes, “On the one hand, the railroad is treated as a romantic symbol of adventure and progress, and on the other as a symbol of corruption, dehumanization, and intrusion” (124). More recently, Kevin Flynn identifies an equally ambivalent subjectivity between the speakers of “modern” train poems and their public. Importantly, Flynn observes a “detached” individualism in the personae of later train poems, one that forecloses engagement with the spaces and people the train passes through and by: “It seems clear that there exists a gap between poets whose vision of the train is almost exclusively private and interiorized and a public who views the railway as an important symbol of nation and community” (73). In Marlatt and Warland, the train is most certainly in the former category.

In the “Crossing Loop” section of *Double Negative*, Marlatt and Warland dialogue about how they chose to describe their train journey⁴¹. Marlatt, signified by “D.,” notes,

We also didn’t admit any of the tradition of how trains have been depicted, we didn’t contrast how we were experiencing the train, from

⁴¹ In their eroticizing of the train from a female perspective, Marlatt and Warland have an antecedent in Emily Dickinson. Jones quotes Dickinson’s “The Railway Train,” where she writes, “I love to see it lap the miles/And lick the valleys up” (qtd. in Jones 34).

the inside, with how it's so often imaged from the outside as this powerful industrial monster whose rhythms and approach are seen as very much like the male orgasm—how it used to be imaged as steaming towards you down the track, or even towards the waiting female tied to the rails, which gets pretty obvious! (37)

The “Crossing Loop” section is another example of what I have previously discussed in the chapters on Symons and Rule as paralipsis, or false redaction, a disclosure through erasure. The dialogue begins with Warland commenting, “There were things we left out” (36) and indeed the dialogue becomes in part a list of deletions and the writers’ argument for not admitting certain imagery to the text; however, by mentioning their refusal of these literary and filmic conventions within the metapoetic field of revision, Marlatt and Warland admit them, but only on their own terms. By framing the train’s phallic imagery within the retrospective dialogue of the “Crossing Loop,” and insisting on a wider range of representation in the love lyrics and prose poems, Marlatt and Warland assert authorial-editorial control over the train as a fraught signifier of sexual politics.

If the train has become entangled with narratives of heterosexual romance, particularly in literature and film, then Marlatt and Warland appropriate and subvert the conventions of the love lyric as a textual response. As Carr notes, “the love lyric has historical connections with the Petrarchan sonnet which conventionally involved a male speaking subject and a mute female body—fantasized, fragmented, and fetishized—as the object of his discourse” (114). Mix observes how “both [the love lyric and the travelogue] seek to map their subjects, to circumscribe and

circumnavigate the other, placing the other in the speaker's erotic framework" (307). Marlatt and Warland "re-verse" many of the love lyric's conventions, making room for lesbian desire and subverting imperialist imagery. In "17:00 Katoomba," for example, they describe the swaying of the "dining car" and the "table cloths folded/over edges of settings/like you and me/in Robyn's bed" (10). The simile here operates as a filmic dissolve, transporting the lovers from the public space of the dining car to the private bed they shared earlier in a friend's home. They remember the sound of the bird song, "these blue notes" (11), with the colour suggesting both the improvisation of jazz composition and the connotation of a "blue" movie. In "30/5 8:50 past Menindee," the speakers are similarly "rolled in our bunks/me above you below/in our ANR plaid blankets, no/rolled in the original glow our bodies/in the one berth" (13). By describing a sexual encounter under the literal cover of the Australian National Railway, Marlatt and Warland insist on inserting lesbian desire within the clichéd romantic narratives of train travel—the same heterosexual narratives deployed in advertising, for example, "like billboards overlaying landscape" (36).

While Warland attempts to revision the railroad as cyclical rather than linear, feminine rather than masculine, pointing to its "constantly starting and stopping, departing and arriving, coming and waiting at crossing loops" (37), traveling by train imposes a linear narrative that constantly needs to be disrupted. *Double Negative* opens with the voice of the conductor: "Ladies and Gentlemen, could I/have your attention please?" (8), setting into motion both the binary of gender, and the railroad's ordering of time and space as indicated by the date, time, and place styling of the lyric titles. In "15:25 Zanthus," the poets point to how the train and the grammatical

“double negative” are both forms of contraction: “o contractions (‘she didn’t say nothing’)/of double negatives/TRAIN: ‘tragh-, contract’/o contractions” (29). Time, space, and bodies are equally contracted by the railroad. When one of the speakers asks the conductor if they can leave the train,

he says we got to
 stay on track, go on
 leaving our mark
 shit and toilet paper
 shredded at high speed
 so nothing’s left (26)

The train orders (and erases) the body’s functions, emphasizing the difference between the landscape and the protected space inside “conditioned glass” (26). In addition, the indentations of the stanzas and use of composition-by-field⁴² offer a typographical resistance to the ordering of line, both rail and poetic.

The use of prose in the “Crossing Loop” dialogue and in “Real 2” further disrupts the lyric as an easily received form. York suggests that in the dialogue “the individualized, prosaic ‘D’ and ‘B’ meet in the space of poetry, metaphorically rendered as a train travelling through the Australian desert” (“Lesbianizing” n.p.). The dialogue provides the in-between site of reflection before “Real 2” repurposes the earlier lyrics. Carr cites the Australian meaning of “crossing loop,” or “the side spur where trains wait for other trains to pass,” as a “textual waiting place, a place of

⁴² Composition-by-field is a technique associated with the American poet Charles Olson’s Projective Verse. The term “designat[e] verse composed in open forms resulting from the poet’s taking the stance of an object among other objects, rather than imposing himself upon content or materials... The verse produced by this method and from this stance supposedly registers the breathing of the poet as he writes and conveys to the reader the energy transfusing the poet” (Berry 977). Like Marlatt, Olson was present at the influential Vancouver Poetry Conference of 1963, held at the University of British Columbia.

digression where the text loops back on itself, re-reads itself" (112). The "Crossing Loop" may also be an example of what Manina Jones calls "the prosaics of collaboration" (172). Drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin, Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, Jones argues that "prosaics" may refer to "both a theory of literature that privileges prose and, more generally, 'a form of thinking that presumes the importance of the everyday, the ordinary, the *prosaic*'" (174). While Marlatt and Warland's text documents the extraordinary (a trip to the other side of the world) rather than the quotidian, there are moments of the latter that irrupt the exoticizing of the travelogue, particularly in the prose dialogue section, which lacks the lyricism of the earlier poems and the disjunctiveness of the final section's prose poetry. Instead, the "Crossing Loop" section attempts to remove artifice and allow the reader into the daily, even banal work of collaboration. Importantly, the "Crossing Loop" section of *Double Negative* breaks down the division between public and private texts, as it is where the poets reflect but also reveal their revision. Editorial diacritics, such as the use of square brackets, emphasize the "Crossing Loop" dialogue as a text working against lyric closure:

D. Well, we were so absorbed in being present to it [almost as if we were being born again in this very encapsulated and intimate experience, two in a berth/birth/byrth to bear in a certain direction, forwards say —] (36)

As Jones writes, "For Bakhtin, prosaics registers a conviction that quotidian experience is essentially messy, disorganized, characterized by surprise, openness, and creativity, in short, what he calls 'unfinalizability' (*Anezavershenost*)" (174). The latter suggests the push-pull conversation in the dialogue, where the poets disagree with each other or even digress. The eroticism of the lyrics is deeply personal but the

“Crossing Loop” section risks publicizing a different form of writerly intimacy: intention. The writers invite us into their exchange, paradoxically revealing what they have already redacted. Yet while we are given access, the “Crossing Loop” also poses a paradoxical boundary to the critic, as the writers mount a resistance to any potential misreading, even at the very moment of composition.

In his essay “Vancouver as Postmodern Poetry,” Bowering suggests the writing of the TISH poets⁴³ is inflected by its “instantism” or “compositional decisions made (and seen to be made) in and by the poem too quick to be shaped by a will that would put poetry at the service of an already held opinion or program, yet made by the linguistic suggestions there in the poem-so-far” (83). *Double Negative* uses a mode of composition similar to what Bowering describes here, which is particularly evident in the “Crossing Loop” section. In a preface to an excerpt of the book published in *Tessera*, Marlatt and Warland explain that the original lyrics were written in a notebook during “a three-day train trip across the Australian continent from Sydney to Perth.” The only constraint the writers maintained was that they “had to use the names of places we were travelling through as we were writing” (116). The prose section, “Real 2” was composed when the writers returned to Canada. They observe, “this writing wanted to walk around in what is decidedly not an inert landscape (take language as landscape) and saw as problematic any fixed distinction between subject and object” (“From *Double Negative*” 116).

Pauline Butling situates Marlatt in a group of 1960s Vancouver poets, including Bowering, Roy Kiyooka, Frank Davey, and Fred Wah, who sought a

⁴³ Fred Wah identifies Marlatt as part of the “second wave” of the TISH group following the Vancouver Poetry Conference in 1963 (8).

“locus” of writing “[that] attempt[s] to locate the I/eye of the poet within its social, discursive, and historical constructions” (89). The latter is achieved through a broad range of maneuvers that destabilize the imperialist gaze operating within the traditional lyric, particularly in settler-colonial writing of the landscape. Butling writes that in these poets’ work,

[...] both poet and place are constituted by and within language and by opening the poem to discourses other than the poet’s. By re-locating the self within a ‘linguistic landscape’ these writers decentre the poetic I/eye, re-value the ‘local,’ and disrupt imperial hierarchies of value that define the local as culturally deficient. (100)

For Butling, this writing importantly presents “a poetry of place [that] can present more than what the eye sees” (100). In *Double Negative*, especially, Marlatt and Warland attempt to further trouble the imperialist gaze in the travelogue by subverting what Butling calls, borrowing from the critic Mary Pratt, the “monarch-of-all-I-survey genre” (90) of travel writing. Marlatt and Warland equate the tourist’s imperial gaze with the male gaze that subjects the female body to a similar mapping.

In “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” Laura Mulvey writes, “Woman displayed as sexual object is the leit-motif of erotic spectacle: from pin-ups to strip-tease, from Ziegfeld to Busby Berkeley, she holds the look, plays to and signifies male desire. Mainstream film neatly combined spectacle and narrative” (12). In their

with the X also signifying the negative, so that women are “XX” or, again, doubly negative. Yet the inferences in this passage remain ambiguous. Are Marlatt and Warland questioning the “X” rating of a female nude? Does the move toward the biological assert that women are not “negative” because of their “womb within room”? Or, by pointing out that both males and females are born with an X chromosome, are they suggesting a breakdown of the binary, that this universal “X” must be “X pose[d]”? The emphasis on writing and skin, through an etymological breakdown of “photograph” and “film,” suggests a re-appropriation of those tools that have trivialized and fetishized lesbian desire for a heterosexual male audience. Later in the poem, the writers ask, “how can this barrenness teem with life how can this once have been sea bottom—the desert unbelievable, dangerous (what is woman?)” (46). As their writing so often does, the assertion of an essentialized, biological feminine in the first half of the poem is questioned in the latter half and followed by an allusion to Rule’s *Desert of the Heart*: “but we are not apart from it Jane’s protagonist seeing that ‘the earth’s given out. Men can’t get a living from it’” (46). They write that the desert is “a different economy (her own woman?)” and return to the lake in Rule’s novel, the “lake not worth developing where women’s desire X changes into a foreign current/cy (‘Men can’t get a living from’)” (46).

If both the lesbian body and the desert are viewed as lacking utility within heteropatriarchal mechanisms of power, then Marlatt and Warland, through writing, inverse the lack: “your hand moving across the page//point of view/night turns the lens around” (11). Like the lake in Rule’s novel, Marlatt and Warland’s experimental text suggests a different economy as well, one that disrupts both lyric conventions and

the travelogue's typically linear narrative; moreover, by revising the earlier lyrics in the prose section, Marlatt and Warland interrogate what Robert Kroetsch has called the lyric's "ferocious principles of closure" (118), literalized here by the cyclical train journey and the prose section's disavowal of the line break in favour of the expanse of the sentence. These formal disturbances allow the text to question, even inhabit, the boundaries of linguistic expression in the space of the page: "we are in space," they write, "transiting no place" (23).

As I will discuss further, Marlatt and Warland remain aware of the political limits of such experimentation, particularly in the final section of *Double Negative*. Indeed, the Language, disjunctive, or experimental poet's avowed desire for innovation may be itself utopic, particularly when married to, as it often is, radical politics, constructing a future-oriented narrative of greater and greater linguistic and formal experimentation that supposedly liberates the writer from the double yoke of tradition and the mainstream. Such arguments typically conflate disjunctive poetics with a politics equally (if admirably) invested in disrupting the twinned discourses of social and economic power. Bowering, for example, observes, "The highly political Language poets will counter that any poetry that does not criticize the conventions of poetic utterance is a perpetuation of the status quo. What of the readers who want poems they can 'understand'? Their poets run the political risk of remaining satisfied to restate the stuff the managers have managed to live with, no threat, comfortably discounted" (85). Yet the poetics Bowering defends also "run the political risk of remaining satisfied" with merely formal innovation that indexes, yet does not actually manifest, change, while remaining isolated from a wider readership, conveniently

side-stepping debates on elitism or accessibility. Perhaps most urgently, innovative forms and process poetics may be too open to appropriation by writers of opposing political interests to be taken on by queer poets and critics as the only viable mode of “highly political” writing. As Robert K. Martin has observed, Symons provides an excellent example of the latter, in that his experimental prose, “display[ing] many of the techniques associated with feminist writing practice,” is deployed to argue for a radical return to the author’s misogynistic vision of a Tory British Canada (209).⁴⁵

In her introduction to *Time Binds*, Freeman articulates a “not-quite-queer-enough longing for form that turns us backward to prior moments, forward to embarrassing utopias, sideways to forms of being and belonging that seem, on the face of it, completely banal” (xiii). Freeman’s comments are reminiscent of Douglas Barbour’s theorizing of the “lyric/anti-lyric” tension (another borderline case) in contemporary Canadian poetry. Both Kroetsch and Barbour value the contemporary long poem for what Barbour calls its “anti-lyric” impulses, or “long poems which in one way or another seek to escape the confines of lyric though not necessarily by abandoning all lyric possibilities” (7). *Double Negative* largely succeeds by walking the “lyric/anti-lyric” line, as Marlatt and Warland radically revise the love lyric’s conventions by doubling and queering the speaking subject, inverting the lyric’s mapping tendencies, and serializing its temporal deployment, from the railroad’s

⁴⁵ Martin goes on to write, “What we need to conclude here is twofold, I think: on the one hand, there may be surprising affinities between gay male practice and lesbian feminist practice despite clear ideological differences. . . . and, on the other hand, that revolutionary textual practice, even in the name of social challenge, does not necessarily accomplish its goal of subversion. Part of the reason for this failure is, as Michel Foucault has presented it, the difficulty in imagining a place from which to speak that is outside the discourse against which one wishes to speak” (209).

linear time to the time of erotic delay. As Kroetsch writes, “In love-making, in writing the long poem—delay is both—delay is both technique and content. Narrative has an elaborate grammar of delay” (117). If both Winnubst and Jagose call upon us to historicize the categories of sexual identity politics, Marlatt and Warland have successfully historicized and queered the lyric and the travelogue in order to evade the same foreclosures such categories impose.

For while its authors desire a lesbian-feminist utopia, *Double Negative* ultimately points to the impossibility of any permanent return to the Imaginary, or total freedom from form. In the prose poem “he says we got to stay on track” they write,

she wants to migrate she wants to mutate she wants to have no natural
predators be nothing looking at nothing thrive in her own absence be
out of focus out of range of The Gaze hide out from the The Law
under assumed names but there’s no way out even the desert cannot
escape imagin-a-nation (51)

The writers ‘frame’ themselves here in the criminal sense of the deviant, the one who “hide[s] out from the Law” and though being framed suggests a crime one did not actually commit, they momentarily embrace, like Symons and Rule, the position of the fugitive. Collaborative writing allows for this productive self-erasure in the creation of a dualized speaking subject: the writers who work under “assumed names” yet remain, aside from the “Crossing Loop” dialogue, undifferentiated. Yet even migration, the crossing of national, erotic, and formal boundaries, will not allow a permanent exile from statehood, the “imagin-a-nation.” In the lyric “31/5 8:45 Deakin” the speakers observe an arbitrary border: ““Welcome to Western Australia’ the sign said//the desert on either side/identical” (23), demonstrating a false binary

between the natural and the geo-political. Instead, Marlatt and Warland's speakers locate transgression in the Foucauldian sense, in language, observing in "10:33 Forrest" that "words [are] my only boundary/the desert on either side of my mind" (25). Yet the latter need not be read as a disavowal of 'actual' politics. As Mix notes, "By 'reading [them] in' to the love lyric—as women, as lesbians, as experimentalists, as collaborative writers—the reader of *Double Negative* is gradually taught to reread the entire world" (317). The latter suggests yet another inversion, that the text's exclusionary strategies may bring about an alternative vision for all of its potential readers in the text's borderland space of imminent deferral. As Marlatt and Warland write, the train is always arriving, "the rhythm again/of instant/(by instant//being/about to be, this" (31).

6. Conclusion

While in the previous two chapters I demonstrated how Symons and Rule appropriated nationalism and sexual citizenship, respectively, in their personal and legal battles for the freedom of expression, in Marlatt and Warland's post-structuralist work such strategies come under interrogation—as does the freedom of expression itself. Marlatt and Warland reveal how the freedom of expression, like liberalism's idea of freedom more broadly—and lesbianism itself—becomes figured as a utopic location outside of regulation. Yet the freedom of expression as we typically understand it remains founded upon, delivered by, and its limits set within those same regulatory powers we attempt to overcome; moreover, the freedom of expression is bound to issues of literary property, as both stem from the Enlightenment ideal of

individualism. Marlatt and Warland represent the Nullarbor Desert as *Double Negative*'s borderland utopia, an imaginary, if self-consciously delimited, site of lesbian expression. By writing collaboratively in a way that contests literary ownership (while notably making other textual enclosures), Marlatt and Warland's borderland utopia recalls Foucault's recuperative vision of constantly deferred transgression: "[Sexuality] involves the questioning of language by language in a circularity which the 'scandalous' violence of erotic literature, far from ending, displays from its first use of words" (Foucault 49). These theoretical concerns inform the poets' formal innovations that revise the lyric and the travelogue, disturbing the linear narrative with recursive, ludic prose that problematizes representation while still expressing an erotic, even lyrical, lesbian subjectivity. In the next chapter, I continue a discussion of queer lyricism by turning to the early political poetry of Gregory Scofield, a gay Métis writer who documents life in Vancouver's downtown eastside during the height of the HIV/AIDS crisis.

Chapter 4

“Not Too Polite Poetics”: Lyric Silence in Gregory Scofield’s *Native Canadiana*: *Songs from the Urban Rez*

1. Introduction

Although the Métis⁴⁶ poet and memoirist Gregory Scofield was born in Maple Ridge, BC in 1966, throughout his writing he specifically refers to Batoche, SK—the site of a historic battle during the Northwest Resistance of 1885—as “home.” The Battle of Batoche, when John A. MacDonald deployed thousands of Canadian troops along the newly extended railroad to suppress the Métis resistance against the settlement of their lands, remains a formative moment in the development of the Métis national consciousness. Though the resistance, led by Gabriel Dumont with Louis Riel as head of a provisional Saskatchewan government, had won previous battles during the uprising, their loss at Batoche resulted in the exile of Dumont, along with other members of the Batoche community, to Montana, and the eventual trial and hanging of Riel. As Métis legal scholar Chris Andersen observes of the Batoche legacy, “the seeds of a continuing nationalism were sown by the very dispossession ostensibly intended to destroy it” (116). In Scofield’s 1999 memoir, *Thunder Through My Veins: Memories of a Métis Childhood*, he recalls how a visit to

⁴⁶ Throughout Scofield’s career, the spelling of “Métis” in both his poems and his books’ paratextual material, such as the author’s biography, vacillate between the accented and unaccented spellings of the word. For consistency, I have chosen to use the accented spelling as the one preferred by the Métis National Council. Throughout this chapter, I maintain the author’s choice of spelling when quoting those scholars who use the unaccented version. See also section 2 for a broader discussion of the scholarly and legal debates regarding Métis identity and naming.

the Batoche National Historic Site at twenty-one finally allows him to reconcile with his Métis identity:

The importance that I had once placed on being Cree—a true and pure Indian—seemed to disappear with the sinking sun. Suddenly the colour of my eyes, hair, and skin seemed to *belong* to me, perfectly matching the prairie landscape that held such a dignified history. Now I had new heroes—Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont, the half-breed soldiers who had given their lives for *our* homeland, freedom and independence. Never again would I search for a place of belonging.

This place, Batoche, would always be “home,” my home. (166-167)

Scofield frequently returns “home” in his poems. One of his earliest poems from the 1990s, “Last Night’s Rebellion,” for example, conflates a contemporary bar fight with historic military battles in order to assert a continuing Indigenous presence, as the poem concludes, “We never lost Batoche and Seven Oaks” (*Gathering* 24). More recently, Scofield’s 2012 collection, *Louis: The Heretic Poems*, offers a revised portrait of Riel, emphasizing the erotic, religious, and literary aspects of a figure too often caricatured as merely hopeless and mentally ill, the latter because Riel’s lawyers attempted to prove his innocence by reason of insanity (*Thunder* 166). Writing in Riel’s voice in “The Expatriate: St. Paul, Minnesota, 1873 (The Law of Exile),” Scofield repeats the line, “I break out of the country” throughout the poem, conflating the nation-state’s new borders with the jail cell Riel evades after the Red River Resistance of 1869-70, when he was forced into exile by the Canadian government (*Louis* 36).

Scotfield's lyric engagements with the Battle of Batoche, Riel, and their legacies, emphasize how the histories and historiographies of colonial violence—and, specifically, *frontier* violence from Canada's westward expansion—deeply shape and inform his poetics. In another early poem, "Between Sides," he asserts, "I am not without history" (*Gathering* 81). A multitude of boundaries—national, administrative, linguistic, and geographic—may be traced throughout Scotfield's abundant body of work. As I will discuss further in the following section on the Canadian laws reflecting (and, more often, dictating) Métis identity, not only are the Métis reductively viewed as inherently "mixed," but, as the nineteenth century progressed, a range of commercial and nation-state interests resulted in the drawing of a literal borderline—that is, the international boundary between Canada and the United States at the forty-ninth parallel—through traditional Métis lands on the northern Plains. The poems that provide the focus of this chapter, taken from Scotfield's second collection *Native Canadiana: Songs from the Urban Rez* (1996), may be largely set in Vancouver, but the detailed evocation of the city's downtown eastside, gathered from Scotfield's personal experience as a street youth worker at the height of the HIV/AIDS crisis, present another bordered contact zone where issues of race, class, and sexuality collide.

Native Canadiana also marks Scotfield's coming out in his writing, as he engages with topics of Two-Spirited and gay sexuality for the first time in his poetry. In his memoir, Scotfield describes how he continued to struggle with his sexual identity until he began writing privately about sex and desire. In a discussion of his

formative writing practice that recalls Hugh's diary in Scott Symons' *Place d'Armes* and Alma's notebook in Jane Rule's *Contract with the World*, Scofield recounts,

I did a great deal of writing after Mom died, mostly in journals and in the form of short erotic stories that had nothing to do with being Native, but being gay. I am almost embarrassed by these stories now, although I realize they were simply a reflection of my need for emotional escape. But in all fairness, I must give them credit for helping me to express my desires, poetic sensibilities, and ultimately the fusion of two voices that would reflect my spirit distinctly. (189)

Here, Scofield's early erotic writing walks the public/private line found in the queer life writing previously discussed in the dissertation; that is, while readers of the memoir lack access to the journal, and Scofield partly redacts the stories through embarrassment, the traces of these erotic fictions remain in the memoir as signposts toward understanding how writing incites Scofield's sexual self-reckoning. Scofield emphasizes how same-sex desire becomes "fused" with his Métis identity through their mutual expression in the poems that would develop from these private stories, particularly in *Native Canadiana* and his third book, *Love Medicine and One Song*, a rich and complex revision of the love lyric genre.

When such disclosures occur in Scofield's poetry, they often evoke what I call, somewhat oxymoronicly, "lyric silence." Of course, attributing any form of silence to a writer as prolific and publicly-engaged as Scofield might appear an odd critical gesture; however, Scofield frequently writes out of, in response to, or deploys the metaphors of silence in order to create a borderline space for so-called marginal

expressions—quite literally in the case of his glossing Cree words in the margins of the page. For example, Scofield titles his 2009 collection of new and selected poems, *Kipocihkân*, Cree slang “for someone who is unable talk; a mute,” according to the book’s epigraph from the *Alberta Elders’ Cree Dictionary*. Considering that the collection includes selections from his previous five books of poetry, Scofield’s title indexes the concerns and paradoxes he returns to throughout his career: How does an Indigenous poet write out of the silence imposed by settler-colonial forms and languages? How might the lyric genre, given its long European and heteronormative legacy, be redeployed to assert a fusion of Métis and queer identities? How might Indigenous conceptions of gender and sexuality be recuperated in contemporary writing without reifying those conceptions as being *only* of a pre-contact past?

In his essay “Epistemology of the Woodpile,” the Métis scholar and author Warren Cariou draws on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet* in order to reveal the similarities between “the woodpile,” or the racist trope that provides “a way of expressing—and simultaneously containing—hybridity,” and the sexual closet (910). The woodpile has served as a metaphor for “ancestral impropriety” (Cariou 910) since the nineteenth century in American history when the phrase, “the nigger in the woodpile,” originally signifying a concealed problem or meddler, belied racist anxieties of miscegenation (Cariou 911). As Cariou argues, “the woodpile is the genealogical closet” (910). He goes on to write,

Both closet and woodpile are metaphorical spaces at the margins of the domestic sphere, that realm of family identification, of sameness, of legitimacy. And both exist as the receptacles of possible secrets—

specifically sexual secrets—which challenge the rules of that domestic space. Systematic covering and uncovering, performing and hiding: these are the legacies of both the closet and the woodpile. (910-911)

For Scofield, the silence, and the shame it sought to conceal, began in childhood. In the end notes to his 2005 collection *Singing Home the Bones*, in which he further explores his family history after discovering his father's Jewish heritage, Scofield observes that his great-great-grandmother was born in the Red River Settlement in present-day Manitoba, marking his connection to the ancestral Métis homelands (102). Yet in his earlier memoir, Scofield reveals that he had little understanding of his family history growing up because his maternal grandfather never revealed his Métis lineage, likely in an attempt to shield his daughters from a racist society (*Thunder* 11). Scofield calls his grandfather's silence "the catalyst for [his] own self-acceptance, love, artistic expression, and ultimately, survival" (*Thunder* 11). Indeed, throughout his writing, the work of recuperating familial memory dovetails with public history. For example, in his 2000 collection of biographical poems, *I Know Two Metis Women: The Lives of Dorothy Scofield and Georgina Houle Young*, and its accompanying compact disc recording, Scofield weaves lyric and dramatic poetry, country & western music, and family photographs to recount the troubled if vibrant lives of his mother and "auntie," both survivors of the residential school system who later struggled with addiction and physically abusive relationships. The suspected homicide of Georgina Houle Young partly inspires Scofield's latest poetry collection, *Witness, I am* (2016), a response to the crisis involving missing and murdered Indigenous women. As his early poems and memoir detail, frequent moves, mental

illness, and alcohol abuse—compounded by frustrating and sometimes abusive encounters with the bureaucracies overseeing his education, welfare, and treatment—punctuate Scofield’s own adolescence and early adulthood. Scofield writes, “the price of his [grandfather’s] silence, the denial of his heritage, has left hundreds of unanswered questions and, I strongly believe, deeply affected each generation of my family” (*Thunder* 11). Over the course of nine books, recovering his family’s private lives becomes a public literary act of political resistance.

Scofield’s poetics challenge several assumptions at work in my dissertation. While Scofield directly engages with Canadian law and policy in his writing, his Métis identity necessitates a different relationship to the nation-state; i.e. while Symons, Rule, Daphne Marlatt and Betsy Warland write *against* the state from various standpoints *within* the national polity, Métis legal subjectivity has been positioned variously inside and outside that same polity due to a series of legislative recognitions—and *mis*recognitions, as Andersen argues—beginning in the nineteenth century. As previously discussed, Métis national identity does not cease at the international boundary; thus, the representation of border crossing takes on new meanings in Scofield’s writing. At the same time, Scofield’s work extends the many formal strategies I have considered throughout the dissertation, and that I have broadly termed “a queer poetics of disclosure”: the adaptation of autobiography, the drawing of recuperated or imagined geographic borders, the incorporation of non-English vocabulary, the broad use of inter- and intra-texts, the queer refashioning of the lyric genre, and the self-reflexive use of redaction or silence. In the next section, I turn to a discussion of Métis legislative discourse and debates on terminology to

inform a reading of two poems about Indigenous policy in Scofield's *Native Canadiana*. Next, I consider recent queer theoretical interventions in Indigenous studies (and recent Indigenous interventions in queer theory) that demonstrate the need to read the queer and Métis elements of Scofield's poetics as mutually implicated, indeed, as an example of what the Cherokee poet and critic Qwo-Li Driskill calls a "sovereign erotic" ("Stolen" 51). Finally, I conclude with a close reading of Scofield's writing on Two-Spirit/queer identity and HIV/AIDS in order to theorize the forms of silence he deploys throughout so much of his writing. These poems provides a useful case study in which to examine how intersecting histories of legislative and social oppression necessitate new modes of expression, even, paradoxically, silence. As Scofield writes in his first collection, "But it's the absence of words; how we keep drowning / In each other's silence that tells me we'll survive" ("Today," *Gathering* 87).

2. "Policy of the Dispossessed": Métis Identity, Canadian Law, and the Borderlands

In his memoir, Scofield's own birth brings an encounter with the law, as he writes, "I was born in July of 1966, the very day my father stood trial" (*Thunder* 3). Scofield's father, facing fraud charges, suffered a heart attack during his time on the stand and received care at the same hospital where Scofield's mother was giving birth. With his father under guard and facing fraud charges, Scofield's birth story provides a real-life allegory for the ways in which the state dictates and authenticates Indigenous identities. Indeed, throughout his early life, Scofield and his family

regularly face legal or administrative powers that attempt to define their identity or assign their rights based upon ill-fitting legal constraints. As such moments inform Scofield's writing, personal struggles and public policies become interwoven. For example, when he recounts moving from British Columbia to Saskatoon at twenty, he encounters a welfare worker who claims she cannot provide assistance as Scofield is neither a resident of the province nor a "treaty Indian." At one point she asks, "Then what are you?" and he whispers, "Half-breed" in response (*Thunder* 156). The barely audible tenor of Scofield's declaration of identity belies how such declarations might circulate on the edge of silence. Moreover, such moments reveal how long-standing disputes regarding the legislative definitions of Indigeneity and the legal status of the Métis continue to impact daily life. While a detailed accounting of the state's attempt to legislate Métis identity is beyond the scope of this chapter, a brief overview of the main legal decisions shaping Métis recognition in the Canadian courts will assist in demonstrating how Scofield appropriates that legislative language in the early political poems of *Native Canadiana*.

Debates on language and terminology remain a central, if divisive, concern of Métis studies more broadly. The Métis, whose name derives from the French word for "mixed," emerged as a distinct Indigenous people in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. During this time, the offspring of European fur traders and Indigenous women on the northern Plains (present-day Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and parts of the northern United States and Ontario) formed communities through intermarriage that were separate from both European settlements and other Indigenous nations, as evident from the Métis' unique cultural practices, language,

and socio-political collectivity. The Métis, who were then known as “the people who own themselves” or “the free men,” provided meat and furs to both the Hudson’s Bay Company and the North West Company (Schenck 234). In her essay, “The Myth of Metis Cultural Ambivalence,” Brenda Macdougall notes that the accented version of the name typically refers “to those people with French Canadian paternity...who had a sense of political nationalism” while the unaccented form is usually applied to those with Scottish, English-speaking heritage who were affiliated with the Hudson’s Bay Company. The latter were also often referred to as “half-breeds” or “country born” (423). For Andersen, Métis “refer[s] to the history, events, leaders, territories, language and culture associated with the growth of the buffalo hunting and trading Métis of the northern Plains, in particular during the period between the beginning of the Métis buffalo brigades in the early nineteenth century and the 1885 North West Uprising” (24). As Andersen argues throughout his monograph, increasingly broad applications of “Métis,” stemming from racialized understandings of Métis identity as merely “mixed-blooded,” necessitates a narrower use of the term.

For example, both Macdougall and Andersen take issue with John Raulston Saul’s use of the word in *A Fair Country*, where he refers to Canada as “a métis nation” (qtd. in Macdougall 422). The usage attempts to unify Canada’s diversity of nations yet results in eliding the distinctiveness of the Métis people specifically (Macdougall 422). Andersen argues for de-emphasizing the racial categorization of the Métis as “mixed” given how such a category continually fails to recognize the Métis as Indigenous:

To continue to understand the Métis in terms of some apparently innate mixedness is thus to reproduce the same racist depictions through which less critical commentators—among them scholars—recognize indigeneity. Doing so emphasizes narrowly construed strands of pre- or early-contact origins rooted in biology rather than more formal political relationships (such as treaties), and it reduces the complexity of that indigeneity to these biologically based origins. (11)

While scholars such as Andersen reserve “Métis” for the people who trace their lineage to Red River, such definitional limits are not entirely bound by the geography of the Red River Settlement itself, given the necessary mobility of buffalo hunting and the fact that the Métis were pushed westward during the period of Canadian settlement. As Andersen observes, “the Métis people circulated far beyond that geographical core to inhabit the geographies of a pre-established subarctic fur trade that reached east from the upper Great Lakes west into what is now eastern British Columbia, and north from the northern United States to what is now the Northwest Territories” (18). These migrations had long-lasting impacts not only on the culture and identity of the Métis people, but also shaped the boundaries of the later nation-states in which they lived and worked.

In the mid-nineteenth century, as Michel Hogue argues in *Metis and the Medicine Line*, “Commercial rivalries had long given meaning to the paper boundary separating British- and U.S.-claimed territories in the Northwest. Metis involved in the buffalo economy drove HBC and the U.S. government efforts to mark the international boundary along the forty-ninth parallel” (41). Yet, as Hogue also points

out, the northern Plains were already Indigenous lands, “complete with their own borders and boundaries, and with their own histories independent of their interactions with different state agents” (4). Hogue reveals how marking the international boundary influenced the evolution of Métis identity as much as the movement of Métis people spurred the reification of the border. Throughout the nineteenth century, determining who belonged where led to an increasingly racialized understanding of Indigeneity: “[A]s colonial borderlands gave way to national borders, fluid and ‘inclusive’ intercultural frontiers yielded to hardened and more ‘exclusive’ hierarchies” (Adelman and Aron 816). Andersen refers to the latter as “the racialization of Métis administrative boundaries” (89), or the border dividing those without from within the Métis nation. Meanwhile, the boundary at the forty-ninth parallel imposed new national borders dividing Indigenous nations along different lines. For example, in his memoir, Scofield recalls how he “met [his] own people for the first time” when he visited the Rocky Boy Reservation in Montana. Many of the Chippewa-Cree who live at Rocky Boy trace their ancestry back to those who fled Saskatchewan following the North West Resistance of 1885 (*Thunder* 133). The creation of the international boundary drove, in part, the need for the state to determine (on their own terms) both Indigenous and national identities for those people moving back and forth across the line.

The racialized identification of Indigenous peoples largely occurred through administrative metaphors of blood, specifically blood quantum, which, as Hogue argues, “imagined Indigenous blood and identity as susceptible to dilution, as something that would decline with each succeeding instance of outsider marriage and

procreation. As Indians were defined (or bred) out of existence, others could claim their lands and resources” (7). As I will discuss further, Scofield’s poems about the HIV/AIDS crisis reanimate these tropes of contagion to demonstrate the enduring legacy of anxieties about the mixing of blood and the breaching of various boundaries. Identifying the complex, if mutual, implications of these borders (both geographic and administrative) demonstrates how so much of Métis legal recognition is bound to disputes over the land and access to its resources. As Ian Peach points out, while the Métis were included as one of Canada’s “Aboriginal peoples” in section 35 of the 1982 Constitution Act, their first legal recognition may be found much earlier, in the Manitoba Act of 1870, which was intended to set aside land for the Métis while creating the new Canadian province (279). As the Métis were considered less authentically Indigenous, they were not included in the 1876 Indian Act and thus lacked legal recognition as an identifiable group, making it difficult later on to petition the state to secure their rights (Peach 280). Peach concludes, “Because Métis were perceived by the settler state as less ‘pure’ than First Nations, their Aboriginal rights were assumed to be less” (281).

In 2003, the Supreme Court’s decision in *R. v. Powley*, a case regarding Métis hunting rights in northern Ontario, defined how Métis identity would be tested and applied in policy and the courts. In the creation of the so-called “Powley test,” the Court shifted the emphasis from blood to culture: “[T]he term Métis in s.35 [of the Constitution Act] does not encompass all individuals with mixed Indian and European heritage; rather, it refers to distinctive peoples who, in addition to their mixed ancestry, developed their own customs, way of life, and recognizable group identity

separate from their Indian or Inuit or European forebears” (qtd. in Peach 286). While in earlier cases, gaining the right to hunt and fish as a Métis required the individual to prove a connection to an ancestral Indigenous lineage (especially problematic given that the Métis emerged post-contact), the Powley test prioritized three points: “whether the individual self-identified as Métis, had an ancestral connection to a historical Métis community, and was accepted as Métis by a current Métis community” (Peach 287). While the Powley decision provides a legal precedent for recognizing Métis people as Indigenous and thus entitled to Indigenous rights, Jeremy Patzer argues the decision remains problematic given the emphasis on a test to prove a subject’s “authenticity,” which, he argues, will continue to locate Indigeneity “in a quaint, ‘authentic’ past tethered to discrete and tightly delimited practices” (308-309). Patzer goes on to call such testimonial practices “one of the most insidious forms of subjectification of Aboriginal peoples,” as they base success on the individual’s “successful performance of the colonizer’s restrictive notions of Aboriginality” (321). In their essay “Being Indigenous,” Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel similarly point to the way the state determines the limits of Indigenous identity for its own ends:

[M]any Indigenous peoples have embraced the Canadian government’s label of ‘aboriginal’ along with the concomitant and limited notion of postcolonial justice framed within the institutional construct of the state. In fact, this identity is purely a state construction that is instrumental to the state’s attempt to gradually subsume Indigenous existences into its own constitutional system and body politic since Canadian independence from Great Britain—a process that started in

the mid-twentieth century and culminated with the emergence of a Canadian constitution in 1982. (598)

As Alfred and Corntassel demonstrate, Canadian law and policy determine identity, status, and recognition specifically through language, and the subsequent interpretation of text-bound precedents, that “construct” and reiterate the Indigenous subject within a settler legal framework. Such a process recalls the means by which sexual censorship operates through iterative citations, as I discussed in my introductory chapter, and suggests the ways in which the state construction of the Indigenous legal subject simultaneously censors that subjectivity through the very language of its recognition.

In their discussion of effective strategies of resistance, Alfred and Corntassel argue, “*Language is Power*—our people must recover ways of knowing and relating from outside the mental and ideational framework of colonialism by regenerating themselves in a conceptual universe formed through Indigenous languages” (613). Poetry then provides one mode of criticizing and countering public policy in texts and oral performances that circulate both outside, and yet in response to, “the mental and ideational framework of colonialism.” In *The Erotics of Sovereignty: Queer Native Writing in the Era of Self-Determination*, Mark Rifkin interprets fiction and poetry by queer Indigenous writers as “forms of political theory” that “seek to reimagine what counts as sovereignty...[and] provide alternative ways of figuring Native experience, not simply describing it differently but indexing collective modes of being effaced in current administrative discourses” (2). Similarly, Driskill argues that analyses of LGBTTQ Indigenous writing must view poetry, among other genres, as theoretical

interventions: “Theory is not just about interpreting genres: these genres *are* theory” (“Doubleweaving” 82). The latter approach remains useful for interpreting Scofield’s poetry as well, particularly his early writing in *Native Canadiana*, as it comes before the Supreme Court’s official recognition of Métis rights in 2003, a period in which Scofield’s poetry and nonfiction directly engages with the myriad forms of effacement in legal discourse.

In his poem “Policy of the Dispossessed,” for example, Scofield retells the history of Canada’s western surveying and settlement through the lived experience of his family; however, the poem begins with two epigraphs drawn from historical legal texts, including an excerpt from section 31 of the 1870 Manitoba Act setting land aside for “*the halfbreed residents*” as it is “*expedient...towards the extinguishment of the Indian Title to lands in the Province*” (qtd. in Scofield, *Native* 53). A quotation from John A. Macdonald speaking in the House of Commons on July 6, 1885 follows the excerpt above: “*That phrase (the extinguishment of the Indian Title) was an incorrect one, because the halfbreed did not allow themselves to be Indians. If they are Indians, they go with the tribe; if they are halfbreeds they are whites, and they stand in exactly the same relation to the Hudson Bay Company and Canada as if they were altogether white*” (qtd. in Scofield, *Native* 53). Invoking the first legal recognition of Métis rights, followed by the Prime Minister’s swift revocation of those rights five years later, opens a discursive boundary that mirrors the spatial dispossession of the Métis’ and within which Scofield drafts his own policy in poetry.

The poem begins with an image of the Canadian Pacific Railroad, as Scofield writes that his family “ended up squatting/anywhere there was road allowance” and

later “lived in a vacant CPR shack” where they “watched the influx of newcomers/until one day/the prairie was completely taken over” (*Native* 53). Métis activist and author Maria Campbell, one of Scofield’s central influences, has written of the importance of road allowances to the formation of Métis communities. When the Canadian government surveyed the west, they set aside land intended for roads once nearby areas developed. After the North West Resistance, the Métis dispersed to the Northwest Territories, the United States, or “settled on crown lands, or road allowances, and were, according to the government, squatters; their inherent right to their land not recognized. They became known as Road Allowance People, and they were left alone, out of sight, out of mind, until it was again time for settlement or resource development” (Campbell, “Foreword” xiv). With his family living at the boundaries of both policy and Canadian settlement, Scofield concludes the poem:

In that part of the country
we were always *katipâmsôchik*—
and our displaced history
is as solid as every railroad tie
pounded into place, linking
each stolen province. (*Native* 55)

At the bottom of the page, Scofield glosses the word “*katipâmsôchik*” as “The People Who Own Themselves,” or the Cree term for the Métis people. Scofield’s “Policy of the Dispossessed” not only appropriates the legal language that variously recognizes and redacts Métis identity, but the incorporation of Cree, and its English gloss in the margins of the page, reasserts Scofield’s right to author policy, even in a formerly censored language. As Mark Cohen argues, “educational censorship,” or the banning of speaking and learning Indigenous languages, remained an enduring legacy of the

residential school system to which Indigenous authors such as Campbell, Beatrice Culleton, and, I would add, Scofield respond (123).

Scofield examines both linguistic and legislative forms of silence in his poem, “Mixed Breed Act.” Composed entirely of unpunctuated quatrains, the opening stanza provides an excess of rhyme and consonance:

How do I act I act without an Indian act
 Fact is I’m so exact about the facts
 I act up when I get told I don’t count
 Because my act’s not written (*Native 56*)

The repetition of “act,” its rhymes, and near rhymes, sharply contrasts with the corresponding legislative silence regarding the Métis, especially prior to the Supreme Court’s 2003 ruling in *R. v. Powley*. Not included in the Indian Act, the Métis are indeed a people whose “act’s not written.” While the latter has important implications, as the speaker says he “get[s] told I don’t count,” the second stanza introduces some ambivalence regarding the politics of recognition. As Scofield’s speaker observes, “So I don’t get told who I am or where to go” and that “No DIA [Department of Indian Affairs] director can pop me on a bus//Send me home homeless as I am” (*Native 56*). The latter suggests both the possibilities and pitfalls of living outside legislative frameworks. On the one hand, the speaker celebrates, ironically, the state’s refusal to interpellate him as Indigenous and to set the terms of that identity, and, on the other hand, he remains beholden to a state that continually fails to meet its obligations because the speaker remains illegible under existing rubrics, or policies that operate as administrative borders. The poem’s complete lack of punctuation (its caesuras marked instead by mid-line spaces or enjambment) suggests a formal ambivalence through the blurring of discrete sentences. Later in the

poem, Scofield writes, “So we end up scrunched in between/Suffocating ourselves to act accordingly/However we’re told to act/But according to their act” (*Native* 57).

The ironic use of “accordingly” and “according” (which may mean either “in agreement” or “properly”) also puns on the noun “accord,” derived from the French for a “formal treaty affirmed by an oath” (*Oxford English Dictionary*). In the following stanza, Scofield writes, “I’m not solely a First Nations act/Or Canadian act/But a mixed breed act” (*Native* 57). Here, the legislative act becomes a theatrical performance, recalling Patzer’s argument that legislative tests around identity depend upon Métis testimony as a “successful performance of the colonizer’s restrictive notions of Aboriginality” (321). Moreover, Jennifer Andrews points out that given how AIDS appears, sometimes spectrally, in the collection, “Scofield is also invoking the AIDS activist strategy of ‘acting up,’” a phrase associated with the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power or ACT UP (n.p.). Scofield’s poem then offers several iterations of “act,” shifting its semantic meaning each time, and ultimately decentering the state’s mechanisms of rights and recognitions as the main determinant of Métis identity.

“Mixed Breed Act” also demonstrates how Scofield brings together socio-legal and erotic text and imagery. In the fourth stanza, he writes, “Truth is my treaty number’s not listed/So I don’t get obscene phone calls/From politicians breathing heavy in my ear//Or dirty Bill C31⁴⁷ talk” (56). As Andrews observes, “The tone of the poem and its inside jokes become forceful illustrations of how bureaucratic terminology has been used to keep the Métis silent” (n.p.). The conflation of a treaty

⁴⁷ Bill C31 refers to the 1985 Act to Amend the Indian Act.

number with a phone number indicates how gaining status under the Indian Act allows for somewhat greater contact with the state as an Indigenous person seeking rights. At the same time, since the speaker remains without status, he does not suffer the “obscene phone calls” of politicians, extending the ambivalence toward the nation-state from the poem’s earlier stanzas. Scofield’s use of “obscene” here recalls Symons’ attempts to problematize the word’s meaning in *Place d’Armes*. For Scofield, obscene suggests a failed seduction and the speaker’s refusal to be swayed by a politician’s false promises. The trope of legislation as obscenity recurs in the following stanza as the speaker observes, “So I mark my X for self-government/And wait to be noticed/Not me alone as extinct/But distinct as we are” (*Native 56*). In addition to the voting rights of citizenship, the “X” suggests, simultaneously, the rating of a pornographic film, the signature of a person without literacy, and the unknown quantity. Importantly, the speaker observes that he waits to be recognized not “alone as extinct/But distinct as we are,” shifting from the singular lyric “I” to the plural “we.” Thus, Scofield appropriates the lack of Métis recognition, or silence, signified here by the “X,” as an opportunity to assert simultaneously individual *and* collective authorship of identity. Such a strategy recalls the grammatical shifts in Rule’s testimony at the Little Sister’s trial in which she shared her personal encounter with the law on behalf of a broader queer collectivity. In “Mixed Breed Act,” Scofield offers a similar intervention and testimony through poetry. In the next section, I build upon this discussion by turning to recent debates in queer theory and Indigenous studies to theorize the parallel disclosures of Métis identity and Two-Spirit or queer sexuality in Scofield’s writing.

3. Two-Spirit/Queer Disclosures

In the introduction to *Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature*, the editors observe, “The issue of terminology always pushes at the limits of language” (3). The latter refers to the limits articulating sexual and gender identity, yet for the Indigenous LBTTQ community, in particular, these terms remain inextricably bound to other limits, as well—from those demarcating land to those setting the extent of the law. The previous section demonstrated how, over time, the boundaries marking Métis identity have shifted across a range of Indigenous and colonial discourses.

The terms used to describe, study, or litigate Indigenous sexualities have been similarly contested, co-opted, and reimagined. Though terms with very different histories, epistemologies, and material implications, several parallels become visible when considering how, for example, the terms “Métis” and “queer” (when using the latter as an identity position) both remain fraught with questions of belonging, representation, and visibility, as Cariou suggests in his discussion of the “woodpile.” Indeed, Rifkin points out that “nonstraight sexuality serves as a dense point for negotiating collective boundaries; who can be included; what counts as properly Indian; how do Native people engage with white expectations and ongoing forms of settler denigration and dispossession ” (30). Just as Indigenous activists and scholars have called for self-determination over identity and affiliation, an emerging field of inquiry, bringing together queer theory and Indigenous studies, has begun to interrogate earlier Eurocentric frameworks for understanding Indigenous sexualities,

while further elucidating the ties between desire and decolonization. While many of Scofield's books engage questions of sexuality and expression, *Native Canadiana* includes his first poems in which the speakers relate the lived queer experience. As Driskill notes, "[Scofield's poetry] demands to be seen within the intricacies of history and identity" ("Call" 234). Before I turn to an extended discussion of Scofield's poetry and poetics, then, this section theorizes disclosure at a complicated juncture: the emergence of Two-Spirit/queer Indigenous visibility in the midst of the HIV/AIDS crisis.

In 1990, a group of queer Indigenous activists and scholars chose "Two-Spirit" as a term affirming "their belonging to cultural traditions" during the Third International Gathering of American Indian and First Nations Gays and Lesbians in Winnipeg (Driskill et al. 10). "Two-Spirit" was chosen to indicate the co-presence of femininity and masculinity in an individual; moreover, the term offered a critique of established anthropological terms like "berdache"⁴⁸ (Driskill, "Doubleweaving" 72). As Driskill points out, while Two-Spirit, like queer, "risks erasing difference," the term "is meant to be inclusive, ambiguous, and fluid" ("Doubleweaving" 72). Driskill also notes that while "queer" tends to signify sexual practices, Two-Spirit critiques "[place] gendered identities and experiences at the center of discussion" ("Doubleweaving" 73). It is important to emphasize here, as June Scudeler points out, that while Scofield previously identified as Two-Spirited, and employs the term in

⁴⁸ In "Stolen From Our Bodies," Driskill emphasizes that "Two-Spirit" is not merely a stand-in for "gay" or "lesbian": "[Two-spirit] was created specifically to hold, not diminish or erase, complexities. It is a sovereign term in the invaders' tongue" (62). An extensive discussion on the legacy of the term "berdache" may also be found in the editors' introduction to *Queer Indigenous Studies* (1-28).

Native Canadiana, he now identifies as “gay.” In his essay, “You Can Always Count on an Anthropologist (to Set You Straight, Crooked or Somewhere-in-Between),” Scofield writes, “This embodiment of multiple genders greatly intrigued me, although I found it difficult to understand it in relation to the Cree spiritual world and the teachings I’d been taught” (qtd. in Scudeler, “Gifts” 190).⁴⁹ While Two-Spirit remains a pan-tribal (and, importantly, transnational) term, it neither precludes other tribally-specific terminologies regarding gender or sexuality, nor those Indigenous people who prefer to identify by, or in addition to, other letters on the LGBTTQ spectrum (Driskill, “Doubleweaving” 73).

Given that “Two-Spirit” developed through transnational affiliations, the term provides an example of “border-crossing alliances” among Indigenous peoples that traverse the boundaries of settler-colonial states (Driskill et al. 20). The latter largely occurred through the term’s wide adoption by global Indigenous HIV/AIDS activists and health organizations in the early 1990s.⁵⁰ In *Spaces Between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization*, Scott Lauria Morgensen writes, “Addressing Two-Spirit people in Native AIDS organizing then marked Native peoples’ experiences of colonial governance over sexuality, gender, and health, and

⁴⁹ In a 2011 interview with scholar Sam McKegney, Scofield asserts, “In relation to the ideology of Two-Spirited theory, I always back away from that three-hundred fold. I mean I don’t consider myself Two-Spirited. I don’t really work within that context, if you will. Not that I’m disparaging of it. It’s just that I think it’s very multi-layered insofar as the politicization of the word and how it’s come about and its interpretation and its reinvention and the reinterpretation of things” (218).

⁵⁰ Indigenous communities in Canada continue to be affected by HIV in higher numbers than the rest of the population. According to the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, drawing on statistics from the Public Health Agency of Canada, “Indigenous populations represented 12.2% of new HIV infections and 8.9% of people living with HIV” in 2014 (3).

framed acceptance of Two-Spirit people as a decolonial mode of traditional healing in Native communities” (95). By adopting a Two-Spirit framework, Indigenous AIDS activists responded to the challenge of developing strategies that addressed HIV while also resisting “the biopolitics of settler colonialism that presumes Indigenous peoples are destined to die” and the “colonial heteropatriarchal targeting of queerness” in Indigenous communities (Morgensen 197).

“Two-Spirit” provides both a term for expressing Indigenous concepts of gender *and* a potential means of evading homophobia in risky moments of disclosure. Driskill et al. observe how some people might use “Two-Spirit” in order to “[downplay] a ‘homosexual persona’” so that rather than emphasizing gender or sexual otherness, “Two-Spirit” becomes “a series of acts whereby one’s cultural competency and socioreligious commitment to traditional cultural conservative ideals [are] primary” (16). In the latter case, Two-Spirit might serve simultaneously as an expression *and* an elision of queer desire. Yet while some who identify as Two-Spirit may do so to challenge the dominant gay and lesbian culture, or the homophobia within their own communities, others avow sexuality and desire as central to their Indigenous identity (Driskill et al. 16). Driskill, for example, theorizes a “Sovereign Erotic,” or “an erotic wholeness healed and/or healing from the historical trauma that First Nations people continue to survive, rooted within the histories, traditions, and resistance struggles of [their] nations” (“Stolen” 51). Healing comes in part through identifying and expressing the mutual implications of sexuality and the land, as Driskill writes, “I have not only been removed from my homelands, I have also been removed from my erotic self and continue a journey back to my first homeland: the

body” (“Stolen” 53). Rifkin, following Driskill, demonstrates how queer Indigenous writing encourages “the development of alternative visions of peoplehood and sovereignty through the representation of an Indigenous erotics” and that such representations “[take] up the most seemingly apolitical, or personal, aspects of individual experience and insists on their collective character so as to challenge the obviousness of models and mappings inherited from and imposed by the United States [or Canada]” (4). Two-Spirit/queer Indigenous writing integrates both erotic and Indigenous identities in order to resist the interpenetrated forces of settler-colonialism and heteropatriarchy.

Such disclosures not only open a discursive field that allows for overlaying Indigenous identity and affirmations of non-heterosexual desire—the title of Rifkin’s earlier monograph asks, *When Did Indians Become Straight?*—but also “[change the] force field of lived relations through which collectivity is (re)constituted in everyday ways” (Rifkin 4). Sexual disclosures in literature go beyond mere spectacles of the intimate self but circulate, as Rifkin notes,

as touchstones for a broader conception and narration of selfhood.

They register legacies of imperial violence, which continues to have material effects in relations and spaces not usually considered political, while also functioning as a site through which to understand the enmeshment of individual feeling in collective formations—participating in and affected by shared histories, circumstances, challenges, and aspirations. (Rifkin 27-28)

The latter echoes Driskill's claim that "the erotic" is not just "a realm of personal consequence only" and that the Indigenous person's "relationship with the erotic impacts our larger communities, just as our communities impact our senses of the erotic" ("Stolen" 52).

Given the collective ramifications of sexuality in this framework, Driskill views desire, and embodiment more broadly, as a site of political resistance.

"Sovereign" and "sovereignty" serve here as "metaphors for relationships between Native people and nations and the non-Native nations, people, values, and understandings that occupy and exist within our traditional lands" ("Stolen" 62).

Morgensen similarly parses the specific usage of "sovereignty" in this sense:

Whereas "sovereignty" tends to invoke Native people as distinct from one another or from settler society, transnational Native activists reimagine sovereignty not as inherent in a state—as in the Western sovereignty theorized by Giorgio Agamben and critiqued by [Taiaiake] Alfred⁵¹—but as a capacity of Native peoples across differences *and* interrelationships to assert autonomy from colonial rule. (196-197)

Literature that asserts the quotidian presence of Two-Spirit/queer Indigenous experience contributes to the larger project of what Driskill calls a Sovereign Erotic.

In Scofield's poem "I Used to Be Sacred (On Turtle Island)," what Sara Jamieson

⁵¹ In *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto*, Alfred argues, "'Sovereignty' as it is currently understood and applied in indigenous-state relations cannot be seen as an appropriate goal or framework, because it has no relevance to indigenous values... We need to create a meaning for sovereignty that respects the understanding of power in indigenous cultures, one that reflects more of the sense embodied in such Western notions as 'personal sovereignty' and 'popular sovereignty.' Until then, sovereignty can never be part of the language of liberation" (78).

calls “Scofield’s most sustained meditation on the implementation of Two-Spirited consciousness in contemporary society” (60), the speaker ‘comes out’ in the first person plural:

The first Two-Spirit didn’t come along
because the Great Mystery was having
a confused day.
We got put on Turtle Island
for a reason—that wasn’t
just to hang around the city
looking desperate. (*Native* 63)

The speaker begins by invoking a historical continuity for Two-Spirited people that binds him with a collective and preexisting “we.” Next, shifting to the first person singular, Scofield writes, “I wasn’t created/to be a lonesome turtle/crawling around by myself,” simultaneously asserting the speaker’s own Two-Spirited identity while observing that such an identity depends on affiliation with others. The poem continues to narrate the speaker’s “nosing around/at a turtle’s pace” as he strolls an urban street, expressing equal parts ambivalence and caution for the other men, both white and Indigenous, he encounters. At one point the speaker concludes, “So much for brotherly turtleship” (*Native* 64). The poem reveals the desire for community at the same time the speaker remains, humourously, skeptical of its various factions: “these beefy walruses,/cruisy sealions/and trendy urchins” (65). While Two-Spirit/queer Indigenous disclosures might bring together the individual and his community, Scofield’s writing demonstrates how neither remains stable in identity or allegiance.

José Esteban Muñoz theorizes similarly dynamic interventions by minority subjects on hegemonic centres in his discussion of “disidentification.” He writes that

disidentifying involves a series of “survival strategies ...[which] negotiate a phobic majoritarian public sphere that continuously elides or punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform to the phantasm of normative citizenship” (4).

Moreover, Muñoz contends, “These identities-in-difference emerge from a failed interpellation within the dominant public sphere. Their emergence is predicated on their ability to disidentify with the mass public and instead, through this disidentification, contribute to the function of a counterpublic sphere” (7). Hybridity becomes a central component of disidentifying:

[Hybridity] captures, collects, and brings into play various theories of fragmentation in relation to minority identity practices. Identity markers such as queer (from the German *quer* meaning “transverse”) or *mestizo* (Spanish for “mixed”) are terms that defy notions of uniform identity or origins. Hybrid catches the fragmentary subject formation of people whose identities traverse different race, sexuality, and gender identifications. (31-32)

Muñoz’ intersectional version of hybridity differs from the solely racialized model of hybridity Andersen critiques when he writes, “[W]hile hybridity may well offer a midway point between the racial essentialisms of the past and the creative indeterminacy of the future, there is little discussion about how to leap, politically, over the gap between ‘hybridity’ and ‘wholeness’: Métis can’t get there from here” (38). Andersen suggests that while hybridity may have subversive potential, “Métis political classifications in particular seem to bear the weight of less helpful aspects of hybridity rhetoric in a way few other Indigenous peoples have had to contend with”

(58). Though informed by Muñoz' work, Driskill similarly cautions that Queer of Colour critique does not provide an adequate framework for Indigenous queer culture, though they are often grouped together; indeed, Driskill points out that Queer of Colour scholarship "unwittingly contributes to the erasure of the specificity of Native claims to land and to the particular relationships Native people and Native nations have with Euro-American colonial governments" ("Doubleweaving" 76). Drawing on the very strategies Muñoz outlines, Driskill proposes that "Native people must disidentify with the very critiques that claim to be decolonial and counterhegemonic interventions for queer people of color in order to make them viable for our communities" ("Doubleweaving" 79). Driskill provides the metaphor of the Cherokee doublewoven basket, and its intertwining walls, as a model for "the emergent potential in conversations between Native studies and queer studies" (73). According to Driskill, doubleweaving "enables us to see the numerous splints—including Native politics, postmodern scholarship, grassroots activisms, queer and trans resistance movements, queer studies, and tribally specific contexts—from which these critiques are (and can be) woven" (74). Just as Two-Spirit/queer Indigenous critique must observe multiple "splints," when turning to Scofield's poetry, in particular, Driskill argues that his writing "cannot simply be seen as 'Native,' 'Queer,' 'urban,' 'Canadian,' or any other words one might want to use to describe it. His work must be understood within the complexities of overlapping identities" ("Call" 223). Indeed, Scofield's early poems of Two-Spirit/queer disclosure reveal and problematize several interpellations of erotic identity at once.

Scofield's poem "Buck and Run" uses homoerotic imagery and humour to assert the speaker's refusal to be reduced to stereotype. Even the title's playful swapping of "fuck" for "buck" indicates a subtle deployment of self-censorship in terms of sexual expression. Taking on the role of the hunter, the speaker boasts,

You can't keep
A colonized buck down
(though I've never had problems
keeping them up.) (*Native* 78)

The speaker then notes that "Conceited bucks are an entirely/Different breed altogether" so that when he "put[s]/The Indigenous moves on them" he must "keep to the lingo/They understand," including such invitations as, "Hey pretty buck,/Wanna come to my tee-pee/And lie on some soft fur?" (78). Moreover, the speaker asserts that he has no time for "A smooth bar buck talker/Who preferred *mâsawêwin* activity/In the dark under a duvet" (*Native* 79). These lines engage two modes of concealment simultaneously; that is, the speaker refuses to date closeted or self-hating men who can only have sex "(on top with the lights on/when really bombed)" (*Native* 79). At the same time, the use of the Cree word "*mâsawêwin*," which Scofield glosses as "sexual," redacts through translation the only explicit mention of sex in the poem. Shelley Stigter argues that code-switching between Cree and English in Scofield's poetry "results in the dialectic separation of culture and knowledge and the creation of a dialogue between the hegemonic and Canadian Aboriginal culture" (49). Stigter discusses this strategy as a form of linguistic and cultural bordering as Scofield "establish[es] boundaries as well as cross[es] them, thus creating the dialectic in addition to the dialogue between two cultures" (50). It is important to note how the page's visual design mirrors and amplifies such linguistic boundary formations. The

reader lacking a knowledge of Cree must ‘cross the line’ traversing the page’s white space, a line that marks both a separation and a suture between the poem and the gloss found within the bottom margin of the page.

Thus, Scofield’s erotic poems offer several strategies of self-censorship that index and overturn the silencing tactics of settler-colonialism and homophobia. For example, in the poem “Snake-dog,” written in dialect, Scofield’s speaker says

iyee dat one I tinks
 between looks big *skônak*
 wants a whole friggin’ army
 jump into da sack, his hands
 wants to rattle me aroun’
 shakes me up a bit
 for Pete sake (*Native* 81)

While Scofield glosses *iyee* and *skônak* as an “exclamation of disgust or disdain” and “[a] female dog; also, a sexually promiscuous person,” respectively, the use of dialect allows for culturally specific representation without the framing of the gloss.

Throughout the collection, as in “Street Rite,” Scofield asserts,

we got the right to speak/
 slurred unrefined English
 if we want to/
 yell in the back alley
 or talk tough to a pawn broker/
 okay/ when I say 50
 that doesn’t mean 20 (*Native* 116)

Enjambment always produces a border. Here, the forward slash used by critics when quoting and citing poetry amplifies the enjambed lines and is taken back by Scofield to both insist on “rez lingo” (116) as poetry and also to mark the boundaries between cultures. As a visual representation of caesurae, the slash also marks a silence, the boundary between voiced units. The absence of punctuation in “Snake-dog,” recalling

the lineation of “Mixed Breed Act,” also emphasizes the available gaps and silences in which to speak, at the same time they mark historical legislative and linguistic strategies of silencing by hegemonic centres. While poems like “Snake-dog” and “Buck and Run” are highly erotic, Scofield deploys translation, metaphor, and euphemism in order to reveal and conceal queer sexuality at the same time. Moreover, textual arrangements on the page—from enjambment to punctuation, or its lack—produce visual boundaries that reflect the various socio-historical, and geo-political, borderlines inflecting Scofield’s identity.

Complex representations of sexual diversity across a range of modes and genres—and access to those representations—have serious implications. In her essay, “Without Reservation: Erotica, Indigenous Style,” the Anishnaabe writer and publisher Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm recalls working on an HIV/AIDS awareness program and finding Indigenous communities resistant to openly discussing sexuality:

Imagine trying to inform vulnerable First Nations communities of the potential onset of a health disaster like AIDS and being told that in some First Nations communities, it wasn’t acceptable to discuss sex publicly. How do you inform people of the risks so they can protect themselves if you can’t make any reference to sex? In retrospect, we did a lousy job of it as a result. Today AIDS is rampant in some First Nations communities, just as was predicted. (100)

Akiwenzie-Damm traces Indigenous self-censorship regarding sexuality to repressive colonial strategies that disciplined sexuality as “sinful” or appropriated erotic Indigenous narratives in translations that “changed them into something more

acceptable” (99). Similarly, anthropologist Brian Joseph Gilley points to how even radical scholarship has too often theorized sexuality in ways that remove it from lived experience: “Anthropology, feminism, queer theory, and LGBTQ studies have spent a great deal of time disrupting heteronormative sexuality only to produce a certain form of asexual criticism placing desire in a nebulous realm missing certain visceral realities and agentive subjective corporeality” (125). In other words, we need to talk more about sex; however, to echo Leo Bersani, “Most people don’t like it” (197).

Of course, in the context of current Canadian and Indigenous HIV/AIDS activism, the issue of disclosure remains especially fraught. Since a 2012 Supreme Court ruling, failing to disclose an HIV-positive status before engaging in sex involving “a realistic possibility of transmission” may result in charges of aggravated sexual assault (CHLN 5). Several issues arise from the ruling as it remains unclear how the courts will interpret “a realistic possibility of transmission” in some cases (anal sex with a condom, for example) or deal with cases in which disclosure would have placed a vulnerable person at risk of violence, not to mention the potential misuses of the reporting system.⁵² One’s HIV status also regulates mobility across geopolitical boundaries, and border-crossing highlights cultural anxieties regarding migration and contagion. For example, early in the HIV/AIDS crisis, epidemiologists had mistakenly theorized the epidemic’s “patient zero” was Gaetan Dugas, an Air

⁵² In her recent book, *Conflict Is Not Abuse: Overstating Harm, Community Responsibility, and the Duty of Repair*, writer and AIDS activist Sarah Schulman devotes a chapter to Canada’s criminalization of HIV non-disclosure and discusses how Toronto AIDS Action Now! has developed the Think Twice awareness campaign “aimed at potentially upset or anxious partners who may want to get back at their lovers by calling the police, even if they were not infected” (Schulman 115-116).

Canada flight attendant from Quebec City.⁵³ Moreover, in 1987, the US banned those with HIV from immigrating or visiting the country—a ban that was not repealed until 2010 (Preston n.p.). Disclosure of identity and “status”—an already loaded term in Indigenous contexts—impact one’s ability to traverse the bounds of both community and country. While Indigenous LGBTIQ cultural representations remain vital, such disclosures, particularly in everyday life, always occur in a discursive field of intersecting historical, cultural, and legal forces that often necessitate alternative modes of expression.

Turning again to Scofield’s poem “I Used to Be Sacred (On Turtle Island)” provides one example of how metaphors of identity become subtly redeployed as a resistant strategy. During his urban stroll, the speaker encounters “some big tortoise” who tries to pick him up (*Native* 63). The speaker observes,

By his nose
I could tell
he wasn’t from around here.
At first
I was flattered, tilted
my head slowly
and gave a turtle grin.
Then I saw
the red stripe on his neck
so I just shrugged (*Native* 64)

Jamieson interprets “the red stripe on his neck” as an elaboration of the term “redneck.” Given how “redneck” operates in the collection as a term the poems’ speakers apply both to themselves and others, its signification shifts throughout the collection:

⁵³ The Canadian “patient zero” narrative was popularized by journalist Randy Shilts’ bestselling book *And the Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic* (1987). John Greyson’s 1993 Canadian musical film *Zero Patience* offers a critique of this theory, and its larger cultural motivations and implications (cf. Susan Knabe and Wendy Gay Pearson).

While the word originally refers to white skin that has been reddened by sunburn, in Scofield's work it also suggests red (Native) skin. The resemblance exposes homophobia as something that Native people may have learned from the dominant culture, something that amounts to a betrayal of their own traditions. (Jamieson 60).

While I agree with Jamieson's reading, the image's potential for misrecognition goes even further. Given that HIV/AIDS is a recurring, if unnamed, subject in the collection, "the red stripe on his neck" could be misread at first as a lesion, particularly as the true implications of the image—the other man's potential for racist and/or homophobic violence—only become explicit in the next stanzas:

Sure enough
 three blocks later
 that pushy bugger
 still trailing me
 wanted coffee, directions
 to my nest.
 Look, I snapped
 I gotta big mean tortoise daddy
 at home. (*Native* 64)

Scofield's layering of metaphors indexes the silent forms of signaling and interpretation in the cruising encounter, replete with its simultaneous desires and risks; he also recalls the long history of colonial taxonomizing based on skin colour and shifts the subject of such categorizations to those in positions of dominance instead. Moreover, a common trope in coming out narratives centres on the subject's anxiety that his or her queerness might be visible in tone or gesture, even without an explicit disclosure. In *Thunder Through My Veins*, for example, Scofield writes, "Sean was forever being singled out at school for being gay. He wore his persecution

silently, seldom sticking up for himself. I remember thinking that people teased him because he was soft-spoken and somewhat effeminate. I knew that I, too, had these qualities, but I did my best to hide them” (73).⁵⁴

In Scofield’s later poem, the other man’s potential for violence becomes the legible sign. As I have discussed throughout the dissertation, legibility and recognition frequently operate in concert with both implicit and explicit forms of censorship. As Judith Butler observes in *Excitable Speech*,

[T]o be addressed is not merely to be recognized for what one already is, but to have the very term conferred by which the recognition of existence becomes possible. One comes to ‘exist’ by virtue of this fundamental dependency on the address of the Other. One ‘exists’ not only by virtue of being recognized, but, in a prior sense, by being recognizable. The terms that facilitate recognition are themselves conventional, the effects and instruments of a social ritual that decide, often through exclusion and violence, the linguistic condition of survivable subjects. (5)

For LGBTTQ Indigenous people, the “doubleweaving” of identities, in Driskill’s terms, provide at least two instances of recognition (and misrecognition) by a range of institutional powers, from the state to scholarship. In the next section, I turn to the question of poetics (a field no less fraught with boundaries) in order to locate the

⁵⁴ Years later, when Scofield learns of Sean’s death, he interprets his refusal to cry, or show weakness, differently: “I was flipping through a gay newspaper and came across his obituary and picture. He had died of an AIDS-related illness at twenty-one. I wanted to cry but I couldn’t. I felt he didn’t need my tears, but something more constructive—like my own self-acceptance—something that would take me another ten years to find” (*Thunder* 75).

various incarnations of silence in Scofield's poems and how such strategies reorient a genre.

4. "Not Too Polite Poetics": Scofield's Lyric Silences

Scofield opens *Native Canadiana* with a poem entitled "The Poet Takes It Upon Himself to Speak" and closes the collection with "The Poet Leaves a Parting Thought." The mirrored titles demonstrate not only a self-conscious assertion of Scofield *as* a poet but also frame the entire collection within the discourse of censorship. While it may be redundant for a poet to index his speaking in his own poems, the preceding sections demonstrate how, from sexual epistemologies to the languages used to express them, Indigenous peoples incur several intersecting forms of implicit and explicit censorship. Scofield's poems about HIV/AIDS in particular, though relatively few in the collection, deploy silence—from metaphors of censorship to subtle manipulations of translation and dialect, to the text's arrangement on the page—as a political intervention. In poetry, silence operates as a border—familiar by now in the dissertation, and yet inhabited differently by each writer—between the individual and his communities, the spoken and the unspoken. The lyric poem makes a particularly intriguing vehicle for these silent boundaries because of how its emphasis on individual subjectivity, often perceived as interiorized or merely overheard, becomes married to a public text that can be either performed or read, again, in silence.

There are some important caveats to consider before going forward, particularly the invocation of the lyric in the context of Indigenous poetics. In his

essay “Writer-Reader Reciprocity and the Pursuit of Alliance,” Sam McKegney observes the risk of settler scholars “subjecting Indigenous poetry to pre-formulated methodologies indebted to Eurocentric philosophical traditions that are perhaps anathema to particularized Indigenous world views, thereby replicating acts of imposition” (47). Indeed, in his poem “The Dissertation,” from 2009’s *Kipocihkân*, Scofield writes of a scholar who “overtook his poetry like a landlord,/rented him a room in his life/where she could study his polemic/or lack thereof” (125). In his reading of the poem, McKegney argues, “Here the poet is indeed ‘annexed’ as the hegemonic voice of academic authority sterilizes the dynamism of the creative process, reducing poetics into discrete bits of information in an anatomy textbook” (46). Similarly, Scofield’s poem “Not Too Polite Poetics” concludes *Native Canadiana*’s first section, following “Policy of the Dispossessed” and “Mixed Breed Act.” Given that “Not Too Polite Poetics” comes before “I Used to Be Sacred (On Turtle Island),” and Scofield’s other poems on Two-Spirited/gay life collected in the second section of the book, the poem serves as a hinge between two different but interrelated disclosures of identity. Invoking several Indigenous stereotypes, Scofield writes,

like all First Nations writers
I must adhere to ethnic demands
make my poet’s entrance
wrapped in a Pendelton blanket
sunburst geometric design (60)

Later, he writes that he “barely pass[es] the visiting poet’s test” (60), recalling the language of authenticity regarding Métis legal recognition, now redirected onto the proper performance of Indigenous poetics according to settler stereotypes. The

speaker concludes the poem by saying he wants “the chance to speak//without backs up or a drum solo” (60), that is, an audience that is neither defensive when he “says [his] piece on First Nations” nor expects him to perform an outmoded vision of Indigeneity. The latter is the critical in-between space of Scofield’s “Not Too Polite Poetics.” Like McKegney, the American poet and critic Dean Rader argues, “Too often, critics of American Indian texts submit to a palpable Native essentialism, or they offer a reading firmly grounded in New Critical or recent theory-based strategies of the Euro-American academy” (126). Given how contested essentialism remains within queer studies especially, the editors of *Queer Indigenous Studies* clarify, “Native critics do not say that Indigenous knowledges possess essential differences that need to be separate from modes of thought linked to the history of colonialism. Instead, critics have argued that the full complexity of Indigenous thought in the past and present should set a first frame for interpreting Indigenous knowledges” (Driskill et al. 5). Two-Spirit/queer Indigenous critiques then require a careful negotiation of the various “splints” Driskill identifies.

In terms of poetics, I ground my approach here in Cariou’s essay, “Edgework: Indigenous Poetics as Re-placement.” Cariou’s essay is particularly useful as he takes up a series of metaphors that compare, contrast, and conflate both literary and spatial borders. He begins by asking how a critic locates Indigenous poetry in a contemporary field where “[y]oung poets are encouraged or required to choose between language and lyric, concrete and spoken word, New Formalism, and old free verse” (31). He writes that to remove Indigenous poetry from this wider field of poetics “might be inviting further marginalization of Indigenous literary art.

Literature as rez.” Yet Cariou also observes, “The colonial boundaries drawn on the land have caused troubles for generations and, as many Aboriginal writers will tell you, the bookstore categories are bad enough” (31). Instead of focusing on identifying the borderlines, Cariou argues that Indigenous poetry “infiltrates the colonial aesthetic categories and shows them that there is more to art than drawing boundaries” (31). Both Cariou and Rader invoke the image of a bridge; for the latter, “genre functions as a kind of stealth bridge connecting otherwise opposing cultures and modes of expression” (124). For Cariou, Indigenous writing “decolonize[s] the imagination by bridging the ideological boundaries that often separate the beneficiaries of colonialism from those who are objectified and impoverished by it” (32). Formal borders are similarly transgressed, as Rader argues that Indigenous poetry “explodes traditional notions of genre; thus, it probably cannot be talked about in generic terms unless the generic terms have also been exploded” (126). Scofield’s writing, and Indigenous literary criticism more broadly, contribute to remaking (or blurring) the definitional boundaries of genre.

Indeed, the past two decades in Euro-American literary studies have witnessed a renewed critical interest in, and revisions of, the lyric. In the General Introduction to their recent anthology, *The Lyric Theory Reader*, for example, Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins discuss the difficulty of defining their subject and conclude, “Perhaps the lyric has become so difficult to define because we need it to be blurry around the edges, to remain capacious enough to include all kinds of verse and all kinds of ideas about what poetry is or should be” (1). My own use of “lyric” here signifies not only the use of the first-person or the general brevity of Scofield’s poems in *Native*

Canadiana (though both are considered hallmarks of the genre) but also the lyric's long association with music. Scofield subtitles the collection *Songs from the Urban Rez* and the middle section, "Songs," contains most of his poems about gay life. The collections following *Native Canadiana* bear titles such as *Love Medicine and One Song* and *Singing Home the Bones*, and as I discussed earlier, *I Know Two Metis Women* incorporates lyrics from American country music. Scofield himself points to *Native Canadiana* as a transitional text, marking a boundary between the narrative poetry of *The Gathering* and the formal engagement of *Love Medicine and One Song*. Describing the process of drafting the latter collection, he writes, "[N]ow I was conscious of form and technique, and I strove to create poems that were highly lyrical: songs that were rich with the images of the northern landscape and the Cree language" (*Thunder* 195). Just as Marlatt and Warland redefined the traditional love lyric in *Double Negative*, Scofield makes the form his own in *Love Medicine and One Song*. Yet, by calling his poems "songs" in the earlier *Native Canadiana*, he signals a shift toward self-consciously reworking the limits of "lyrical" poetry. In the poem "Warrior Mask," for example, the speaker recounts a dreamed encounter with "a grandfather" who gives him "summer songs/to sing" (121). In the dream, the grandfather paints half of the speaker's face in a blend of pollen and saliva and draws a line in charcoal down the middle of his face. The poem concludes:

A black line divided.

"*Pahkisimotâhk* [west]," he continued
 grinding charcoal, spitting
 and mixing and
 marked four black dots
 on the left.

“*Ā*,” he clapped,
 “your path to the spirits.”
 “*nikamow*,” *itêw*, “*nikamow*.” (121-122)

Scofield glosses the last line of the poem as, “‘Sing,’ he said, ‘sing’” (122). In “Warrior Mask,” singing becomes, simultaneously, a formal and familial inheritance.

Moreover, the “black line” that “divide[s]” produces an explicit border mapping the speaker’s face with the directions the grandfather names while perhaps also suggesting the multiple ways Scofield’s identity becomes inflected through perceived or imposed divisions. Indeed, the grandfather’s drawing overturns the assaults the speaker describes in the poem’s first stanzas:

This face
 wasn’t always
 a concrete mask
 littered in neon
 to be spit, frowned
 or pissed on. (121)

Such violence stems from the speaker’s sexual orientation, as he notes that “in puberty,” the time of sexual awakening, “my *Āyahkwêw* eyes / followed strangers / and saw the black junk / squishing / around inside” (121). At the end of the poem, Scofield glosses “*Āyahkwêw*” as “Two-Spirited” (122). Thus, the grandfather’s “black line” inverts the “black junk” of homophobic others, turning the speaker’s division into strength, signified by the “Warrior Mask.” The emphasis on orality and performance in this poem extends to the book’s visual design, as well, as the title page for the second section, “Songs,” includes a photograph of a black-and-white mask that resembles the one described in the poem (61). According to the book’s front matter, Scofield designed and made the mask himself (n.p.) Given its position at the head of the section, the physical mask (and its related poem) may be interpreted as

a significant statement of Scofield's poetics. Just as he reconciles his Indigenous and gay identities in *Native Canadiana*, he is also finding his form.

While Scofield incorporates elements from a very broad lyric tradition, he also grounds his poems in the particularities of Cree language and narrative. In "Cree Poetic Discourse," Neil McLeod writes that a "metaphorical discourse, composed of symbolic and poetic descriptions of the world and our experiences, saturate and permeate Cree narrative memory" (89). McLeod argues,

[W]e need to be able to name the process of poetry. In Cree, I would say that this process could be described as *mamâhtâwisiwin* (the process of tapping into the Great Mystery), which is mediated by our historicity and *wâhkôtowin* (kinship). Because of this connection to other generations, there emerges an ethical dimension to Cree poetic discourse, namely, the moral responsibility to remember. (91)

After all, the first line of Scofield's *Native Canadiana* is "*hâw-nikiskisin*" or "now, I remember" (11-12). The speaker of "The Poet Takes It Upon Himself to Speak" imagines language as "old earth,/clumps beneath the water" and shows how those borders claiming and contesting both land and language remain intertwined (11).

"The Poet Takes It Upon Himself to Speak" is a powerful multi-part poem resisting multiple forms of censorship. In section one, the speaker imagines a series of possible narratives concerning how the land, language, and rituals "got away from us":

our *ayamihâwina* floated
as far as Spain
needed purification, censoring
so hymns would stretch,

trail the wagon road
to church (11)

Here, Scofield suggests the “*ayamihâwina*” or “rituals,” travel across the ocean, inverting the colonial migration by travelling to Europe, the site of “censoring.” Later in the poem, words are replaced with “wafers” and “grapes,” indexing how the colonial missionary project censored Cree in the residential school system. At the same time, the poem also asserts continuity for the language, as the speaker wonders, “maybe/we conversed in secret/retaining/bits of earth, sky” (12). Scofield’s opening poem indicates how speech, censorship, and space remain co-extensive, simultaneously producing and bound to the other’s limits.

In “Poetic Silence,” American language poet and essayist Rae Armantrout theorizes silence as “an aesthetic effect” that “[has] something to do with empty space left in a work, or following one, a kind of palpable stoppage, a silence that [is] a gesture” (21). Later, she observes, “silence may mark the legitimate bounds of certainty” (22). While Armantrout draws examples from long poems by fellow American language poets, her spatial theorization of silence on the page remains useful for understanding how Scofield strategically manifests silence in his poems. In listing the various forms that poetic silence might take, from unexpected enjambment—which, as I discussed above, always produces a border—to creating “the effect of inconsequence,” Armantrout writes that a poet may “use anything which places the existent in perceptible relation to the non-existent, the absent or outside” (24). Scofield also places the perceptibly “existent” and perceptibly “non-existent” side by side when he sets most of the poems in *Native Canadiana* in “the

urban rez,” or Vancouver’s downtown eastside, where he worked as a street youth worker in the 1990s (Jamieson 52).

Cariou describes such urban neighbourhoods as “The New *Terra Nullius*”:

While imperial nations at the onset of colonialism considered North America a *terra nullius* or empty land, open for their own claims, I believe that non-Native North Americans now once again see Indigenous spaces as blank, but in a different sense: they don’t imagine these spaces as tantalizingly empty zones of potential wealth and possibility; instead, they don’t see them at all. (“Edgework” 35)

The “urban rez” is, of course, marked by both visible and invisible borders—spatial, racial, sexual, economic. Cariou posits that contemporary Indigenous writing can “help shake up this kind of compartmentalized thinking by placing different realities side by side, thereby showing readers what they sometimes prefer not to notice” (“Edgework” 35). Poems like “Another Street Kid Just Died” and “How Many White People Noticed,” from *Native Canadiana*’s third section, “The Urban Rez,” directly address the willful ignorance Cariou describes.

The street, in particular, becomes the site of such bordering in Scofield’s poems. In “Tough Times on Moccasin Blvd,” the neighbourhood boundaries that contain, for example, “These addicts [who] sit defeated corpses” also mark the usage of a different language, as Scofield writes of those who “Hover around the needle van/Shrieking obscure dialect” or “Their rez dog mumbo-jumbo” (97). The use of the phrase “mumbo-jumbo,” which the *OED* cites as, originally, a borrowing from West African religious practice that came to mean “nonsense,” provides another form of

border crossing as it indicates a layering of broader colonial appropriations of land, language, and culture. Moreover, the unpunctuated lineation mirrors the continuous circling of the poem's subjects on the street who "[scatter] the shouts of death/Up down and back again" (97). In the poem "Piss 'n' Groan," Scofield indexes the arbitrary, if racialized, contingencies of such bordering: "the streets smell like piss/down here/it doesn't matter what side/of the skids/you're on" (118). Later in the poem, the speaker shifts from the lines demarcating different sides of "the skids," to the borderlines that mark the scope of settler nations:

Don't tell me
 we got no rights here
 just because you got the Legislation
 to steal and expropriate
 without our consent
 that doesn't mean
 there was no law here
 before you stuck your big toe
 across the line tap danced all over
 the continent like it was yours
 to begin with (119)

By "placing different realities side by side," in Cariou's terms, Scofield sets new borders that resist settler-colonial appropriation and the censorship of Indigenous expression.

Scofield's poems on the AIDS epidemic and its effect on Vancouver's Indigenous residents of the downtown eastside provide some of the best examples of what I call lyric silence, not least because of how silence as a metaphor operates in AIDS discourse more broadly. Beginning in the late 1980s, ACT UP launched the well-known poster campaign in which a pink triangle on a black background— inverting the symbol used to identify homosexuals in Nazi concentration camps—was

followed by the words “SILENCE=DEATH.” The slogan and its visual corollary analogize the contemporary government’s ineffective response to the epidemic with the historical persecution of queer people, which went largely unvoiced and unrecorded. Scofield similarly historicizes the government’s stalled action on AIDS but within a settler-colonial context. The acronyms HIV or AIDS never appear in *Native Canadiana*; instead, Scofield refers to AIDS throughout the book as “the plague.” Drawing on Susan Sontag’s *AIDS and Its Metaphors*, Jamieson notes that the plague metaphor in Scofield’s poems “[suggests] continuities between HIV/AIDS and the various epidemics visited upon Native populations throughout the history of colonisation of the Americas, and becomes a protest against colonialism’s lingering effects” (57). The plague metaphor becomes spatialized then not only as a colonial inheritance but also as a failed response by contemporary colonial powers within the borders of “the urban rez,” as well.

Only a handful of poems in *Native Canadiana* address the epidemic, which Jamieson argues attests to a resistance to engage with the trauma of the period but also as a means of circumventing the double negation of gay and Indigenous life, or the stereotypes of the doomed gay man and the disappearing Indigene (52). While invoking “the plague” indexes colonial violence, it also risks the possibility of presenting sex as a mode of extinction, recalling the racist tropes of blood quantum and dilution in the nineteenth century that were used to invalidate the Métis as Indigenous people or tacitly assume their assimilation. Yet, as Melissa Zeiger writes, given the continuing legacy of AIDS in gay culture and literature, “almost any poem written now by a gay man, no matter what its topic, is likely to include elegiac

elements” (qtd. in Jamieson 51), suggesting the ways in which AIDS might manifest indirectly, as it does in Scofield’s poems.⁵⁵ Limiting the amount of coverage given to AIDS in *Native Canadiana* might also differentiate his work from mainstream gay literature of the period; that is, in *Native Canadiana*, as in the neighbourhoods in which Scofield’s speakers work, HIV/AIDS remains just one of several inequities stemming from a network of intersecting oppressions. By presenting “the plague” alongside other systemic problems such as poverty, racism, substance abuse, and homelessness, Scofield both aligns with the broader literary response to AIDS while asserting the particularities of urban, Two-Spirited/queer Indigenous experience in the early-to-mid 1990s. Analyzing a single poem, “Owls in the City,” demonstrates how Scofield’s disclosure of Métis and Two-Spirit/queer identities become fused with his position as a witness and storyteller of “the plague.” As Driskill, Scudeler, and other critics argue, Scofield’s poetics cannot be read through any single or finite framework but demands that critics attend to a range of mutually-implicated, sometimes conflicting, identities. Silence, and the long shadow of censorship, bind each of these identity positions together; thus, in Scofield’s poems, silence becomes both metaphor and mode, an edge where the poet “[makes boundaries] visible again and [provides] a necessary window across them” (Cariou, “Edgework” 32).

Scofield sets “Owls in the City” within a particular time and place: Vancouver in the mid-1990s with the speaker looking “back [on] the ’80s/before the plague really hit” (*Native* 72). Like so many of the poems in *Native Canadiana*, the speaker begins with the invocation of memory: “The ones I remember/like Donny,

⁵⁵ Even in 2016, Schulman observes, “AIDS will always be queer. The stigma of the ‘gay disease’ has historical reach that demographics cannot undo” (*Conflict* 133).

Ray,/Felicia and Queenie/are all sick or dead” (*Native* 71). In the preceding poem, “Queenie,” Scofield writes an elegy for the man who “wanted to be/six feet deep before thirty/and got his wish” (*Native* 69). In “Owls in the City,” Queenie joins other friends who were “the coyote ones/slumped together/at the Dufferin/eyeing every white guy/who walked by” (*Native* 71). The name of the bar further specifies the poem’s geography and history. Until 2006, The Dufferin was a Vancouver gay bar, frequented by many living in the downtown eastside, and was known as “a place where edgy artists could perform transgressive material, where strippers and hustlers entertained, where different classes of people could come together” (Hainsworth n.p.). In the mid-2000s, the bar gentrified and became Hotel Moda. As Schulman writes in *The Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Generation*, when streets gentrify, the process “replaces most people’s experiences with the perceptions of the privileged and calls that reality. In this way gentrification is dependent on telling us that things are better than they are” (161). In Schulman’s critique, gentrification acts as a form of architectural censorship that not only redraws class-based borders, but also has the potential to overwrite a building’s previously lived experiences. Though Scofield’s poem was published ten years before The Dufferin renovated and changed its name, by indexing a particular time and space, “Owls in the City” asserts a continuing queer presence; however, given that Scofield presents a boundary between “the coyote ones” and “every white guy,” he does not suggest the bar as a utopic space where difference becomes erased through sexual transgression. Instead, the gay bar remains more akin to what Michel Foucault calls a “heterotopia,” with “the power of juxtaposing in a single real place different spaces and locations that are

incompatible with each other” (334). Indeed, the speaker positions himself largely outside the gay milieu and the generation hardest hit by AIDS:

Back then
I was the chicken
of the bunch and
mouthy as any redneck.
Because I screamed and hollered
they kept out of my pants. (*Native 71*)

In this instance, Scofield uses gay slang (“chicken,” the term for a very young, possibly underaged, man) that positions him as an insider and also as a “redneck,” which places him in an antagonistic position to that same group. The disjunction of the two words indexes an internalized homophobia. Later, Scofield writes, “I just stayed clear of them,/observed their *mâhkêsis* ways/from across the bar” (*Native 71*). The latter remains another principle of heterotopias as Foucault suggests that while they might “have the appearance of pure and simple openings...they usually conceal curious exclusions...One thinks one has entered and, by the sole fact of entering, one is excluded” (335). From his anti-social position in the pub to the incorporation of the Cree word (glossed as “fox,” adding yet another layer of significance to the recurring redneck image), Scofield demonstrates how even gay bars (perhaps *especially* gay bars) have borders.⁵⁶

The poem also marks a boundary between decades. The penultimate stanza begins, “That was back in the ’80s/before the plague really hit” (*Native 72*). While the plague metaphor recalls historic colonial violence, the word also becomes detached from the popular assumption that AIDS is ‘over.’ Indeed, Scofield writes in 1996, “Today it’s worse—/our *iyiniwak* [people] are dropping/like rotten chokecherries”

⁵⁶ In “Going It Solo,” Scofield writes, “Sex is hierarchical” (*Native 89*).

(*Native 72*). The word “plague” carries a temporally charged meaning that recalls the past but may also carry forward into the present and future, detaching itself from historiographies that too easily erase Indigenous narratives. Scofield’s gesture marks a subtle deviation from some of the AIDS poetry of the same period. In his essay “In Time of Plague,” John McIntyre observes how in 1996, journalist Andrew Sullivan “declared an end to the AIDS epidemic in the *New York Times*... writing in response to the rise of protease inhibitors and the changed prognosis” (n.p.). Poems about AIDS then tended to align the epidemic with the past. McIntyre notes, “The threat had, to a large extent, moved abroad. The Americans most susceptible to infection were increasingly poor and of color” (n.p.). Scofield’s speaker positions himself as witness to the latter when, at the poem’s conclusion, he stands “Tonight at the darkened window” and thinks “how fortunate I am—/saved to pull up these *Âyahkwêw* songs” (*Native 72*). In the bottom margin of the page, Scofield again “loosely translate[s]” *Âyahkwêw* as “a person who has both male and female spirits; also known as Two-Spirited” (*Native 72*). Jamieson notes that while “Scofield’s use of the Cree word...situates Two-Spiritedness within a specific tribal framework” he also identifies here, through translation, with the broader Two-Spirited community (60). Indeed, in an epigraph, Scofield dedicates the poem “for my *Âyahkwêw* relations,” leaving no doubt as to the poem’s intended audience. While I discussed in my reading of “Buck and Run,” drawing on Stigter’s analysis of Scofield’s code-switching, the ways in which Scofield both allows and disallows non-Cree speakers from accessing certain parts of the text, the latter also applies to the use of certain metaphors drawing on Cree narrative. Though fleeting as an image within the poem,

the title emphasizes the importance of the owl imagery. After commenting on the increasing number of Indigenous people dying from AIDS, Scofield writes, “Even owls have migrated to the city,/perched on rooftops or clotheslines/hooting their miserable death chant” (*Native* 72). While Scofield writes about the owls in English, the specific Cree cultural context is not provided to the reader. Driskill suggests, “The owl images evoke many Native traditions in which owls signify death and/or severe illness” (“Call” 227). As Stigter notes, Scofield will often present an English translation but not an “explanation of the cultural context...so it is left to the reader to investigate and acquire this knowledge for him/herself” (53). Scofield’s poem layers Two-Spirited, gay, Cree, and English metaphors and language in order to demonstrate the continuing, and mutually bound, legacies of settler-colonialism and homophobia.

The conclusion of “Owls in the City” offers another vacillation as the speaker retreats from the more public address of the poem’s first three stanzas to the interiorized subjectivity of the final stanza when he stands at the “darkened” window. The window either becomes a mirror that reflects the speaker back to himself or, if “darkened” here means that the lights are switched off inside, allows him to gaze out at the city. In “Lyric, History, and Genre,” Jonathan Culler, writing on the Western lyric tradition, observes that lyrics often contain such under-examined moments when speakers “hyperbolically mark this combination of indirection and address” by “turning aside from supposedly real listeners to address...someone or something that is not an ordinary, empirical listener, such as a nightingale, an urn, or one’s own poem” (68). While the speaker does not entirely apostrophize when he says “these *Âyahkwêw* songs” there is a turning away from public address and a self-conscious

awareness of the song(s) at hand. The moment conflates introspection with expression—another lyric silence—as the songs will continue the memory of “the ones [he] remembers” (71). Moreover, the poem’s “darkened window” provides a literal example of Cariou’s metaphoric window that allows for seeing across boundaries.

5. Conclusion

In his introduction to the second edition of Scofield’s *Love Medicine and One Song*, Cariou observes how the book has proven to be “an important watershed in [the] literary exploration of indigenous erotics” (iii). Considering the musicality of the collection, Cariou recalls “the truism that songs are not really songs until they are performed” and encourages readers to speak the words aloud and “taste their syllables on your own tongue, feel the rhythms of your own body” (x). Cariou’s statement suggests that Scofield’s poems on the page are text-bound in yet another kind of lyric silence.

In many ways, *Love Medicine and One Song* provides the richer example of how Scofield, in Cariou’s words, “blow[s] the proverbial doors off the old love poem” (“Introduction” ii). At the same time, several elements of *Native Canadiana*’s engagement with censorship may be found in *Love Medicine*, too. Consider, for example, the poem “No Language” in which the speaker asks, “What is it he calls to my lips,/little redbird/humming in mid-flight?” (*Love* 22). The poem presents a series of metaphors phrased as questions concerning what the speaker’s lover “pulls,” “calls,” “leaves,” and “speaks” (22). While the poem might recall the tropes of the

Renaissance love lyric—such as the poet’s inability to express his lover’s beauty in words—the poet’s struggle takes on new meaning in the Cree/Métis context:

What is it he speaks,
old earth and roots
moving across his tongue
and mine? (*Love* 22)

These lines recall “the clumps beneath the water” in “The Poet Takes It Upon Himself to Speak” (*Native* 11). At the end of “No Language” the speaker recounts, “Always, it crumbles/in my mouth/before discovery” (22). Language and his lover’s body become conflated for the speaker, simultaneously absence and presence.

The poems in *Love Medicine and One Song* mark a clear shift away from the more forthright politics of *Native Canadiana*. In his memoir, Scofield recalls the difficulty of touring to support the book and finding, after its publication, “the glitz and glamour of being a writer started to fade, and I began to realize the limitations of being a ‘young, angry, gay, Métis poet.’ Secretly I felt resentful that my work, and the perception of it, restricted me to such labels” (194). Being “labelled” remains the obvious downside of disclosure; that is, while the persona of the straight, white, male writer may be largely neutral—allowing him to strategically adopt and discard positions of difference when convenient—the writing of poets from so-called marginalized positions is often received as the sum total of an identity that remains singular and reified. Cariou suggests that Scofield’s career continues to rebut such limits:

He has repeatedly flouted the attempts of critics and reviewers to place hard boundaries around his identity... With each book he complicates the meaning of his own identity, leaving behind the empty husks of

labels in favour of a more holistic and more honest sense of lived reality. (“Introduction” vii).

Scofield’s writing frequently attempts to integrate distinct identity positions (Métis and gay, for two examples) without subsuming one to the others or suggesting that such affiliations are fixed in time or space. Many of these identities share a history of censorship: the violent censure of the Cree language, the failures to acknowledge a distinct Métis culture, the suppression of a Two-Spirited/queer sexuality. Silence in Scofield’s poems makes identitarian boundaries visible in new ways, allowing him to index and rework historical anxieties regarding the transgression of a whole range of borders, from the mixing of blood to the migration of the Métis back and forth across the forty-ninth parallel—anxieties that continue, often in new forms, up to the present. Yet as poems rooted in Vancouver in the 1990s, they join works by Rule and Marlatt and Warland that articulate a wide range of responses to sexual censorship and expression in the era.

Conclusion

1. “We’re Not in Green Gables Anymore, Toto”

In 1968, on the eve of publishing Scott Symons’ second novel, *Civic Square*—those 900 unbound pages hand-decorated with drawings of flying phalluses—publisher Jack McClelland writes, in a letter to Richard Goldfarb, “Is Canada ready for this? Is it necessary? Desirable? Permissible? Do we censor him? ...I can’t help but feeling that it must have been both easier and more profitable to publish Lucy Maud Montgomery” (qtd. in King 189). Yet not even Montgomery, arguably Canada’s most successful literary export, has been immune to censorship or controversy. For example, *Anne of Green Gables* remained popular for decades in Poland after its translation in 1912, even after the Polish government attempted to ban *Anne*, and her anti-authoritarian message, after the Second World War (York 96). Moreover, when scholar Laura Robinson delivered a paper entitled, “Bosom Buddies,” at the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences in 2000, providing an analysis of the novel’s potentially homoerotic female friendships, the essay became a national news story, and fodder for debate on call-in radio shows. “Does lesbianism underlie *Anne of Green Gables*?” asked a *Globe and Mail* headline (Nolen n.p.). In 2008, playwright Rosemary Rowe staged her cabaret show, *Anne Made Me Gay*, at Buddies in Bad Times, Toronto’s iconic queer theatre. That year, a *Toronto Star* headline proclaimed Anne our “National Redhead as Queer Icon” (DeMara n.p.), without the question mark.

I make this brief digression to Avonlea because the reception of Montgomery’s novel—and its robust critical, commercial, and tourism industries—

reveals how the discourse of books and national borderlines continues to intersect the limits of gender and sexual expression in sometimes surprising ways. Indeed, as I will discuss further, McClelland is not the last person to mistakenly suggest that Montgomery offers a respite from queer literary controversy. When Raziel Reid's YA novel, *When Everything Feels Like the Movies* won the 2014 Governor General's Literary Award for Children's Literature, Barbara Kay denounced the award in her *National Post* column, calling Reid's book a "values-void novel" (n.p.). Reid tells the story of a gay teenager named Jude who navigates high school bullies and a difficult home life by creating an elaborate fantasy world of sex, substance use, and celebrity obsession. Jude develops a crush on a straight-identified boy named Luke and asks him to their school's Valentine's Day dance, an invitation that results in Jude's murder (we learn on the second page of the novel that Jude is narrating his story after his death). While Kay critiques the text's explicit sexuality, she is equally concerned with its *lack* of explicit Canadian content. After cataloguing the novel's most salacious moments, offered up without context, Kay declares, "We're not in Green Gables anymore, Toto. Indeed, we're not anywhere recognizable. Province? State? East? West?" (n.p.). Later, Kay suggests that a book should be "recognizably Canadian" (n.p.) in order to win a Governor General's Award. Of course, Kay's own analogy conflates Canadian children's literature with an allusion to Toto, the little dog in *The Wizard of Oz*, by the American author L. Frank Baum. Thus, in Kay's critique of Reid's novel, another border has been unwittingly breached.

I want to conclude by offering a brief analysis of Reid's novel, and its reception, as a final exhibit that touches upon the various strategies I have discussed

throughout the dissertation; however, this exhibit is not meant to close the case, but rather to suggest the ways in which the queer poetics of disclosure—and the role of the nation’s borders in the constitution, circulation, and detainment of LGBTTQ lives and culture—continues into the first decades of the twenty-first century.

2. “The Censor Light”

Los Angeles remains, appropriately, the only place name in *When Everything Feels Like the Movies*. If one chooses to read the novel’s unnamed setting as “Canadian,” then Jude’s plan to move to Los Angeles reverses the persistent myth of Canada-as-queer-sanctuary, while at the same time confirming the long-held assumption that Canadian writers and artists must “go south of the border or across the ocean to learn how to talk,” as Rule puts it in *Contract with the World* (319). Jude keeps a tattered poster of Marilyn Monroe on his basement bedroom wall and, when he walks to school, imagines the snowy bungalows of his neighbourhood as Beverly Hills mansions (18-19). The trope of Hollywood film production is maintained throughout the novel, with Jude’s middle school becoming a “movie set,” the honour students employed as “the crew,” the popular girls as the “movie stars,” and “the extras” composed of students Jude calls “the misfits, outcasts, and social rejects” (21). Yet even when Jude is the one doing the casting, he cannot locate himself in this world. He ultimately settles on calling himself “the flamer that lit the set on fire” (22).⁵⁷

⁵⁷ In Christian hagiography, Jude the Apostle is the patron saint of lost causes, often figured with a flame above his head.

Like Hugh in *Place d'Armes* redrawing the boundaries of Old Montreal, or Scofield's lyric speakers delimiting the racial, sexual, and class boundaries of "the urban rez," Jude re-maps geographic space even while he fails to navigate the vicissitudes of his sexual orientation. Moreover, Jude says, in a direct address to the reader, "I'm not going to tell you what town I lived in because it was a dump, and it will just depress you. It had everything you needed if you didn't need anything at all" (18). Jude takes pleasure in denying his small town so much as a name—a linguistic erasure that allows semantic space to be re-filled with new, and queer, signification. Toward the end of the novel, Jude observes the Welcome sign, over which someone has crossed out the town's name and written: "'Welcome to hell.'" (135). Elsewhere, the sign for an abandoned Blockbuster Video has been rewritten as "Byebuster" (101). Reid's novel, and its so-called placeless landscape, blurs not only the line between acceptable and unacceptable representations of youth sexuality, but also the border between US and Canadian culture.

After the publication of Kay's column, and a separate online petition calling for the novel to be stripped of its award, a lively debate ensued on Twitter in which Kay responded to critics: "This is not a censorship issue. Not even close. It would be censorship to ask that it not be published. Critiquing a prize is another matter altogether" (n.p.). Here Kay is restricting the definition of censorship to "prior restraint," such as when a government bans the printing or distribution of certain material—sometimes before it is even published. Prior restraint might also prevent dissemination, such as when Customs blocked shipments of queer materials to Little Sister's. In the case of Reid's novel, the petition writers were not calling for a prior

restraint form of censorship; however, calling for the award to be rescinded arguably attempts to infringe upon the intellectual freedom of the jury that awarded the prize in the first place.

In *Prizing Canadian Literature*, Gillian Roberts notes that once bestowed upon a text, a literary prize cannot easily be removed from the reader's reception of the work. The gold GG medal imbues what Kay calls a "values-void novel" with a high degree of symbolic "cultural value" from the prize's expert jury, not to mention financial value, in that the winner receives a \$25,000 prize, and can expect an increase in book sales. As Roberts points out, literary prizes are paradoxical in that while they attempt to celebrate high aesthetic achievement they also, simultaneously, seek to promote literature among a wide national public (23). As I previously discussed in the dissertation, both Symons and Rule have pointed to the importance of literary prizes to their careers. Winning the Beta Sigma Phi First Canadian Novel Award allowed Symons to end his Mexican exile and return to Canada in 1968 (Taylor 221), while Rule invoked her Canadian Author's Association award in her testimony at the Little Sister's trial (*Detained* 18). Moreover, Rule's literary prizes allowed her work to become *recognizable*—even respectable—to the state's would-be censors at the border. In Betsy Warland's recent hybrid-genre text, *Oscar of Between: A Memoir of Identity and Ideas*, she writes of the frustrations of applying for Canada Council funding: "I've spent twenty years applying to either the poetry jury or the nonfiction jury and both have repeatedly doubted that my writing fits their genre. It has been utterly demoralizing" (143). Here, the discrimination that results from a failure to conform to the limits of genre mirrors a similar illegibility in terms of

gender expression. National prizes and grants validate an author in both aesthetic and political ways. Given its vice-regal name, for example, the Governor General's award declares its recipients as officially Canadian. With Reid's win, representations of queer, sexually active youth are, in effect, given royal assent.

Yet there is a telling and perhaps intentional typo in Reid's novel. In one scene, Jude and his best friend's older brother, Abel, are walking home late at night. Reid writes, "The censor light turned on like paparazzi hiding in the bushes. The spotlight could be so relentless" (124). Here, the 'sensor' is spelled with a C instead of an S. The "spotlight" collapses public and domestic spaces; indeed, Jude's emulation of Hollywood celebrity, spectacularly staged under the quotidian glare of a porch light-cum-paparazzo, recalls the similar conflation of nation, domesticity, and celebrity obsession in Michel Tremblay's *Hosanna*. It remains unclear whether the misspelling in Reid's text is intentional, that is, one of Jude's textual slippages, but, as my dissertation has demonstrated, it is useful to think about censorship as a kind of spotlight that brings the public's attention to cultural productions in new ways. As Judith Butler argues throughout *Excitable Speech*, calls for censorship tend to reveal, rather than conceal, offending speech. Whether or not Reid is making a pun here, the "censor light" is particularly prescient given that the phrase arrives directly before Jude and Abel have anal sex for the first time—a scene which, perhaps inevitably, was one of the most cited by the novel's opponents.

Like all of the writers I consider in the dissertation, Reid blurs the boundary between "real life" and its literary representation. In several interviews, Reid has acknowledged the novel is inspired by the 2008 murder of fifteen-year-old Larry

Fobes King in California. Larry, like Jude, was shot by a boy named Brandon, whom Larry had asked to be his valentine. Brandon's first trial ended in a mistrial and some of the jurors later expressed sympathy for him, even wearing "Save Brandon" bracelets (Lederman n.p.). Toward the end of the novel, Jude declares with tragic irony, "I was going to get an Oscar if it cost me my life" (134). And yet, narrating his coma after his shooting, Jude observes that the cameras are focused on Luke, his murderer, instead of him. Jude says,

The news talked more about Luke than about me. He was a typical 'boy next door' trying desperately not to be stomped on by my stilettos...The reports claimed that Luke was being bullied. What about *his* rights?... His lawyers were going to use the 'homo panic' defence in court because I'd been hitting on him in the change room. Because I'd asked him to be my Valentine. (170)

Just as the cameras turn toward Luke, I fear giving too much attention to those taking offense with Jude, rather than focusing on Reid's text. And yet, in some ways, reading the calls for censorship alongside the book's national celebration is an extension of the novel's engagement with fame. Jude vacillates between desiring the populist acclaim of celebrity at the same time he declares he wants people to hate him because, as he puts it, "hate was as close to love as [he] thought [he'd] ever be" (19). The line recalls Hugh's declaration in *Place d'Armes* that "art is love—even an art of hate is love" (361).

The wavering between adoration and hate extends to the reception of Reid's novel, as well, particularly as it was situated within that year's literary prizes.

If there is a powerful lack of the nation in the novel, then there has been a surplus of nationalism in its reception. For example, *When Everything Feels Like the Movies* was the runner-up for the 2015 CBC Canada Reads competition. While the overarching goal of the Canada Reads contest is to find one book that all Canadians should read, its 2015 theme was to find “one book to break barriers.” Yet by being part of Canada Reads, the subversive text becomes part of the dominant culture as it is received and circulated within new contexts, not least of which is the nation as it is constructed through the CBC’s Canada Reads program. In her defense of the novel on the Canada Reads broadcast, talk show host and blogger Elaine Lui discussed and countered Kay’s editorial in her own advocacy of the book. On the first day of the competition, Lui argued,

[The novel] shakes up the status quo. It upsets the guardians of the status quo, the pearl-clutchers who guard the barrier of homophobia and intolerance. Because it’s not only confronting the barrier, it has doused gasoline all over that barrier and has lit the flame. And if this book can win this competition, we together can throw that match down, watch it burn to the ground, then walk across the ashes of that barrier, hold our hands out and say, ‘Be my valentine.’ Come on, Canada, let’s dance.

The censorship controversy following one of the novel’s awards ends up validating it as a serious contender for the other; however, Lui’s statement positions Reid’s novel as an impossibly transgressive text. As Georges Bataille, Michel Foucault, and their interlocutors demonstrate, transgression cannot “break barriers”; rather, the barrier

produces the effects of the transgression. Indeed, within the constitutive frameworks of a popular and nationalist literary prize, the book becomes newly disciplined, and Jude's flame tempered. In the reception of Reid's novel, Canada is instead invoked as, simultaneously, the saviour and the transgressor, all the while remaining a total absence in the novel. The reception of Reid's novel demonstrates how, even in 2015, anxieties about sexual expression, and the limits of national identity and recognition, continue to be intimately seamed.

3. To "Own the Border Outright"

The national boundaries of North America continue to set the limits of queer expression, even as the terms of recognition have changed. In November 2015, for a personal example, my boyfriend and I were stopped at the US border. A guard ordered us to keep our hands and faces forward as she searched our bags. We were instructed to pull over, and sent to wait in a glass vestibule between the parking lot and the customs office, a border within the border. When another guard called us into the office, he asked us how we knew each other. We told him we had been dating for four months. "So, are you guys going to get married?" he asked. The interview continued in a similar vein for thirty minutes. When only one of us had to fill out a form regarding our combined international travel history, the guard slid the form across the desk and asked, "So, who's the boss?" with a smirk. He asked us questions like, "You two just saw each other across the university campus and happened to 'fall in love' at first sight?" The sarcastic scare quotes were audible in his voice. The many questions about how and where we met suggested the guard might not have believed

we were a couple, or perhaps even gay. If the guard did not believe we were a couple, he may not have believed we were just going across the border to spend a weekend at my boyfriend's family's cottage in Michigan. As I have written elsewhere about the experience,

It's rare (absurd, even) to experience a situation where *not* being perceived as gay seems the riskier option. The exchange with the border guard discomfited because our sexuality—nuanced, queer—was being held up against our national identity, which is supposed to be solid and impermeable. In the border, the former was being used to interrogate the latter, so that questions about our sex life were meant to validate the story of our selves. Yet how could we get our stories straight if we were still in those heady days before we'd set any real boundaries, before we'd made any declarations that made us recognizable to each other in certain terms, never mind the state? (93)

Moreover, “The guard's question about marriage was meant to put us into the course of ‘good’ citizenship (a mode of state recognition the US had only just allowed), and by being read as good citizens, we could be recognizable as allies” (Shaw 96). By adequately performing in this same mode (undoubtedly made easier for us as white, cis-gendered men) we were finally able to pass.

In *Boys Like Her*, the members of the Taste This collective narrate their crossing the US-Canada border. Zoë Eakle observes,

Confusing these guys [border guards] is a crime. Being proud of the things about yourself that confuse them makes it worse. To cross the

U.S./Canada border without incident it is best to look and act as though you never have and never would think of crossing any border, metaphoric or otherwise, without the express permission of someone very official with a government-issued badge and uniform. Either that or you yourself have to actually own the border outright. If you do not own it, transgressions are not allowed. (113)

This rich passage is particularly amplified by the page's visual design. Opposing the text is a full-page black and white photograph of a dildo. The phallus confuses, too. In Eakle's narrative, the phallus represents the power of "these guys," the border guards, but also quite literally the dildo the guards remove from Lyndell Montgomery's bag, proudly presented in the book as a subversion of that state power. In Anna Camilleri's account of the border crossing, Montgomery says, "He's touching my dick... Funny, I don't feel a thing" (172). The tone is humorous, but also belies the uncomfortable fact that trans and queer bodies are "read" and detained at borders just as the books they produce have been seized and confiscated. Through their border writing, the members of Taste This, like the authors I consider in my dissertation, attempt to "own the border outright" through the only means possible: language.

Of course, each writer differently reveals the possibilities and pitfalls of claiming or reimagining the lines that define and divide colonized land. A range of formal and generic strategies mirrors these political dissonances, from Symons' homosexual *coup d'etat* in Old Montreal, mapping the borders that redefine contemporary definitions of obscenity, to Rule's vision of a globalizing Vancouver energized by the diversity of its sexual citizens, and Marlatt and Warland's

recuperation of the Australian desert as so-called “negative space” that demands new forms for its signification. Scofield’s poetry returns readers to the very frontier that formed North America’s colonial boundaries at the same time as it divided and erased the borderlines marking Indigenous nations. The implications of the latter violence continue to be felt, as Scofield reveals, in the various boundaries that divide Vancouver’s downtown eastside.

Indeed, in the recent marches resisting President Donald Trump’s call to “build a wall” between the US and Mexico, and his attempts to impose a travel ban on “predominantly Muslim countries” (Thrush n.p.), a recurring protest sign reads, “No Ban on Stolen Land,” indexing the overlapping and complex concerns of migration and boundary-formation that continue to the present. At the same time, Trump’s administration has rescinded so-called “bathroom bills” that protect transgendered students using school washrooms that correspond to their gender expression (Peters, Becker, and Davis n.p.). The latter provides another example of the hegemony’s queer panic, this time at the quotidian boundary of a bathroom door. The emergence of trans visibility in recent decades, the new threats to immigration via the rise of xenophobic political movements throughout the west, and the continuing strategies of decolonization are just three productive—and prescient—directions in which to turn in furthering a queer poetics of disclosure at the nation’s borders. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argued in her 1991 address to the MLA, “It is speech and visibility that give us any political power we have.” My dissertation reveals how literary forms and genres not only bear the trace of attempts to seize or silence the expressions of LGBTTQ writers, but also how censorship—in both its implicit and explicit

manifestations—has, paradoxically, galvanized the innovation of queer aesthetics in the latter half of the twentieth century. These strategies continue to offer us ways of crossing and re-crossing that line Foucault names the “horizon of the uncrossable” (34).

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Zero Patience: A Musical About AIDS. Dir. John Greyson. Strand, 1993. DVD.

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EDUCATION

2017 PhD. English Language and Literature, Western University
 2012 MA, English Language and Literature, University of Windsor
 2009 MLIS, Western University
 2008 BA, Honours Specialization in English Language and Literature,
 Western University

ACADEMIC AWARDS & HONOURS

2016 The Carl F. and Margaret E. Klinck Prize, Western University
 2014-2017 Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Doctoral Scholarship,
 Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
 2014-2015 Ontario Graduate Scholarship (Declined)
 2013-2014 Ontario Graduate Scholarship
 2012-2013 Sara Marie Jones Memorial Scholarship in English, Western University
 2012 A.R. and E.G. Ferriss Award, University of Windsor
 2011-2012 University of Windsor Postgraduate Tuition Scholarship

CREATIVE WRITING AWARDS & NOMINATIONS

2016 Shortlisted, *Event Magazine* Nonfiction Contest
 2016 Shortlisted, The Edna Staebler Personal Essay Award, *The New Quarterly*
 2016 Grand Prize, *PRISM International Poetry Contest*
 2015 Poem of the Year, *Arc Poetry Magazine*
 2015 Longlisted, The CBC Creative Nonfiction Prize
 2007 First Prize, Alfred Poynt Award in Poetry, Western University

ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS & PRESENTATIONS

Refereed Journal Articles

“Ekphrastic Drag: Temporal Transgressions in John Barton’s *West of Darkness: Emily Carr: A Self-Portrait*.” *Canadian Literature* 224 (2015): 65-81.

Refereed Conference Presentations

“Queer Kids Under ‘The Censor Light’: Seeking the Nation in the Reception of Raziel Reid’s *When Everything Feels Like the Movies*.” Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English Annual Conference, May 2016.

“*Cruising* and the Capital of Censorship: *Interior. Leather Bar.* as Hollywood Erotohistoriography?” Sexuality Studies Association Annual Conference, May 2015.

“Coming to Terms: Reading Lawrence Hill’s *The Book of Negroes* as a Literacy Narrative.” Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English Annual Conference, May 2015.

“Public Consumption: Food and Celebrity in Gertrude Stein’s *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*.” Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English Annual Conference, “Queer Food” Panel, May 2012.

CREATIVE PUBLICATIONS

Poetry - Books

Smaller Hours. Fredericton, NB: icehouse poetry/Goose Lane Editions (Forthcoming Fall 2017).

Poetry - Journals

“Alexander Graham Bell,” “The Corridor,” and “Expired Trojan.” *The Fiddlehead* 270 (2017): 50-54.

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“Mars in Love” and “Discretion.” *Plenitude Magazine* 1 (2012): n.p.

“Freon Love.” *The Gay & Lesbian Review* XIX.1 (2012): 23.

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Creative Nonfiction

“Lend Me Your Ears: A Border Crossing in Three Acts,” *The New Quarterly* 142 (2017): 92-97.

“The 21-lb. Chinook Salmon,” *Event Magazine*, forthcoming.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 2016-2017 | Teaching Assistant, Introduction to Film Studies (FILM 1022), Western University |
| 2015 | Teaching Assistant, Studies in Poetics (ENGL 2230F), Western University |
| 2014-2015 | Lead Graduate Teaching Assistant, Western University |
| 2013-2014 | Teaching Assistant, Understanding Literature Today (ENGL 1020E), Western University |
| 2012-2013 | Teaching Assistant, Enriched Introduction to English Literature (ENGL 1022E), Western University |
| 2011-2012 | Teaching Assistant/Instructor, Composition (ENGL 26-100), University of Windsor |