“Ask the Colonial Ghosts”: Intimate Histories, Harmful Complicities, and the Search for an Accountable Relationship with the Past

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Abstract by:

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I take episodes from my life and my family’s past as sites through which to explore connections between individual lives and larger structures, between the ways we tell our stories and the ways that histories are constructed, between colonial pasts and colonial presents. By researching and contextualizing the lives of my ancestors who homesteaded in Saskatchewan and those who participated in the British Raj, I analyze the lived practice of particular colonial structures and racial logics, and the consequences of our relationships with these histories. I then explore my contemporary participation in settler colonial seizure and amnesia, and my connection and responsibility to the Indigenous peoples who have lived (and continue to live) in relation with this land we now call Toronto. Grounded in a decolonial analysis, I aim to challenge both the erasure of unpalatable histories and the denial that these histories have any bearing on our world today.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the contributions of my great-aunt, who offered acceptance when I needed it and shared her stories when I asked for them.

Endless appreciation to my partner for his patience, support, and laughter, and to our beautiful toddler, who grounds me everyday. Asher, I hope one day that you will read this and grapple, in your own way, with the stories that we both carry with us. Thanks also, to my friends, parents, family, community, and mentors who have helped me through this process in countless ways. Lastly, much gratitude to my dedicated supervisors, Radhika, Julia, and Celia, for your commitment, advice, and wisdom.

Note: The quote in my thesis title is from artist Rae Spoon's lyrics, "Come on Forest Fire Burn the Disco Down," included in the epigraph below.

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We're all standing on our parents' shoulders,
The boats across the ocean.
And they stand on their parents' shoulders,
Missionaries that never went home.
And they stand on their parents' shoulders,
Wagons in a row.
And they stand on their parents' shoulders,
Churches built from bones.
...
Ask the colonial ghosts if they live in your bones.
Ask the colonial ghosts if they live in your bones.
Ask the colonial ghosts what they took...
And they'll say
You're dancing on it.

– Rae Spoon, "Come on Forest Fire Burn the Disco Down"

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: "A Decolonizing Autobiography"

"The history of families has been a history of empire." – Emma Rothschild (269)

An Origin Story

Growing up in Toronto, my family always used a word, "Fanagalo." It meant to tidy the house, to do a quick clean. My parents, grandparents, great-aunts and uncles, cousins, my sister and I… we used the word without second thought. Because its use was confined to the domestic sphere of the household, however, it wasn't until I moved out and casually used it with my then roommate that I realized that no one outside of my extended family had ever heard of the word. In retrospect, it seems obvious that this expression originated from a language other than English, but it had embedded itself so seamlessly into the everyday vocabulary of generations of my family that it rolled off my tongue without question. Suddenly confronted with the fact that it had a history particular to my own lineage, I became curious as to its origins. Where did "fanagalo" come from? How and when had it first collided with my family? I turned to the internet, trying a couple possible spellings of a word that I had never read, only ever heard spoken. I was shocked by what I found. "Fanagalo," also known as "fanakalo," is the name of a sophisticated pidgin language emerging in South Africa and adjoining countries at some point during the 1800s, based primarily on Zulu, with some influences from English and Afrikaans (Pewa 22). It facilitated a certain kind of communication, almost exclusively used between white settler colonialists, and workers in mines or servants in households (Pewa 25, 29). Fanagalo, which means "do-it-like-this" in Zulu ("Fanagalo"), is entirely constructed around the imperative, a means of issuing commands or instructions across asymmetries of power (Adendorff 180).

I began to ask questions, trace the connection between this history and my own. My ancestors who were in Southern Africa were turn-of-the-century missionaries, I discovered, participants in a particular kind of colonial relation. My evangelizing great-great-grandparents likely "relied on native servants" for a myriad of household tasks (Beidelman 125) and, it seems probable, communicated with them in the domestic dialect of Fanagalo then known as "kitchen kafir (sic)" (Pewa 25).[1] The language was so characterized by and characteristic of racialized power differentials that – even in more recent studies – South African interviewees described Fanagalo "as an authoritarian and demeaning language used to facilitate control rather than communication" (Brown in Pewa 137). The word "Fanagalo" somehow infiltrated these missionaries' lexicon, evolved to refer to a common domestic task, shifted into the terrain of casual household parlance, and was passed down, generation to generation, to me.

"Partly because of empire," Edward Said argues, "all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogenous" *(Culture and Imperialism* xxvi). The same is true of languages: none are isolated or static, and all have been shaped by long histories of borrowed terms and various influences (Durkin 3). English's spread across the globe – in large part through processes of British colonial expansion and American neo-colonial domination (Boampong and Penova 3) – has put it in contact and dialogue with countless languages at different geographical and historical moments. What made this word of interest to me, then, is not its supposedly "foreign" origins but its specificity to my family's lexicon, and its particular historical roots in a particular context of domination. What kinds of connections, resonances, hauntings are exposed through this encounter? What kinds of inheritances are

[1] "Kaffir," also known as the "k-word," has been used as a violent anti-Black slur in South Africa for almost a century (Beresford).

revealed? My tongue jumps to this word when I gesture to my partner at the chaos that our toddler has created in the living room. "Let's do a quick fanagalo!" But my mind interrupts. Now that I know the contours of this story, a thought process is triggered every time that I would have used the word but stop myself: I think about a different household, separated from mine by four generations and over 13,000 kilometers. I am reminded of my intimate ties to these particular histories of racial dominance, and cultural and religious imperialism, in ways that are uncomfortable, but perhaps also productive. I don't expand further on these missionary histories in the chapters below,[2] but I begin with this encounter as an origin story of sorts: uncovering this artifact launched the fraught process of autoethnographic exploration, familial navigation, and historical research that evolved into this thesis.

"A Decolonizing Autobiography"

Chickasaw theorist Jodi Byrd argues that apprehending violent colonial histories is a crucial step towards imagining and working towards decolonial, Indigenous-centered futurities (229); confronting, unpacking, and grieving (historical and ongoing) colonial violence is a project that needs to continue to happen on many levels and in many ways. Celia Haig-Brown offers one concrete methodology that aligns with this call, positing the pedagogical utility and transformative potential of writing "decolonizing autobiographies" ("Decolonizing Diaspora" 13). Such a practice of "tracing [colonialism's] roots through personal narrative and family history," she argues, is a "first step in the long journey of possibility for decolonization" ("Decolonizing Diaspora" 14). As the lyrics in the epigraph suggest, especially for those of us who are settlers, there is value in tracing the "colonial ghosts" (Spoon) that continue to haunt us

[2] I did not have the time and resources necessary to complete the required archival research in the context of this Master's. I intend, however, to pursue these histories in my doctoral work.

as individuals and as a society. Such a process of untangling stories, legacies, and complicities is crucial for locating ourselves – in relation to our pasts, to each other, and to the land on which we live.

When I began to investigate the histories of my own family, I found a web of geographically disparate colonial engagements. While branches of my family have been settling North America since the 1700s, others were serving in India as part of the British Raj, evangelizing in southern and central Africa, captaining merchant ships to and from "the Orient." These stories and their legacies, linked by the material, cultural, and affective relations of kinship, are a worthy site for scholarly investigation. Through a rigorous, self-reflective, and methodologically innovative research process, an analysis of my family's history – and of my relationship with those histories – offers valuable conceptual contributions, stretching across disciplinary boundaries.

Research Areas and Questions

Although there are many possible sites from my own and my ancestors' lives to investigate, I focus on the episodes that most productively embody the dynamics with which I am grappling: personal involvements in macro processes, the operations of power and violence, the political stakes of representation and erasure, affective and relational contradictions, and the contemporary implications of colonial histories. (My research areas were also constrained by the available time, resources, and historical material.) In chapters that focus, respectively, on my ancestors' participation in settler colonialism and white supremacy in the settlement of Saskatchewan, my family's time as economic, social, and story-telling participants in the British Raj, and my own relationships with the various histories of Toronto, I pursue the following questions: How can the rigorous and creative investigation of personal and ancestral

entanglements offer valuable insights into some of the *lived* and *practiced* operations of colonialism, historically and in the contemporary world? How can I develop a relationship with these stories that allows me to better understand my relationship to lands, peoples, and histories, to disrupt violence-erasing myths, and to participate in conversations that seek to make space for decolonial possibilities?

Weaving through, into, and around my microhistorical investigations is my own perspective and process: how I have encountered and been impacted by these stories, my journey of researching and writing them, and my theoretical and affective unpacking of what I find. This is the story of colonial haunting and of striving towards elusive (even impossible) accountability, and it is the lens through which I research and narrate all the other histories, the ground from which my theoretical conversations emerge. Alongside the particular historical analyses that I offer within each chapter, my thesis argues that, while colonial histories need to be investigated and unsettled at a macro scale, we also need to look inwards to see how colonial ideologies, complicities, and histories live in and through us. The histories I examine below shape my location in the world, and I seek to analyze what that means – for me and for the many others whose historical entanglements remain less examined.

Orientation: That which follows…

This introduction has articulated my research questions and gestured towards my goals, but I expand upon my theoretical framing and methodological considerations in the next chapter, "Nurturing an Approach: Political Investments, Theoretical Foundations, Methodological Considerations." In it, I outline the contours, investments, and positioning of my project, and draw on relevant bodies of literature to work through the intellectual, practical, and ethical

"problems" that are part my overall process.[3] I also detail the political goals that drive this work, and the various methods that I have used to complete my research. This chapter offers crucial context for the three chapters of historical content that follow.

Chapter 3, "As *Exalted Subjects*: Confronting an Intimate History of Prairie Settlement and White Nation Building," draws on Sunera Thobani's analysis of the early settlement of the Prairies as an important episode in Canadian nation-building and as a crucial part of our celebratory national mythology. Given that I am descended from white settlers who homesteaded in Saskatchewan in the early 1900s, it is also a history with which I have a fraught but intimate relationship. In this chapter, I analyze the crucial role occupied by "ordinary" homestead farmers like my family in the settler colonial projects of dispossession, displacement, and claiming the Canadian Prairies. I then survey the related histories of differently racialized settlers and arrivants, and examine how the interlocking structures of white supremacy were operationalized at this historical juncture. Lastly, I look specifically at the mutually supportive processes of memoralizing and selectively disavowing the histories of homestead era white settlers, and the consequences that can emerge from these historical framings. I ground my analysis in my ancestors' stories because I want to emphasize the proximity of these violent histories to "exalted subjects" (Thobani) like myself, rather than their supposed remoteness.

The next chapter, "'The Colonial Way of Life': Contextualizing and Learning from my Family's Experience of the Raj," explores the lives of my great-grandparents and their children in British India. I am looking for a *different* way to tell the story of growing up in the Raj, one that is less celebratory and tinged with Orientalism, and more attuned to context and power, than

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[3] Since the clusters of personal and familial entanglements (the respective subjects of Chapter 3, 4, and 5) are geographically, temporally, and contextually disparate, I explore the literature related to the particular content of each in the chapter itself.

those that have come to dominate the cultural imaginary. I discuss the career-orientated motivations that drew my great-grandfather from Britain to India, and the systems of economic imperialism in which he participated. I look at the fraught terrain (and nostalgic memories) of childrearing on racially charged imperial frontiers, and then unpack the intersection between my family's individual lives and the histories of World War II and "decolonization." I conclude with an exploration of the legacies that I have inherited from these Raj entanglements, in order to further understand the multidirectional ways that imperial relations impact people and cultures, and to expose deeply engrained and long lasting traces of colonialism.

My fifth chapter, "Toronto's Past in My Present: Land, Time, and Resistant Insistence," focuses on a different set of relationships-with-histories – those centered on shared place rather than on family ties. Taking certain Indigenous approaches to land, time, and the connection between them seriously, I argue that the histories of Toronto, this place that I call home and that informs my life and my writing, are *relevant*. Insisting on keeping these pasts in the picture upsets settler logics that would prefer to suppress all of the stories that this land holds, and allows for an honest exploration of the ways that colonialism has touched us all. This unconventional and autoethnographic chapter consists of a series of encounters: I move through different places in this city that have significance in my life in order to reflect on others for whom those places have had meaning. It is far from a comprehensive account of the many Indigenous and colonial histories of Toronto, but it gestures to the complexities, multiplicities, and legacies that I live with everyday.

The final chapter of the thesis, "Im/Parting Words: Conclusions, Contributions, Possibilities," outlines my project's contributions to several important conversations. I summarize the methodological and pedagogical implications of my approach to historical

material, and explore how my work can help to intervene in colonial memory formations and to foster responsible affective engagements with privileged identities and colonial complicities. While I position my project as "settler harm reduction" (Tuck and Yang), with all of its inherent limitations, I also chart how this work can, in some small way, contribute to evoking relational understandings of our pasts and making space for working towards decolonial futures.

CHAPTER 2

Nurturing an Approach: Political Investments, Theoretical Foundations, Methodological Considerations

"Imagine how you as writers from the dominant society might turn over some of the rocks in your own garden for examination. Imagine… courageously questioning and examining the values that allow the de-humanizing of peoples through domination… Imagine writing in honesty, free of the romantic bias about the courageous 'pioneering spirit' of colonialist practice and imperialist process." – Jeanette Armstrong (Okanagan) (in Mackey 1)

"An Inventory of Traces"

According to Antonio Gramsci, "the starting-point of critical elaboration is… 'knowing thyself' as a product of the historical process to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory" (in Said, "Introduction" 33). "Therefore it is imperative at the outset," he argues, "to compile such an inventory" (in Said, "Introduction" 33). This call resonates deeply with the work I try to do in this thesis, unpacking the stories, traces, and historical entanglements that have been deposited in me, and attempting to develop an ethical and historically-grounded sense of self. I take Gramsci's "imperative" to heart, looking inwards in order to more honestly look outwards; my thesis is specifically, however, focused on a critical engagement with my personal and familial positioning in various *colonial histories*. This chapter elaborates on my approach to writing a "decolonizing autobiography," exploring why, how, and through which theoretical lenses I study colonialism and "trac[e] its roots through [my] personal narrative and family history" (Haig-Brown, "Decolonizing Diaspora" 14).

My Political Goals and Investments

My project is motivated, in large part, by the belief that honestly engaging with colonial histories has ongoing political significance (Allen 53). My investments align closely with those that propelled Victoria Freeman to trace her ancestors' involvement in colonizing North America. As she articulates: "I wanted to understand the attitudes, events, and choices that were part of colonization, to investigate my inheritance in all its complexity" and to "establish my own personal connection to the history of colonialism on this continent" (*Relations* xix; xviii). Freeman argues that "we can 't move forward until we look the past in the eye," and so aims to confront "the darker aspects of our history" (*Relations* 467). I too am invested in trying to develop an ethical relationship with the colonial histories to which I am so intimately connected.

The political salience of my work relies on particular ways of understanding time, and the relationship between past, present and future. While many Indigenous paradigms see the past as "inextricably part of the present,"[4] dominant Western approaches to time tend to emphasize linear progress and detachment from the past (Kinew in Freeman, *Relations* xviii). What is erased and hidden through such a temporal framework? What are the dangers of disavowing linkages and correspondences between the "then" and the "now"? Wab Kinew (Anishinaabe) argues that this conception of time allows for North American people of European descent to feel neither connection to histories of violence, nor responsibility for working to change oppressive

[4] Gerald Vizenor's short story "Custer on the Slipstream" is an example of a text that plays with non-linear temporalities with political implications. The defining temporal twist in the text is the resurrection of George Armstrong Custer, the American General who led an 1876 attack against the Sioux and Cheyenne but was infamously defeated and killed at the Battle of Little Bighorn, in the present form of Farlie Border, a power-hungry government bureaucrat who purportedly helps but actually exploits "the poor and disadvantaged" (17). Vizenor's use of temporal slippages allows him to explicitly articulate the continuities between past colonial violence (19th century military campaigns) and present colonial violence (corrupt government bureaucracy, poverty and discrimination, violated sovereignty, etc.).

narratives and colonial structures (in Freeman, *Relations* xviii). My approach to understanding time draws on Indigenous interventions, as well as on "queer temporalities, that emphasize the affective relations between past and present" (Cvetkovich 3). I do not imagine the past's profound and ongoing impact on the present as a simple, linear chain of events;[5] rather, as Freeman states, as a "web of action and interaction, of act and consequence, [that] is far larger, deeper, and more long-lasting than we often realize" (*Relations* 414). Colonialism's "effects still impinge on the lives of millions of people" (Comaroff and Comaroff 14), and so colonial histories are profoundly tied to understanding the contemporary world. Saidiya Hartman's "hopes of transforming the present" (170) by exploring the past are (more modestly) echoed in my own political aspirations.[6]

The past itself is influential, but so too is the way that the past is narrated; how history is constructed continues to have a profound impact on contemporary lives, relations, and structures (Thobani 153–4). The Pequots' "challenges to the accepted settler view of their shared history," for instance, make it clear that debates "about history and how it's understood" remain politically important: "while the story of the Mayflower Pilgrims finding freedom in America is a founding myth of the nation, …that other history of dispossession, war, and subjection of the indigenous population is largely unacknowledged" (Freeman, *Relations* 417; 413). Dominant historical narratives, full of these dangerous erasures and silences (Francis 12), have very real

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[5] Centering the idea of legacies and inheritances doesn't imply that structures, processes, or relations from historical periods have continued unchanged until the present moment. Discontinuities, transformations, and evolutions are inevitable and demand careful attention.

[6] Hartman refuses to dismiss the past because of how the "afterlife of slavery," in the United States and on the other side of the Atlantic, *continues* to imperil black lives (6). While she traces the slave route across the ocean, and I trace colonial complicities in my family tree, we both pursue our respective histories "less because [we] hope to discover what really happened [t]here than because of what live[s] on from this history" (130).

consequences.[7] In Canada specifically, a "myth of benign origins" and "general benevolence" (Thobani 87; 151) erases histories of colonial genocide and displacement, as well as the ongoing racist and colonial nature of the state (Thobani 153–4). These dominant framings of the past are mobilized today to mask power relations, undermine demands for justice, buttress violent nationalisms, presume an "even playing field," and uphold other explicit and implicit injustices. Given the contemporary importance of "the stories we tell about what happened then … and the ethical and political stakes of these stories" (Hartman 133),[8] such dominant histories are important sites for disruption.[9]

Many critical historians have attempted to intervene in dominant historical narratives by challenging the gaps, and foregrounding people and stories that are too often ignored. Hartman's project, for instance, tries to recover and revalue "the lives of those deemed unworthy of remembering" (16). Franca Iacovetta articulates a feminist historiography as further centering the *perspectives* that are made marginal in mainstream historical thinking:

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[7] While some silences can actually be necessary for healing and moving forwards, Mary Fullbrook aptly distinguishes "the painful wounds that those who suffered have no desire to reopen, [from] the uncomfortable nagging of a possibly troubled conscience of a former facilitator or beneficiary of Nazi rule" (335). The latter genre of self-serving "forgetting" occurs in other contexts as well, and this revisionism is what I try to challenge in my work.

[8] It is often more difficult to categorize historical approaches into neat "dominant" and "critical" categories. Hartman, for instance, is trying to intervene in a form of "remembering slavery" that silences any discussion of "African slavery and its entailments – class exploitation, gender inequality, ethnic clashes, and regional conflict" (164). Her efforts therefore clash against *dominant*-dominant historical narratives that downplay the violence of slavery (and white supremacy) altogether, but also against *counter*-dominant historical narratives that direct all focus on the European-led transatlantic slave trade.

[9] Freeman, who embarks on such a historical rewriting, states that she is not trying to right the record by offering a detached "objective truth," a concept that she rightly views as highly problematic (*Relations* xxiii). Even as we appropriately critique the biases that structure dominant historical narratives, we must also remain attuned to the ways that our own investments, interpretations, and perspectives inevitably shape the critical histories that we construct (xxiii).

> In bringing more female subjects to Canadian history's table—including nuns, teachers, Aboriginal fur traders, telegraph operators, homesteaders, immigrant socialists, Black abolitionists, murderesses, asylum patients, battered wives, domestics, and unwed mothers—they did more than simply enlarge the picture. Some also offered compelling critiques of the dominant liberal, elite, white, masculine, and nationalist meta-narratives of Canadian history. (207)[10]

I do try to take up the perspectives of women in my family in order to analyze gendered dynamics of power, agency, and mobility, and aim to remain attentive to nuances of how class, age, gender, sexuality, geography, and other factors impacted the choices and capacities of particularly situated people operating in their respective contexts. However, my project differs from those of many critical historians who attempt to find and recuperate the voices of those marginal figures who are usually left out (Love 1–2). While I, like Iacovetta, am attempting to offer a critique of the dominant meta-narratives of (Canadian and other) history, I do so not by bringing excluded voices to the fore, but, rather, by shedding critical light on the ways that histories *of the dominant* are framed. Most of my ancestors occupy positions of (relative) privilege in racial, colonial, and class-based matrices of power, so my work centers the lives that history *does* remember. Rather than just allowing them to be lauded as heroes, though, I try to interrupt the processes of celebration that distort and elevate their lives and their histories at the expense of others.

For Deanna Bowen, whose multimedia artwork has engaged the histories, operations, and impacts of the KKK, heavily memorializing civil rights activism is an important but insufficient

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[10] Iacovetta's distinction echoes what Tricia Logan names as a profound difference between *including* previously ignored historical material, and *integrating* those counter-hegemonic perspectives (152).

approach to the history of that time period ("Artist's Talk"). It is also crucial, she argues, to grapple with the unpalatable histories of racist violence,[11] especially given how continuous and foundational the Klan and its ideologies are to contemporary American and (in less overt ways perhaps) Canadian society. Her work resonates with my own effort to look at those enabled by structures of power, and to challenge not just *who* is memoralized but *how* they are memoralized. By critically scrutinizing the colonial entanglements of my family and the way they are remembered, with careful attention to how power operates, I see an opportunity to productively reframe these histories. Instead of only applauding white settlers, missionaries, businessmen. merchants, and agents of empire, I try to explicitly draw attention to their role in maintaining colonial and racial hierarchies and violences.[12] In the context of Canada's national myth of tolerance and benevolence, it is particularly disruptive to scrutinize the oppressive underbelly of our histories, to make "invisible empires" visible.[13] Indeed, to acknowledge historical violence and the way that it continues to structure our society demands a radical rethinking of the nature of Canada's "modern liberal democracy" which has been "built on the destruction of aboriginal nations and cultural identity" (*Relations* 449). My focus on the white and (to varying degrees) powerful aims not to re-centre their perspectives, but to honestly re-evaluate the consequences of their actions, the structures they perpetuated, their dominant and dangerous ways of thinking.

Chadwick Allen (Lakota) gestures to the importance, for decolonial knowledge production, of working towards more honest and accountable ways of remembering our

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[11] Her depictions of Klan racism often leads to discomfort in audiences, but this discomfort is part of her point. Bowen says that she does not want her (primarily white) audiences to leave her exhibit feeling "inspired" – she wants them to leave feeling unsettled and driven to confront their own racism and their own histories ("Artist's Talk").

[12] I make use of the (doubly) pluralized term "violences" in order to refer to many distinct forms of violence, often occurring across diverse geographic and historical contexts.

[13] I borrow this phrase from the title of one of Bowen's exhibitions ("Invisible Empires").

(personal, familial, and national) pasts (53). There is a risk with this kind of important work, however: Sunera Thobani cautions that the performative confession of historical wrongs can become an unproductive attempt to cleanse the confessor of any ongoing complicity (35), what Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang might call a "settler move to innocence" (9)**.** I believe that this danger is particularly present if the colonial violence, when it is acknowledged, is a) projected into a distant past, as if it is neither ongoing nor has had any lasting consequences, and/or b) constructed as rare and extreme aberrations from an otherwise primarily benevolent and natural process. My own work therefore emphasizes the ongoing (although certainly not unchanging) nature of colonial relations, and how the entanglements of my predecessors were profoundly *ordinary*. Further, while filling in the gaps is crucial, the act of *just* recounting histories of trauma does not necessarily help us move forward or teach us anything (Yeoman 13). While "we might regret the past, … we can't undo it," Freeman notes, so "what we are accountable for is what we do with our inheritance – this legacy of pain, cruelty, and misunderstanding" (*Relations* 457). In order to "remember *well*," to borrow Rachel Baum's language, "each of us must create a narrative about our relationship to the traumatic history" and "relate historic events to the ways we live our lives in the present" (Yeoman 13). By thinking about continuities between past violence and present violence, and by situating these structures in the context of my own family's entanglements, I am attempting to make disavowal and distancing impossible, and build an *ethical relationship* with my colonial histories.

Colonial Histories and Post-Colonial Historiographies

There are many approaches to researching and writing colonial histories, and while I cannot comprehensively review the complex historiographic territory, I do want to position my work within the wider scholarly debates and explain how I approach "colonialism" as an analytic

and a subject of study. The writing of history is neither transparent nor innocent (Bannerji in Hall 20), and has contributed to entrenching violent structures of power; indeed, early imperial histories acted, in many ways, as "an adjunct of empire" (Hall 20). Nicholas Dirks critiques some current historiographic trends that, although perhaps less explicitly sympathetic, dangerously (attempt to) recuperate empire from the taint of violence: "like the aftermath of colonialism itself," he argues, "colonial history lives on" (95). More critical approaches to studying empire are emerging, however, which Stephen Howe describes as "new imperial histories" (2).[14] This cluster of fresh, creative, often-interdisciplinary approaches to histories of empire are grounded in "the desired… political or ethical effects" of the work, hold onto anti-colonial investments while engaging in complex, nuanced historical study, and include "explicit self-consciousness about the positioning of the historians themselves" (Howe 2–3). New Imperial Histories also tend to center culture and discourse, attend to gendered and racialized structures of power, and focus on colonialism's "continuing effects after the end of formal colonial rule" (Howe 2), as well as seeking to "locat[e] the 'post-colonial' among colonizers as well as colonized" (Stockwell 270). I place my own approach to studying empire and the beneficiaries of colonialism in line with this new critical historiography.

"Colonialism," for Catherine Hall, "describe[s] the European pattern of exploration and 'discovery,' of settlement, of dominance over geographically separate 'others'" (5). Jean and John Comaroff gesture to patterns of "political domination and economic exploitation, spatial distance and racial difference" (18). Both of these offer useful starting points, but colonialism is perhaps impossible to pin down entirely with a simple or precise definition (Comaroff and

[14] These approaches are emerging in contrast to the long held associations between studying empire and sympathizing with it, which had, for a time, channeled critical scholarship towards focusing on anti-colonial nationalisms rather than imperial powers (Howe 1).

Comaroff 20). I will therefore outline how I deploy the concept by expanding on some features that I see as vital to operations (and therefore to its study).

While the state is certainly important to take into consideration, I do not approach it as the exclusive site of colonial power (Howe 8). Colonial actors outside of formal state structures, such as corporations, missionaries, and settlers, have also played concrete roles in the process (Comaroff and Comaroff 21), and others (writers, "scientists," etc.) have participated in more indirect ways. No single lens or narrow focus on formal empire or political domination can do justice to the multifaceted and complex operations of colonialism, and with Edward Said's seminal analysis in mind ("Introduction"), I hold representation, culture, and knowledge formations as central to colonial power. Accounting for ideas should not, however, mean abandoning the material and social formations of colonialism (Ballantyne 182–3), which is a process that operates through bodies and lives, lands and resources, labour and class, concrete hierarchies and physical conditions. I understand colonialism as *inherently* and *inseparably* political, economic, cultural, symbolic, discursive, and bound up in racial (and other) structures of domination (Comaroff and Comaroff 21).

My understanding of colonialism is further informed by Ann Laura Stoler's analysis of "two powerful but false premises" upon which colonial authority was constructed:

> The first was the notion that Europeans in the colonies made up an easily identifiable and discrete biological and social entity… The second was the related notion that the boundaries separating colonizer from colonized were thus self-evident and easily drawn. Neither premise reflected colonial realities. ("Carnal Knowledge" 178)

"*The* colonizer" and "*the* colonized" have acted as "powerful discursive tropes" and been "strategic[ally] deploy[ed] in the politics of decolonization" (Comaroff and Comaroff 24), but

neither "group" can be taken as unified or homogenous. Each contained countless internal divisions on axes of gender, class, sexuality, and others, as well as diverse (and sometimes contradictory) positions, goals and intentions (Hall 15–16). The colonial and racial "otherness" of colonized peoples has never been a given and has had to be produced and maintained (Hall 19–20); it is important to recognize this boundary as constructed, ambiguous, and anxiously policed (Stoler, "Carnal Knowledge" 179). Although the division was far from natural and the groups were far from homogenous, the "'rule of colonial difference' … that distinguished the colonizers from the colonized, [and] that was predicated on the power of the metropole over its subject people" (Hall 7) had profound *consequences*. This logic of domination is, I believe, what underpins colonialism in all of its diverse forms.

While positioning colonialism as an "all-embracing, transhistorical force, controlling and transforming ever aspect of colonised societies" (Howe 6) risks reducing colonized societies to undifferentiated, passive blank slates, I am also wary of the emergent set of approaches which instead emphasize the weakness and haphazardness of colonial power, the mutuality of colonial relations, and the agency and "collaboration" of colonized peoples (Howe 7; Dirks 95–96). These revisionist accounts, Dirks argues, amount to a wholesale "disavowal of colonial power and prejudice" (in Howe 7), and erase the profound racism and violence that have been so central to colonial logics and their effects (Dirks 100). The elevation of the agency of colonized subjects above all else, for instance, silences many who have spoken about their own diverse experiences of being colonized "in very different terms; often much darker, more concretely political, more concerned with what it meant to be acted upon" (Comaroff and Comaroff 18). I have tried to keep my approach nuanced and sufficiently complex *without* losing sight of the structures of power at play or their profound, violent consequences.

Studying colonialism necessitates grappling with its diversity across numerous axes – different geographical realities, different historical periods, different societies on both the "imperial" and the "indigenous" sides of the structure, different forms,[15] and more. This diversity makes it difficult to work with "colonialism" as an abstract analytic without grounding it in "localized theories and historically specific accounts" (Thomas in Hall 16). Colonial encounters do not, however, occur in isolation or at random. We must *also* pay attention to "the wide historical provenance, not to mention the deep historical force, of colonialism" (Dirks 101–2), as an ideology and process that is dramatically varied but also unified by a logic of rule and colonial governmentality (Hall 7). The transnational networks, the material and discursive circuits of empire, and the "cultural exchanges that criss-crossed the globe" (Lester 141), render an exclusively local outlook potentially myopic, so holding a balance becomes crucial. Like Nicholas Thomas, I believe that we must "break up and particularize colonial culture *while* sustaining a sense of its global character and development" (298, emphasis added).

Partha Chatterjee's approach to writing colonial histories productively frames my own engagements:

> My narrative commitment serves as a constant reminder that empire was not just about power politics, the logic of capital, or the civilizing mission but instead was something that had to be practiced, as a normal everyday business as well as at moments of extraordinary crisis, by real people in real time. (xi–xii)

By braiding together "little" (i.e. lived) histories with "grand" (i.e. theoretical) ones (xi), Chatterjee is able to attend to "actual practices of empire" (xii). I expand upon my

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[15] Crucially, the distinctions of *settler* colonialism, but, Nancy Shoemaker argues, there are many other variants and forms that can also be productively parsed out.

microhistorical approach in the next section, but I think that this "braiding" generates particular insights for the study of colonialism, exposing how it functions through particular people and at particular moments, profoundly structural and also deeply personal.

Given the "subtle mix of continuities, ruptures, and elisions that link the early imperial epoch to the present," colonial histories are far from *over*; lives are still at stake, and it is crucial not to forget, turn away, or "move on" too quickly (Comaroff and Comaroff 12; 14). Especially as "some politicians urge that it is time to 'stop apologising' for the imperial past and instead celebrate its positive achievements" (Howe 14), it would be misguided and dangerous to erase the "more egregious aspects of the colonial past" (Comaroff and Comaroff 14). Critical approaches to colonial histories remain necessary in face of such revisionism, in both academic and public contexts. There is much still to be learned from thinkers, such as Frantz Fanon and Aimé Cesaire, whose "claims that colonialism is *inherently* bound up with extreme, pervasive, structural and even genocidal violence," Howe notes, "have today a vigorous new lease on life" (14, emphasis added). With this violence in mind, I am wary of claims to "objectivity" and am grounded in, and explicit about, my anti-colonial investments.

A Microhistory Approach: Connecting the personal and the social

Driven by my political and personal goals, and my interest in colonialism's practice on-the-ground, much of my research focuses on the lives of my ancestors. I am therefore using a "microhistory" approach: the in-depth investigation of a small historical area – such as the story of a single person, family, or event (Szijártó 209) – to explore the "broader issues affecting the culture as a whole" (Lepore 133).[16] Mary Fulbrook, in tracing the Jewish community of Będzin

[16] The compelling microhistories that I have encountered makes the merits of such an approach explicitly clear: see, for instance, Bowen's performed family-cum-social-history ("Sum of the

(Poland) from before the German occupation through to the ultimate horrors of Auschwitz, offers an instructive model. She focuses on one person – a friend of her family's who was the *Landrat* (chief administrator of the county) during this time – and his personal involvement in the now familiar Holocaust history. Fulbrook is able to enrich the larger history with a treacherous intimacy and a neglected perspective, by exploring this individual story as characteristic of a whole class of German civilian administrators.

I am not, however, drawing simple equivalences between individual stories and larger social and political processes: I understand that the relationship between the micro and the macro is far from smooth (de Vivo 9), and perhaps even better understood as metaphor (Creet, "Peripheral to the Past" 85). The heterogeneity of experience is what makes microhistory so valuable, but also what prevents the easy translation of conclusions to wider scales (Ginzburg, Tedeschi, and Tedeschi 27). Investigating colonial processes and relations through close and critical attention to the stories of my predecessors can, though, offer unique insights that cannot emerge from larger scale work. "Master narratives about global conditions … frequently operate at such a high level of abstraction that [they] fail to address the lived experience of these system[s]", Ann Cvetkovich argues, and there is, therefore, value to "forms of description that are more textured, more localized" (12). While my project does not take the exclusive form of a microhistory, my analysis has emerged from close attention to personal stories, inseparably embedded within larger contexts.

Parts") or Adele Perry's *Colonial Relations*, which traces the history of an elite Creole family's entanglements from the Caribbean to British Columbia.

Family History: The potentials and pitfalls

While many microhistories take up the history of a specific family as their unit of study, particular opportunities and challenges become relevant when looking at one's *own* family history. The preoccupation with uncovering and retelling our familial pasts is not new. As François Weil notes, people have been tracing their kinship histories for centuries, motivated, often, by elite investment in aristocratic lineage or a cultural obsession with racial "purity." The contemporary popular genealogy industry, Julia Creet argues, is itself "underpinned by a profoundly conservative religious mission" and driven by the pursuit of connection to some laudable pedigree in a "post-pedigree world" ("Arborescent Archives" 3; 5).[17] I keep this fraught context in mind as I build alternative approaches to my own family history.

Despite these troubling applications, I do believe that family history *can* be a useful analytic. Family is a structure with material, affective, relational and other compelling dimensions.[18] From our families, we may inherit advantages and disadvantages, objects and artifacts, stories and laughter, wealth and poverty, memories and silences, grief and loss, care and support, dysfunctions and displacements, belongings and exclusions, cultures and

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[17] It is also a big business: ancestry.com, a hub of online genealogical records, operates because thousands of people invest money, time, and labour into it, fixated on building their family trees (Creet, *Need to Know*).

[18] I have notably steered away from a focus on *biological* inheritance from generation to generation, although I acknowledge that these ties are one way that families are often defined. In part, I follow Freeman's lead: the contours of "family" for her project include not only her direct ancestors but also their siblings and their spouses, "so that [she] would have a sense of the *familial culture*" (*Relations* xx, emphasis added). While anchoring to my predecessors' stories, I too will look at family members who may not be my direct ancestors, since responsibility, culture, and memory are passed on through *relationships* rather than through DNA. This question of defining family lines is further complicated in my own story given the added axis of queerness, and familial relationships that are non-biological. I am – and so, therefore, are the familial entanglements that I carry with me – part of my child's origin story and relational inheritances, despite an absence of genetic connection.

communities, legacies and responsibilities, patterns and resentments, conflicts and connections, values and opportunities, traumas and pains, teachings and learnings, longings and joys – usually some tangled combination of all of these and more. Many of these concrete, social, and emotional inheritances accumulate, pool, and reemerge over many generations, as research into the intergenerational transmission of income inequality (Menchik) and trauma (Gajdos; Menzies), for instance, have made clear. These legacies, with all their contradictions, questions and often-fraught emotional entanglements, can be a valuable site of analysis. Looking creatively and critically at family history, and learning more about the actions and experiences of our ancestors, is useful for locating ourselves, because of how "this history lives on in us" and shapes "who we are today" (Freeman, *Relations* xvii).[19] Genealogy is a "strategy of memory" (Weil 4), one that foregrounds a connection with and investment in the past, rather than emphasizing removal or distance – as Freeman argues, the method offers "a personal approach to a history" (*Relations* xx). "Our family sagas can be as valid a history as any other kind" (Freeman, *Relations* xix); the way that micro stories complicate and enhance our understandings of macro structures and processes, as discussed earlier, becomes that much more intimate and that much more fraught when the "micro" at hand is situated within our own lineages.

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[19] These considerations also beg the question of who is able or unable to pursue their familial pasts. One of the texts that I draw on heavily is, in fact, less of a family history and more of an exploration of the *absence* of family history. Describing a conversation with her father, Hartman, as someone descended from enslaved peoples, writes:

> What he knew about our family ended with his grandmother Ellen. He remembered no other names. … I saw how the sadness and anger of not knowing his people distorted the soft lines of Poppa's face. … I had seen this ache in others too. … I wondered about my great-great-great-grandmother's mother, as well as all the others who had been forgotten. (12)

While she does pursue what stories she can from her family's past, she finds that "[her] genealogy added up to little more than a random assortment of details", confirming, for her, the "truth [that] couldn't be avoided: slaves did not possess lineages" (77).

Which histories do our families tend to elevate? Which do we bury? What are the consequences of our framing and forgetting? Working with family history necessitates thinking about familial memory and generational amnesia, about "the things we choose to honour, the things we choose to forget, the things we resurrect and re-interpret" (Freeman, *Relations* xvii). Bowen uses the word "disremember" to describe her family's conscious effort to forget, suppress, or carefully frame certain painful aspects of their history ("Artist's Talk"). She argues that these suppressed stories *need* to be told,[20] and so feels compelled to peel back layers of silence and to try to come to her own understandings of her family's histories.

For those of us who are (and are descended from) beneficiaries of violent histories, the processes of "disremembering" familial pasts may be even more self-serving and pernicious. Because Fulbrook focuses on the perpetrators of violence, her comment is particularly apt:

> By the time of the grandchildren's generation, while historical knowledge of the Third Reich had become ever sharper and more detailed, emotionally acceptable images of kindly grandfathers… could sit quite happily within the only vaguely shaped contours of an increasingly misty family past. (17)

To accept this palatable misty past without question is, she argues, to "remain complicit in comfortable family stories" (17). There can be intense personal and relational costs to "betraying" loyalty to family and troubling memories of "kindly grandfathers."[21] But I believe that honestly unpacking our histories and inheritances, especially as white people who may find it significantly more comfortable to ignore or distance ourselves from the actions of our

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[21] Jessie Daniels knows this all to well: after she publically acknowledged her recent discovery that her grandfather had been a member of the KKK, she was rejected (and, briefly, psychiatrically institutionalized) by her father (n.p.).

ancestors, is a process that can help foster personal responsibility and prevent convenient (but dangerous) myths from being passed on to another generation (Daniels).

Unsettling the stories that we as individuals tell about our families' pasts is productive, furthermore, because these stories are connected to those that we construct about our wider societies and histories. "In the case of the colonization of North America," Freeman observes, "two kinds of memory, or rather non-memory – that of the family and that of the state – reinforce one another in suppressing our knowledge of our history with aboriginal people" (*Relations* xvii).[22] To romanticize, glorify, and "whitewash" our ancestors can contribute to erasing the violence that has been foundational to this nation-state and to the contemporary global order. For me, as for Freeman, an investigation of my familial "inheritance in all its complexity" leads me to confronting and trying to understand "the legacy of colonialism" that I carry with me (*Relations* xix; xvi). Countering the silencing of these stories within the family can be one way – a deeply personal and often intensely disturbing way – to disrupt the silencing of these stories within broader histories. Such work can contribute towards slowly shifting cultural memory, resisting processes of erasure, and, potentially, pushing towards a wider reassessment of dominant histories.

As much as personal relationships to people and pasts can motivate and enhance historical work, they can also make it more difficult. Freeman finds that the relational challenges of working with her family's stories emerged when she moved from writing "of ancestors [she had] discovered through genealogical records and books" to writing about "someone who [was]

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[22] While Freeman's focus is explicitly on interactions and relations between her ancestors and aboriginal people (sic), I think that we must also think about the relationship between white settlers in North America and differently racialized settlers and arrivants. Furthermore, since the my family's history spans a wider diversity of colonial contexts, my project is more transnational in nature.

real to [her] in memory and love" (*Relations* 355). She speaks of the difficulty of reconciling her "loving memories of [her] grandfather" with the stories from Native informants "who had painful memories or associations with th[e] school" in which he had been involved (*Relations* xxii); Freeman has to face her beloved grandfather's role in a system that did irrevocable harm to generations of Indigenous people. I too navigate these dangerous waters, and am aware of the potentially painful nature of this process, particularly for members of my family more closely and intimately related to the entanglements of which I speak. I recognize that it may be uncomfortable for my relatives to confront and question narratives about themselves, their ancestors, and their worldviews, but I believe that resting in comfort, too, comes with a cost. I push forward with a careful balance, therefore, of critique and compassion, scrutiny and respect.

There are also more practical challenges in the terrain of family history. Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family* offers insight into the nature of familial memory and the process of gathering oral histories from relatives: "Aunts. How I have used them… They knit the story together, each memory a wild thread in the sarong. … Always repeating the last three words of your question and then turning a surprising corner on [their] own" (92). A woven story, different threads coming together, with surprising corners and "a few judgments thrown in" (Ondaatje 8). The same story is told from different perspectives and at different times, revealing contradictions that are sometimes irreconcilable with each other or with the larger arc of a character or narrative, sometimes impossible to "come to terms with" (Ondaatje 163). This, Ondaatje contends, is the treacherous, magical, shifting nature of the family history; I, too, pursue the elusive and inscrutable, in search of the stories of those who came before me.

Critical Interdisciplinarity: In product and process

The unorthodox structure and form of this thesis integrates different fields of inquiry and academic conventions. I do not attempt to create a continuous, comprehensive, or linear historical narrative as is a frequent practice; rather, I explore several clusters of geographically disparate and temporally distinct histories from my family's past, interspersed with and framed by autoethnographic explorations. My form resonates with Hartman's: although her writing is far more lyrical than my own,[23] we both weave historical narrative together with theoretical and political analysis, stories from our own lives, and insights into our research journeys. Carolyn Steedman, whose historical work was critically lauded for its "layering of lived experience and critical reflection" (Freiwald 26) explains that "the particular and remembered events do not, by themselves, constitute [her book]'s point" (5). For myself as well, the familial microhistories that I research *serve as sites* for personal reflection, activist intervention, and theoretical extensions, as well as histories in their own right.

My project also demands the frameworks, methodologies, and analytics of several different academic disciplines, and is therefore not easily categorized. Although more self-reflective and explicitly theoretical than is typical, much of my content and many of my research methods fall within the realm of History. The theoretical frameworks of Gender, Feminist, and Women's Studies, however, crucially enable me to analyze intersectional power structures and the gendered and racialized dimensions of these histories, ground my critical theorizing in

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[23] I was profoundly moved by Hartman's writing style, which draws on speculation (see 54, 119), descriptive language (throughout), and metaphor (see 32, 112) in ways that, to reference Toni Morrison's distinction, approach the "truth" of the story far better than representing the bare documented "facts" ever could (303–304). My prose is more conventionally academic, but I do draw on literary (and story-telling) techniques at moments, particularly in the less formal structure of Chapter 5.

personal experience, and work with feminist historiography's practice of challenging dominant historical narratives. I further draw on the discipline of English to inform my interwoven creative writing practice, engage in close analytic readings, and explore the politics of discourse, story, and representation. My work exists and evolves in a shifting and contested space between these disciplinary focuses and approaches.

Furthermore, my perspective resonates with what Allen Repko describes as critical interdisciplinarity (37): I am not just trying to borrow and synthesize approaches from these different fields, but am also skeptical of the authority claimed by conventional academic disciplines (and academic structures more broadly). Like other critical interdisciplinary scholars, I reject the idea that research can be apolitical or objective (Alvesson and Sköldberg 110) and see my work as tied to challenging oppressive structures within and beyond the academy (Kann 187–188). I embrace characterizations of interdisciplinarity as "illegitimate, transgressive, [and] disturbing" (Pryse 3), and strive to engage with and produce knowledges that are, in content and in form, unsettling and disruptive.

Autoethnography and Critical Memoir: The personal is political (and theoretical)

I take seriously the principle that theory can begin as autobiography, and can be grounded in our experiences and our social locations. I draw on feminist legacies of challenging the primacy of objectivity and "distance," and value the "carefully situated" (ie. attentive to differing relations of power) personal voice (Cvetkovich 9). I rely on the approach of autoethnography, a methodology that "seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience" (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 1), to interrogate my life experiences and the legacies that I have inherited. Because my research topic is intimately tied to my own experience, inheritance, positionality, and relationships, the autobiographical axis of my

research is inherently central. The ethnographic component necessitates a critical analysis of this experience (instead of simply representing it) as well as connecting personal experiences and reflections to cultural, societal, and structural patterns (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 4–5). Cvetkovich calls her related approach, "critical memoir." She notes that memoir has a "tendency to circulate in sensationalizing and personalizing ways that don't lend themselves to the social and political analysis that [we are] looking for" and is often "met with skepticism about its scholarly value" (16), but we both find value in it as "one of [our] research methods, a starting point and crucible for exploring [our] ideas" (17). Memoir further grounds theory in valuable "forms of knowledge that are not scientific, knowledges that come from the body and from practices" and not just from texts (Cvetkovich 202). I draw on these simultaneously introspective and outward looking methods because they offer vital insight into my subject matter: I autoethnographically explore relevant moments from my life and from my engagement with my family's histories as a way to speak about larger histories, structures of power, public memory, intimate affects, and efforts towards moving forward accountably. My approach is grounded in the potentials of *story* to incite learning and change (Kovach 95).

Using (and Abusing) Historical Sources

Oral history, as an approach to collecting rich and in-depth stories, can offer insights into aspects of individual and social histories that may be overlooked through other methods (Anderson et al. 104). In the end, my primary interviews were with my mother: I have drawn on her memories, her knowledge and stories about our family's past, and her own experiences, emotions, and responses in relation to those histories. Following from the crucial interventions of many feminist historians (Abrams 71), I do not strive for some impossible impartiality or objectivity, nor do I – especially as a close relative and invested participant – ignore my own role

in the production and collection of the data. My research process with my mother was more of a *conversation* than a one-sided interview, and – as proposed by the framework of "intersubjectivity" (Abrams 58) – the emergent knowledge was profoundly collaborative.

I had anticipated more interviews and oral histories being necessary, but my great-aunt had already written a memoir about her childhood and her family, on which I rely heavily in Chapter 4. While not a "research method" per se, conversations to build trust and explain my project to my great-aunt were a crucial part of my process of gathering stories, and I am grateful that she generously shared her written account with me and allowed me to work with it. I analyze other documents from my family's informal and ephemeral "archives" as well, which I detail as they come up in the subsequent chapters. Official archival material – such as homestead records, passenger lists, and local histories – are also incorporated. Taking a cue from queer and feminist interventions into archival thinking, I push past an exclusive focus on texts; my archive also includes ambiguously labeled photographs, objects (like sea chests and swords),[24] and even

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[24] Edmund De Wall's *The Hare with the Amber Eyes* has specifically prompted me to take seriously the stories that objects carry with them:

> I want to know what the relationship has been between this wooden object that I am rolling between my fingers… and where it has been. … I want to walk into each room where this object has lived, to feel the volume of the space, to know what pictures were on the walls, how the light fell from the windows. And I want to know whose hands it has been in, and what they felt about it and thought about it – if they thought about it. I want to know what it has witnessed. (15–16)

The idea of *witnessing* characterizes De Wall's work and has informed my own; his objects were present, enduring, through triumphs and losses, migrations and transitions, from hand to hand, from room to room, from country to country. He ponders the inheritance in its full complexity:

> How objects are handed on is all about story-telling. I am giving you this because I love you. Or because it was given to me. Because I bought it somewhere special. Because you will care for it. Because it will complicate your life. Because it will make someone else envious. There is no easy story in legacy. What is remembered and what is forgotten? There can be a chain of forgetting, the rubbing away of previous ownership as much as the slow accretion of stories. What is being passed on to me with all these small Japanese objects? (17)

words (such as the one I mentioned in Chapter 1). I further submit Cvetkovich's phrase – an "archive of feeling" – to justify my interrogation of responsive and evolving *affective* inheritances as well.

Archives of all kinds are, of course, infused with power and are far from vectors to unmediated fact; the violent consequences of my ancestors' actions so often were not documented, not recollected, not retold in the litany of family stories. As much as I rely on memoirs and stories as microhistorical touchstones, I aim to uncover hidden relationships, fill in the blanks, and imagine what lies beyond the carefully positioned frames. I therefore look at my written and spoken historical sources with an awareness of the perspectives that are missing, and the investments inherent to self-representation that structure them. Indeed, how people tell the stories of themselves (and their families or societies) in complex and (to varying degrees) selective ways is part of what my research probes. While individual "experience" (such as what might be accessed through an oral history or a written testimony) has long been gestured to as a purer and more authentic basis of evidence, Joan Scott insists on attending to the "productive quality of discourse" (793), even or perhaps especially when subjects are describing themselves and their own stories. It is crucial to analyze the layers of representation and mediation at play (Erll 3). Scott therefore encourages a "kind of reading… [that] would not assume a direct correspondence between words and things, nor confine itself to single meanings, nor aim for the resolution of contradiction" (Scott 793), and these interpretive interventions are central to how I analyze my historical sources.

Fulbrook's analysis of the memoirs of Udo Klausa, Nazi-era civil administrator, allow her to explore the gaps between how the Landrat remembers and represents his involvement, and

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I am engaging these questions as well.

what her broader historical research suggests. While many questions cannot be answered with certainty, it is clear through Fulbrook's research that Klausa *was* involved in a murderous system and personally enacted disastrous racial policies, even as his "memoirs and other self-representations portray a personal past almost entirely without violence, almost entirely without victims" (341). She notes that his story is "strongly slanted in the direction of what later looked more acceptable" (94), with the corresponding "explanations, self-justifications, and evasions" (17). My subjects' self-representations – "unreliable," as are all sources – cannot be taken at face value in terms of assessing their complicities and the consequences of their actions. These texts can, however, offer insight into "what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did" (Portelli in Buettner 16). In my own analysis of personal accounts, therefore, I give attention to storytelling processes and the discursive frames as well as narrative details.

Whether the historical narrative under scrutiny is a nationalist origin myth, a self-serving memoir, or an academically researched account, it is always important to attend to the *constructed* nature of histories. This is relevant for my analysis of the sources that I use, but also for being transparent about the work that *I* produce. Scott cautions against hiding the discursive processes at play during research and writing, or ignoring the role of historians as "meaning makers" (790). I find Steedman's emphasis on "interpretations, … the places where we rework what has already happened to give current events meaning, … the stories we make for ourselves, and the social specificity of our understanding of those stories" (5), instructive. Attending to myself as an active and (inevitably) far from objective agent in this work is fundamental: my intentions, investments, and socially (and politically) specific understandings will characterize

which stories and sources I pursue, how I interpret what I find and do not find, and how I choose to represent all of it.

This meaning-making is particularly complex in contexts of what Katherine Borland calls "interpretive conflict." Drawing from her experience conducting narrative research, Borland unpacks the difference between how she interpreted one of her grandmother's anecdotes, and what her grandmother had herself understood and meant by the story (69–70). Her grandmother was angry and expressed her disagreement: "You've read into the story what you wished to - what pleases YOU… The story is no longer MY story at all" (in Borland 70). While Borland does not want to appropriate the stories that have been shared with her, she also resists the notion that her analysis should aspire to being a simple "recuperation of original authorial intentions" (70); to attempt such "pure" transmission would ignore her always already present role in knowledge production,[25] *and* undercut her political and academic intentions (64). She does, however, insist on transparency about the divergent interpretations: "what is essential to emphasize is that this is *my* framing of [her] narrative informed by contemporary feminist conceptions of patriarchal structures, which my grandmother does not share" (69). Like Borland, my interpretations of my family's histories sometimes contradict the intentions of those who lived and wrote the stories. In many ways, that is *my point*, since I am troubling the perspectives that structure familial (and wider) nostalgia about colonial histories. I try to do so transparently, ethically, and without disrespecting the people who have offered me their stories, and aim to allow "multiple and sometimes conflicting meanings" (Borland 73) to emerge.

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[25] In the context of Borland's interviews, she specifically points to the impact of which questions she asked and the possible social pressures shaping the responses that she received (64). Since I analyze previously written memoirs, I was not directly part of shaping the original text itself. My interpretation, (inevitably selective) quoting, and recontextualizing, however, do make new meaning from the original text.

Expanding Ethical Frameworks

Because part of my research (i.e. interviews) involved human participants, I went through the York University Office of Research Ethics' review process. My application was approved on December 18th 2014. My research (including the textual and archival analysis), however, opens up ethical questions above and beyond these institutional parameters, forcing me to consider issues of privacy, ownership over stories, and the complexities of "consent," as well as demanding a broader understanding of research's ethical obligations.

Paul Eakin, in his analysis of how self-narration is received, identifies "privacy infringement" as an accusation often leveled against people who share their life stories (118). In response to this charge, Eakin concedes that violating others' privacy may indeed be an inevitable part of the autobiographical project; as Philippe Lejeune states, "private life is almost always a co-property" (in Eakin 118). No one lives in isolation – telling the story of my life cannot help but indirectly implicate the stories of those who are involved in my life. Given that this violation of others' privacy is unavoidable, I must be thoughtful about how I tell my story, and – when selecting which pieces of others' stories to invoke – consider when the consequences of violating someone's privacy outweigh the benefits of, or impetus for, doing so.[26]

My project is more fraught, however, in that I do not only reference others peripherally through my act of self-narration – I also explicitly investigate, interpret, and seek to represent the life stories of people other than myself. What right do I have to make use of their stories for my own personal curiosity, political agenda, and academic recognition? All academics who work with people or stories must grapple with this question to some degree, but the personal, "micro"

[26] With privacy considerations in mind, however, I have made the choice to refer to living members of my family by their relationship to me, or by their initials when necessary, rather than with their full names.

nature of my investigations make these concerns especially pertinent. Do my familial connections to those whom I investigate justify my use of their stories? Does the fact that many of them died decades ago make my scrutiny more acceptable? While I continue to engage with the ethical demands and complexities of my research, I also question the notion that stories can ever belong *only* to those who directly experienced them. "Individual" actions and experiences are never insular in their production or consequences, and have ripple effects within personal relationships, through social collectivities, across hierarchies of power, and even over time, particularly given the ways that memories can become manifest through generations (Erll 2–3). Furthermore, stories cannot be understood as an object to possess or transfer; I must be transparent about my centrality in the collection, selection, interpretation, and representation of this knowledge. Even as this thesis draws on others' stories and experiences, it is the result of my own reflection, research, and writing rather than an appropriation of someone else's telling.

Another set of ethical questions concerns the complexities around obtaining consent from my subjects. Consent is clearly impossible to obtain from those of my relatives who are dead, so I have examined their stories without their permission. This is always the case with historical work, although some of these documents – such as a personal memoir that was passed relative-to-relative-to-me – feel like a more intimate intrusion since they were never explicitly made available for public consumption. While I received consent before interviewing my mother and before analyzing my great-aunt's memoir, I do not need formal consent from other relatives whose ancestors are also under some degree of scrutiny. Even for those who did agree to participate in my research, my interpretation and analysis may differ from how they would have interpreted our shared histories. What ethical obligations do I have to the wishes of my family – those who are alive and those who are no longer able to communicate their objections?

Literature on research ethics tends to focus on the power imbalances at play when academics use (and too often exploit) the stories of marginalized communities (Kovach 103); because my family occupied relatively (albeit to very different degrees and in different ways) privileged social positions, however, the dynamics at play in my work are distinct. In Laura Nader's seminal article, published almost fifty years ago, she urged anthropologists to begin "to study the colonizers rather than the colonized, the culture of power rather than the culture of the powerless, the culture of affluence rather that the culture of poverty" (5), and she acknowledges that such research may require a different set of ethical frameworks than the practice of "studying down" (20–21). Reminded by Eli Clare that relative structural power should not automatically deny anyone their humanity, dignity, or complexity, I certainly do not abandon a sense of ethical commitment to those whom I research. I do, however, *broaden* my paradigm of research ethics. I am working from an understanding of ethics that includes those impacted by my family's actions and those who continue to be materially, discursively, and affectively harmed by colonial relations. While Clare urges academics to be accountable to the storytellers and their communities,[27] I also want to be accountable to those who are from very different communities than my ancestors but whose stories are profoundly connected to theirs (i.e. those bearing the costs of the systems that my subjects upheld). Even if some members of my family may not appreciate a critical, decolonial lens scrutinizing our shared histories, I believe that refraining from doing so would be unethical in its own way. Unsettling dominant histories and

[27] In Clare's talk, "The Politics of Story," he also discussed the ethical imperative to genuinely open yourself up to a story that is being shared with you, and allow it to challenge and shake your frameworks and preconceptions. Although I am engaging with my family's stories with particular intentions and analyses, I have certainly been changed by my engagement with them, and have had to adjust and shift my assessments based on what has been shared with me.

reframing familial narratives will never be an easy or comfortable process for those privileged by these histories, but such discomfort does not make the process less valuable.

Unpacking "Responsibility": Theirs then and ours now

My research goals and process have led me, to some degree, to try to assess my ancestors' *responsibility*. As family lore and my historical research show, they were involved in processes that are unquestionably violent. But how much choice did they have as individuals? Could they have avoided participation in such systems? Assigning "blame" in a simplistic or decontextualized way risks reducing colonization to individual people and choices, to the actions of some violent racist perpetrators as distinct from the larger social, political, and economic structures in which they were embedded. I do not, however, want to pretend that my ancestors were entirely trapped by their context. Freeman spends a lot of time trying to understand the interplay between personal responsibility and being "part of an oppressive system" (*Relations* 356). Grappling with her grandfather's involvement in the residential school system, she tries to figure out how so much harm had come from the well-intentioned (and deeply misguided) choices by the "social activists of an earlier era," rather than stereotypical tyrants (*Relations* 363). Many of her ancestors (and mine) were not major decision makers; they "simply followed the tide of history and accepted what had been done, without questioning its justice or validity" (*Relations* 441). Her research makes it clear that colonization is not about "a few immoral leaders committing crimes that the general populace is ignorant of," but rather that "ordinary people have been part and parcel of the process, making decisions that deny another people's being or which allow a destructive process to continue" (*Relations* 452).[28] Our ways of thinking

[28] Fulbrook similarly tries to reconcile how people who "thought of themselves both before and afterwards as fundamentally decent people" (23) could have "played an essential role in the path

about responsibility therefore need to account for the widely, though far from equally, dispersed nature of the work required to maintain and operationalize violent structures of power. My family members were not those making policy at the top of the structures of empire, and were far from the only or the most responsible for these colonial and racialized processes, but that does not relieve them of responsibility. These systems only work because of the involvement of countless people, in countless different ways, and through the self-serving participation of "ordinary" people, with varying degrees of power.[29] In order to both try to hold empathy for those who were "prisoner[s] of [their] own time and its limited understanding" (*Relations* 406) and also acknowledge the violence they enacted, I aspire to approach my predecessors with both understanding and scrutiny.

As much as I try to elucidate the responsibility of my predecessors, I am also invested in understanding how I, now, can accountably engage with these histories and their ongoing ramifications. Stagnating in guilt about the *historical* wrongs of my ancestors, Peter Kulchyski notes, would miss the point (1). As Freeman argues:

> My family… has been involved in the oppression of aboriginal people for hundreds of years, and because of this, *and because this oppression still continues – and because I continue to benefit personally from this oppression* – I feel a responsibility to address the wrong that has been done. (*Relations* 451, emphasis added)

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that led the way to the systemic deaths of millions of Jews" (13). She crucially argues that "reducing the notion of 'real' perpetrators to the relatively small circles around Hitler… has helped obscure the way violence permeated the entire Nazi system" (97). The focus on only the *most* extreme acts of genocide and the *most* powerful actors allows individuals like Klausa to (arguably falsely) exonerate themselves by distancing themselves from the "real" violence and the "real" perpetrators – this insight, I believe, is useful in my research contexts as well.

[29] Buffy Sainte-Marie's famous lyric offers one interpretation of individual responsibility within violent structures: "without him, all this killing can't go on / he's the universal soldier and he really is to blame" (5–6).

My ancestors benefited from systems that enacted extensive violence on other people, but I too am granted citizenship rights at the expense of others, enjoy a high quality of life through the exploitation of others, experience (relative) safety from state violence not afforded to others, and am privileged and exalted in countless other intricate relationships. I have lived my entire life on stolen Indigenous land and in an imperialist nation-state; I need to continue to work towards taking responsibility for (resisting) these *contemporary* colonial relations.[30]

Limitations and Potentials

To assess the limitations of my work, I must be self-reflective about my role as a white academic wading into these conversations. As Haig-Brown cautions in her syllabus on (de)colonizing methodologies:

> The parenthetical 'de' gestures toward the (im)possibility of non-indigenous people and people in a university setting doing this work in light of the histories of research and universities' on-going contributions to shoring up Western epistemologies. (*Methodologies* 1)

The academic industrial complex is a site of ongoing violence and the operationalization of hierarchies of various kinds. Work that starts and remains within academia is inherently and unavoidably constrained in its potential for contributing towards social change (Yee).[31] I am also

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[30] Daniels argues that the kind of historical and self-reflective "soul-searching" that this research has entailed can help to "move the conversation forward in some small way": "Only then can we begin to step up and take responsibility for what our ancestors have wrought and more importantly, take some responsibility for dismantling the system of inequality they put in place and from which we still benefit" (n.p.).

[31] I don't envision this exclusively as a scholarly project – my final chapter delves further into some of the possible implications that have emerged, including bringing this work into my home (in conversations with my family of origin and with my own child), into public dialogue (to challenge dominant memory patterns), into schools (through concrete pedagogical tools), and other potential interventions.

aware of the limits of centering settlers' decolonial scholarship, especially in light of Tuck and Yang's concerns about the widening use of "decolonizing" approaches to rescue settlers from their guilt while reifying actual colonization (9) (I take up their arguments in more detail in Chapter 6). I know that even if every settler in Canada wrote self-reflective decolonizing autobiographies, those histories would still be impacting our contemporary moment, and the material structures of colonization would still be in place. "Knowing what happened here," Hartman writes, "couldn't remedy the oblivion or betoken a brighter future or lessen the suffering of the dead" (116): historical work is far from unimportant, but it can never be *enough*.

I do believe, however, that my process of apprehending and engaging with my colonial histories meaningfully contributes to conversations about colonialism, accountability, and erasure. Instead of allowing me to disavow colonial violence as something perpetrated by other people at other times, this process forces me to confront my intimate connections to it. Allen argues compellingly that disrupting violence-erasing colonial myths is a crucial project, "truth telling as an unsettling and ultimately decolonizing strategy – a necessary prerequisite for any form of reconciliation and any possibility of future progress" (53). This project does not make a huge leap towards social and material transformation, but, in some small way, it participates in the "collective rethinking" (Donald 5) that is part of the long struggle towards decolonization. It is a step in the right direction, a step that challenges both the erasure of unpalatable histories and the denial that these histories have anything to bear on our world today.

CHAPTER 3

As *Exalted Subjects*:[32] Confronting an Intimate History of Prairie Settlement and White Nation-Building

Introduction: Grounding my analysis in my history

The "fundamental importance of a study of the past for an understanding of the present," Annie E Coombes argues, is particularly central in settler colonial contexts ("Memory" 4). Sunera Thobani's seminal book, *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada*, embodies the political and intellectual potential of such a method of careful historicization, fruitfully tracing back the roots of the structures of power that underpin contemporary Canadian society. Thobani explores the turn-of-the-century settlement of the Prairies, for instance, as a vital moment in the implementation of settler colonialism and white supremacy on the ground. I have a fraught and intimate relationship with this important history, as I am myself descended from such white homesteading settlers.[33] Below, I take stories of my predecessors as microhistorical starting points from which to talk about settlement processes and various systems of power at this historical juncture. As I lay out in the previous chapter, I believe that disrupting the silencing of certain stories within the family can be one way to disrupt the silencing of these stories within the broader nation-state and, possibly, contribute to a larger

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[32] The phrase "Exalted Subjects" is borrowed from the title of Sunera Thobani's book, which has been crucial for informing the arguments in this paper. I use the phrase "*As* Exalted Subjects" to position myself, and the ancestors whose stories I am exploring here, as the very subjects (and "ideal" citizens) that Thobani sees as centered in the white settler colonial project that is Canadian nation-building.

[33] I intentionally name the whiteness along with the settlerness of my ancestors, in order to make explicit – as I aim to throughout this paper – the interlocking nature of white supremacy and settler colonialism, and to ensure that I not erase anti-Blackness and other racialized oppressions through the process of naming some power relations at the expense of others (Morgensen, "White Settlers" 3).

reconsideration of the dominant historical narratives that continue to uphold dangerous structures.

In my first section, I focus on my family's homestead history, and the crucial role occupied by "ordinary" farmers in the settler colonial projects of dispossessing Indigenous peoples and claiming the Canadian Prairies. Next, I survey the related histories of differently racialized settlers and arrivants,[34] and examine how the interlocking structures of white supremacy were operationalized at this historical moment. The last section looks specifically at the interrelated processes of memoralizing and selectively disavowing the historical entanglements of my ancestors and other homesteaders, and the consequences that can emerge from these historical framings. It will take many different approaches and activities, including material transformation as well as cultural and discursive interventions, to create the kinds of futures that we want to create. But unpacking our relationship to and participation in colonial structures, and – for some of us – its deep roots in our familial pasts, can be a valuable step towards *honest* understandings of our personal positioning and our collective histories.

Populating the "Last Best West": Ordinary farmers in the colonial project

The Lattas have been in North America since 1780, when William Latta migrated from Ireland to New York. His son moved to Ontario around 1800, and built a flourmill near Belleville; the town that developed around the mills is called Latta to this day. But it is the story of his great-grandson (and my great-great-grandfather) that I focus on here. Harry Latta was born in 1879 in southwestern Ontario "in a log house on a 100 acre farm hewed out of hard wood

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[34] I borrow this term from Jodi Byrd, whose use of "arrivant" "signals that racialized non-natives inhabit Indigenous lands while experiencing colonial and racial subjugation, and that her accounts of their participation in colonization and their responsibilities to Indigenous decolonization call for a term distinct from white people" (Morgensen, "White Settlers" 2).

bush land by his father." He bought a house in nearby London in 1899 and apprenticed to become a butcher. In 1905, he – and five of his brothers – relocated to Saskatchewan to homestead. Harry owned property, worked a skilled trade – he was not destitute.[35] His older brother, Samuel, had been a teacher in London for 23 years, had published a popular textbook, and was a principal when he too decided to homestead in the Prairies (Hawkes 1365). Why did they all decide to relocate west? I cannot know for sure, but my mother speculates that it was for the adventure.

Settler colonialism is a structure that operates in many ways – through military conquest, economic exploitation, natural resource depletion (the slaughter of millions of plains buffalo comes to mind), cultural imperialism, legal regulation, spatial relocation and control, re/education, deception and erasure, and other mechanisms – but a key part of the project involves settling the land itself. "If a major condition for the founding of the nation-state was the acquisition of national territory," Thobani argues, "no less important was the recruitment of a national population" (74–5). The possession of land can be secured abstractly through treaties and borders, but must also be enacted through on-the-ground people and everyday practices (Banivanua-Mar and Edmonds 5). Heavily invested in populating the Prairies post-Confederation, the Canadian government passed the Dominion Land Act in 1872, which offered 160-acre land grants, known as homesteads, to prospective settlers for a nominal administrative fee of $10 ("Dominion Lands Policy"). The slow trickle of settlers in the late 1800's, however, forced the government to embark on a massive marketing campaign to sell the homestead dream

[35] The above historical details came from a variety of sources: genealogical information from family records, census data accessed through Ancestry.com, and an email from a distant Latta cousin responding to my mother's inquiries about their shared relatives' history (from which the quote is drawn).

(Murray). Desperate to assert tangible colonial authority and establish a white population, they advertised free land, easy wealth, and other amenities (Thobani 82); this was the offer that tempted thousands, including the Latta brothers.

Arriving in Canada's "Last Best West" in 1905, the Lattas homesteaded in the area around (then barely established) Govan, Saskatchewan, about a hundred kilometers north of Regina. In 1907, Harry Latta married Isabel Maud Seller, whose father, William, had also migrated from eastern Canada to a homestead in the Last Mountain Lake region. Through an online government database, I obtain data on the particular plots given to these ancestors (Library and Archives Canada). For each name that I search, I receive numbers and accompanying maps; after all, "property required a location, and maps were the means of establishing it" (Harris 175). I look through several explanations before I can make sense of the complicated surveying system that turns a landscape into an intricately numbered grid (ISC, "Measuring Land"), but I eventually use the coordinates to locate the specific land that they each received (see Figure 1). As a large body of literature suggests, technologies of mapping are far from power-neutral. Cartography "conceptualized unfamiliar space in Eurocentric terms" (Harris 175) and was a crucial tool for colonial expansion and dispossession (Veracini 181). "Symmetrically surveyed divisions of land," in particular, are characteristic of the kinds of landscapes produced by settler colonialism (Banivanua-Mar and Edmonds 2); territory parsed up so that it can be subsumed into violent capitalist regimes of property and ownership (Blomley 128–9). These connections are all brought powerfully home to me as I pour over these maps, trying to use a set of numbers to pinpoint particular 160-acre rectangular plots. This grid turns land into an abstraction, rendering it legible to the settler gaze, governable by the settler government, and possessable by the settlers themselves.

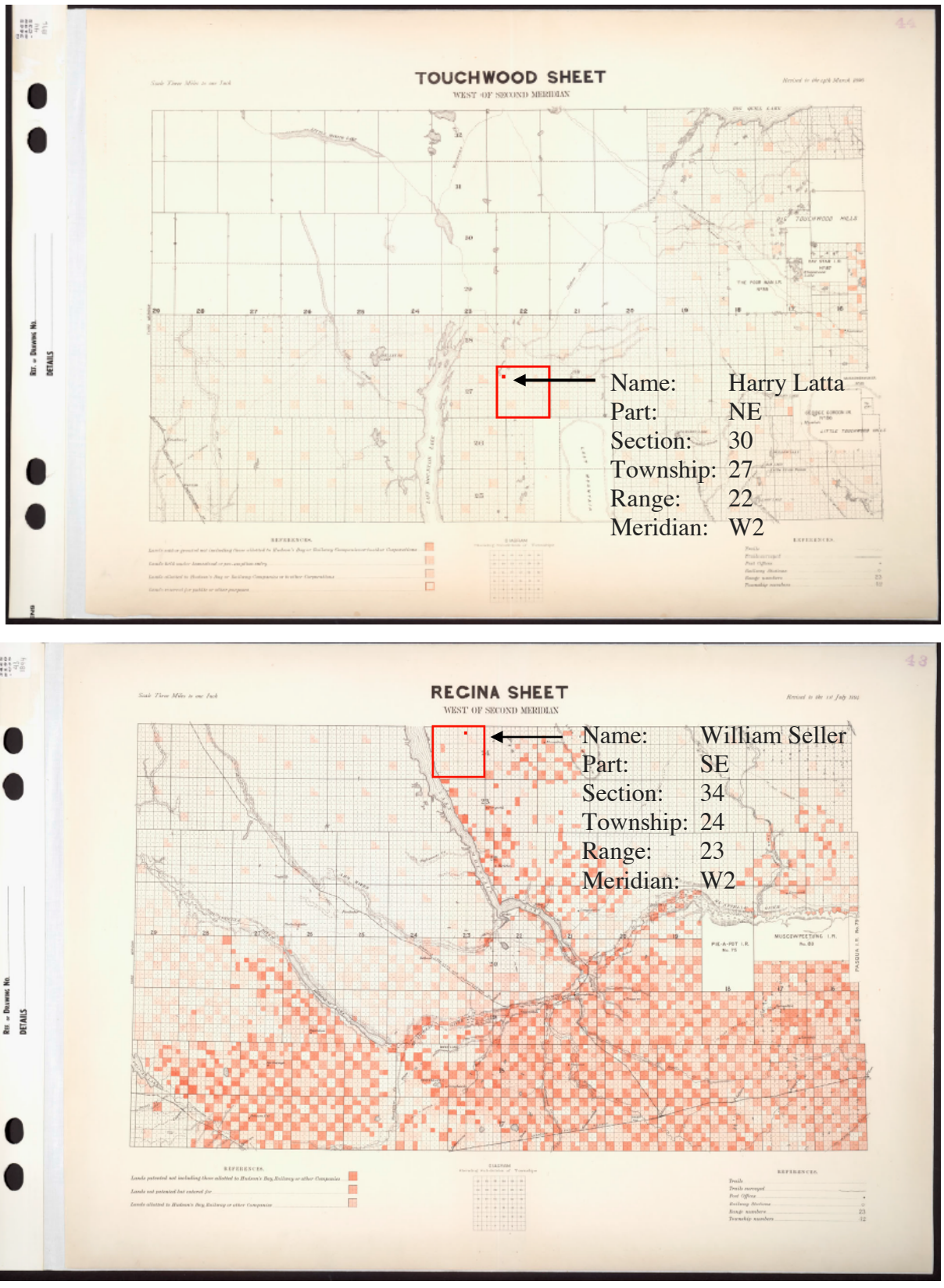

Figure 1. Maps of Saskatchewan's homestead land divisions (the Touchwood and Regina Sheets), with data from government records indicating the plots belonging to my ancestors (Library and Archives Canada).

In addition to the gridlines, a border appears on these maps: what Cole Harris calls "the line between the reserves and the rest – between the land set aside for the people who had lived there from time immemorial and the land made available" (167). I looked at the map dozens of times before noticing, five townships east of Harry Latta's plot, areas marked "George Gordon IR"[36] and "Muskowekwan IR". North of these "Indian Reservations" are "The Poor Man IR" (now Kawacatoose First Nation) and "Day Star IR", and two other reserves – "Pie-A-Pot IR" (now Piapot) and "Muscowpeetung IR" appear on the eastern portion of the Regina Sheet where William Seller's land was located. The maps so clearly enact and represent the processes of colonial land seizure. The relationship between Indigenous dispossession and homestead settlements – too often denied or ignored – can be seen here in cartographic subtext: people had lived on all of the land represented for thousands of years, but were dispossessed through treaty processes, displaced from their lands, homogenized under the legal designation "Indian," regulated by permits and racist legislation, and forced onto tiny patches of territory that could be confined by borders and labeled "IR" (Tang 3).[37] The rest of the land became "empty," a fertile vacuum available to be divided up into squares, distributed, and possessed. The government worked hard to fill it with white settlers, giving the parcels of land away to render colonial ownership of the land seemingly irrevocable, naturalized, and permanent. Who was displaced for

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[36] A dot within the boundaries of the George Gordon reserve is labeled "Mission." This is where Gordon Indian Residential School – the last federally-run residential school in Canada – operated until 1996 ("Reclaiming History"). This school, like many others across the country, was a site of decades of sexual and emotional abuse, and the community continues to experience the effects of this trauma and work towards collective healing ("Red Road Forward").

[37] Much more could and has been written about the specific histories of different First Nations, about the Treaty process in the Prairies and elsewhere (the areas I am speaking about fall under Treaty 4), about the racist technologies of The Indian Act, and other related histories. While they fall outside of the scope of this paper, they have appropriately been the subject of much scholarship and warrant careful discussion (see Cardinal and Hildebrand; Hampton, Bourassa, and McKay-McNab; Lawrence; A. Smith; Tang and many others).

my ancestors to be granted their piece of the Prairie dream? Whose ways of knowing, living, and relating to land were undermined for homesteaders' property, rights, and citizenship?

While mapping enacts its violence, in part, as a "technology of abstraction" (Clayton quoted in Veracini 181), the actions and consequences of homestead settlement were profoundly and intentionally *material* as well. The Dominion Act laid out what was required of homesteaders in order to receive their property title: within 3 years of registering intent to settle a particular plot, they had to clear ten acres for cultivating crops and build a home out of wood or sod, demonstrating that they had "improved the land" through their use ("Homestead Act"). From Saskatchewan archives, I obtain Harry Latta's original application (see Figure 2), where he details the acres of land that he had broken and cropped.[38] Having met the legal requirements, he is recommended and approved for his land patent. These very concrete goals illustrate the centrality of farmers, who were necessary – not only to produce food – but also to physically reshape the land (Banivanua-Mar and Edmonds 6). The materiality and permanence of this reshaping is, like the very presence of the white settlers, an important part of enacting settler colonial possession on-the-ground. The logic is self-serving, of course. Eurocentric and colonial value systems define what constitutes "improvement" of the land (demonstrating ownership with particular kinds of documentation, building particular kinds of houses, using the land in particular kinds of settled, "civilized" ways), and then utilize these supposed signs of "improvement" to justify settler ownership of the land to begin with. With these metrics established, the Indigenous population can be deemed to have never *really* used the land at all; their dispossession and displacement become erased as a problem.

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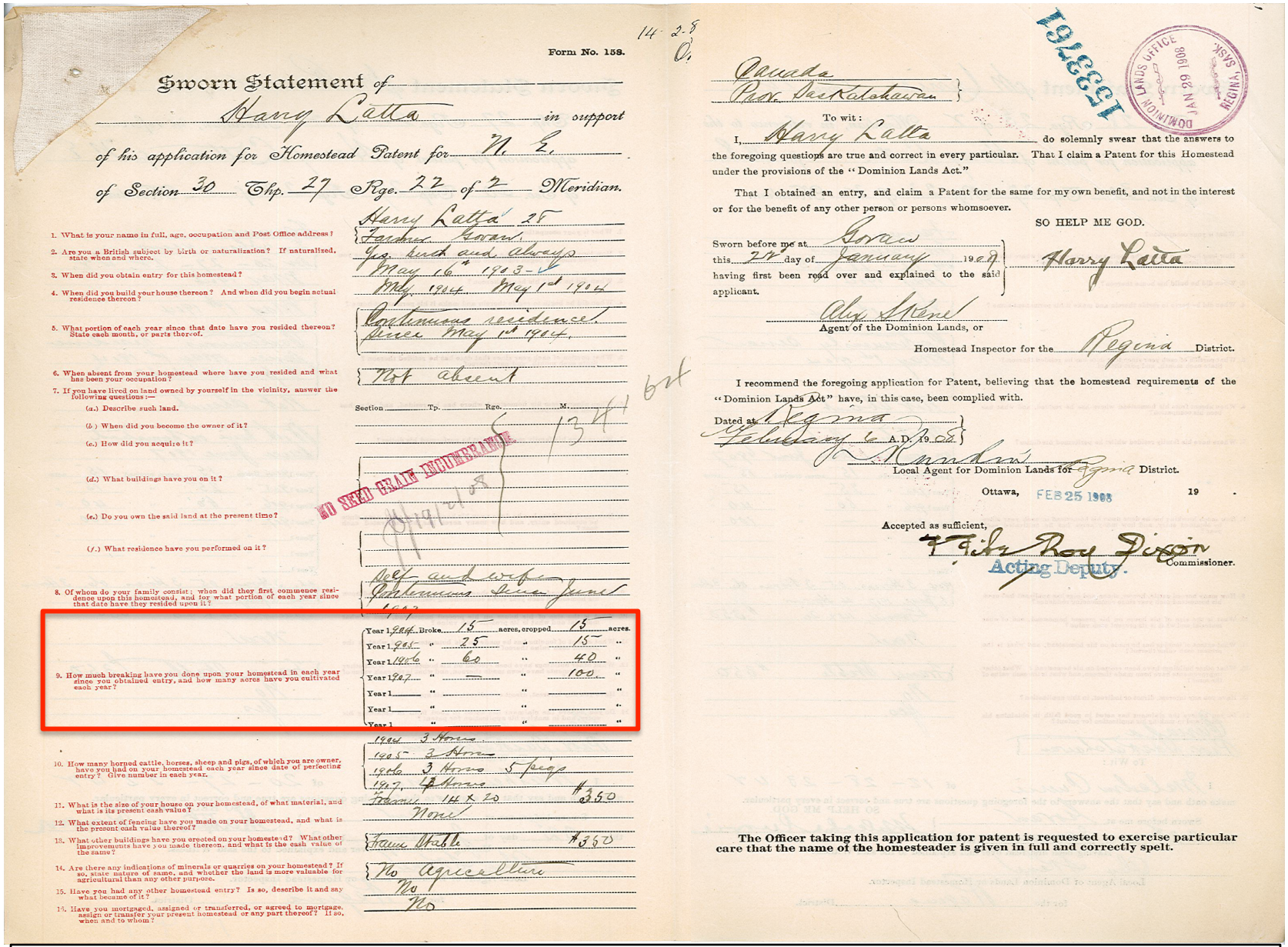
[38] The form specifically employs this language: land was *broken* – a powerful and affective image within an administrative text.



Form No. 158.

Sworn Statement of Harry Latta in support

of his application for Homestead Patent for N. E.

of Section 30 Twp. 27 Rge. 22 of 2 Meridian.

1. What is your name in full, age, occupation and Post Office address? — Harry Latta 25 Farmer Goran.
2. Are you a British subject by birth or naturalization? If naturalized, state when and where. — Yes. Such and always
3. When did you obtain entry for this homestead? — May 16th 1903
4. When did you build your house thereon? And when did you begin actual residence thereon? — May 1904 May 1st 1904
5. What portion of each year since that date have you resided thereon? State each month, or parts thereof. — Continuous residence since May 1st 1904.
6. When absent from your homestead where have you resided and what has been your occupation? — Not absent
7. If you have lived on land owned by yourself in the vicinity, answer the following questions:—
   (a.) Describe such land. — Section ____ Tp. ____ Rge. ____ M. ____
   (b.) When did you become the owner of it?
   (c.) How did you acquire it?
   (d.) What buildings have you on it?
   (e.) Do you own the said land at the present time?
   (f.) What residence have you performed on it?
8. Of whom do your family consist; when did they first commence residence upon this homestead, and for what portion of each year since that date have they resided upon it? — Self and wife Continuous since June 1904
9. How much breaking have you done upon your homestead in each year since you obtained entry, and how many acres have you cultivated each year?

Year 1904	Broke	15	acres, cropped	15 acres.
Year 1905	"	25	"	15 "
Year 1906	"	60	"	40 "
Year 1907	"	—	"	100 "
Year 1	"		"	"
Year 1	"		"	"
Year 1	"		"	"

10. How many horned cattle, horses, sheep and pigs, of which you are owner, have you had on your homestead each year since date of perfecting entry? Give number in each year.
    1904 3 Horses
    1905 3 Horses
    1906 3 Horses 5 pigs
    1907 4 Horses
11. What is the size of your house on your homestead, of what material, and what is its present cash value? — Frame 14 x 20 $350
12. What extent of fencing have you made on your homestead, and what is the present cash value thereof? — None
13. What other buildings have you erected on your homestead? What other improvements have you made thereon, and what is the cash value of the same? — Frame Stable $350
14. Are there any indications of minerals or quarries on your homestead? If so, state nature of same, and whether the land is more valuable for agricultural than any other purpose. — No Agriculture
15. Have you had any other homestead entry? Is so, describe it and say what became of it? — No
16. Have you mortgaged, assigned or transferred, or agreed to mortgage, assign or transfer your present homestead or any part thereof? If so, when and to whom? — No

NO SEED GRAIN ENCUMBRANCE

Canada
Prov. Saskatchewan } To wit:

I, Harry Latta do solemnly swear that the answers to the foregoing questions are true and correct in every particular. That I claim a Patent for this Homestead under the provisions of the "Dominion Lands Act."

That I obtained an entry, and claim a Patent for the same for my own benefit, and not in the interest or for the benefit of any other person or persons whomsoever.

SO HELP ME GOD.

Sworn before me at Goran this 24 day of January 1908, having first been read over and explained to the said applicant.

Harry Latta

Alex Stone
Agent of the Dominion Lands, or
Homestead Inspector for the Regina District.

I recommend the foregoing application for Patent, believing that the homestead requirements of the "Dominion Lands Act" have, in this case, been complied with.

Dated at Regina this 6 day of February A.D. 1908

Local Agent for Dominion Lands for Regina District.

Ottawa, FEB 25 1908 19

Accepted as sufficient,

T. Gibson Roy Dixon
Acting Deputy Commissioner.

The Officer taking this application for patent is requested to exercise particular care that the name of the homesteader is given in full and correctly spelt.

DOMINION LANDS OFFICE REGINA, SASK. JAN 29 1908

19268

Figure 2. Harry Latta's homestead patent application, received from the Saskatchewan Archives Board.

Harry and Isabel Maud Latta. My great-great-grandparents. I have a photo of them, with their five children, looking like an iconic, dusty, homestead family (see Figure 3). I've tried to piece together birth dates from census records to figure out which of the kids is Edwin, my grandmother's father, but the records are neither clear nor consistent, and I cannot be sure. I know very little about Isabel due to conspicuously gendered absences from family lore and official documents.[39] I know that she moved to Saskatchewan with her homesteading father, that she married Harry Latta at age 20, that one of her kids died in infancy.[40] For early twentieth century rural Saskatchewan, Harry and Isabel were, from what I can see, profoundly ordinary. Harry farmed crops and raised poultry on his homestead land. They gave their first child the middle name "Govan," in honor of the town that they pioneered (GDLHA, 1980, p. 166). With his brother, Harry started a grocery store there, "Latta Brothers General Merchants Wholesale and Retail Butcher," which was destroyed in a fire in 1913. He then moved the family to another small town nearby, where he raised cattle and sheep. They were not particularly well off, or particularly exceptional. There is nothing extreme or unusual about their story. When I trace back different branches of my family tree, I find more explicit agents of imperialism: the Lattas are harder to place. They were farmers, butchers, grocers. Working the land, trying to survive. Farmers, not empire-builders. Or farmers *and* empire-builders?

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[39] While I do not spend much time on it, homesteading was certainly a highly gendered process (Cavanaugh). Isabel no doubt faced particular hardships due to her gender – barriers to independent homestead opportunities (Carter, "Homesteads-for-Women" 267–8), for instance, or the lack of accessible healthcare and midwifery, leading to often risky and dangerous childbirths and high mortality rates for both infants and mothers (Langford 278) – but I do not know much for certain about her personal experiences.

[40] I also know that after Harry's death in 1933, she married his brother – Samuel J Latta – by then a former journalist and Liberal politician, one of the "businessmen-cum-elected members of the British-Canadian ruling class" that Thobani identifies (81).

Figure 3. Harry and Isabel Latta with their children. From family records.

Indeed, this story is a common one, as hundreds of thousands of people were granted homesteads in the Canadian Prairies (Russell 205). Many now living in Canada can trace their family trees back to these settlers, so I share the fraught homestead legacy with countless others. I have no evidence to suggest that my ancestors were *exceptionally* racist or nationalist, or that they were *extremely* (or even consciously) invested in taking Indigenous lands for their own possession. But they were part of a much larger and inherently violent system. Homestead settlers, as Thobani argues, were recruited to be on-the-ground enactors and enablers of "the *ordinary and banal* violence necessary for the maintenance of colonial sovereignty" (38, emphasis added). Settler colonialism is not just about explicit or intentional acts of direct violence; the settlers' dreams of wealth, their migrations west, their hard work on the land – their ordinary lives were *necessary* to uphold the colonial system. The project of settling the west is something that the government will not and cannot apologize for. It is too *ordinary*: to

acknowledge its violent underpinnings would call into question the very legitimacy of the state's foundations. It is because of this disruptive potential that I aim to critically appraise our violent histories – even, perhaps especially, the ones that are ordinary, commonplace, acceptable, and even celebrated.

The Right Kind of (White) Settler: Race and the matrices of white supremacy

When I first found out that my family had been among the many to partake in Prairie homesteading, the relations that flashed immediately into my mind were the ones I have touched on above: between the plots of land given to my ancestors and the plots of land designed to contain Aboriginal communities, between histories of displacement and histories of settlement, between celebrating white farmers and erasing colonial violence. I then attended a talk by artist Deanna Bowen, and was confronted with a substantive intersection between our stories. I had been ignoring a whole different set of complicated relationships.

In her oral history installation, Bowen talks about her family leaving an increasingly segregated Oklahoma for Alberta in 1910. They were drawn by the advertisements in many newspapers offering free or cheap land to those willing to migrate to the Prairies, products of the Canadian government's aforementioned effort to populate the western provinces ("Sum of the Parts" 4), the same homestead deal that my ancestors took advantage of just 5 years earlier. Bowen says that these advertisements were accidentally printed in Black newspapers in the U.S. as well,[41] prompting many Black families – including Bowen's – to try to move north to Canada:

> The government had not anticipated the rush of black [sic] immigrants and quickly adapted entry restrictions in an effort to keep them from coming in. In 1911, ... Prime

[41] I have chosen to capitalize "Black" as a proper noun, following the interventions of Kimberlé Crenshaw (1244).

> Minister Wilfred Laurier drafted a regulation that banned blacks from coming into Canada. ("Sum of the Parts" 4)

While this ban was repealed shortly thereafter upon the defeat of Laurier's government, it had many supporters among the populace. In Bowen's exhibit *Invisible Empires*, she displays a petition signed by thousands of local white residents in protest of the immigration of Black families from the U.S. up to Western Canada (see Figure 4). As I sat listening to Bowen, I realized that I could not just think through my family's history in relation to the Indigenous people who were being dispossessed (and worse) by the Canadian colonial project; I needed to also consider the relations between my white settler ancestors and others who were deemed less desirable for the homestead project.

Figure 4. "1911 Anti Creek-Negro Petition" from Immigration of Negroes from the United States to Western Canada 1910-1911, Library Archives Canada ("Invisible Empires").

My primary objects of study occupy positions of privilege along many axes of power and, as such, are not the usual focus of what Rita Dhamoon calls "intersectional-type" theory (61). She argues, however, that "intersectionality is not a content-based specialization… rather, it is a research approach that can [and should] be applied beyond the study of non-white women" (63).

Patricia Hill Collins' concept of a "matrix of domination"[42] pushes me past the dangerous assumption that binaries of domination and subordination can exist in isolation from one another, and emphasizes the relationships *between* binaries (Dhamoon 124).[43] By focusing exclusively on relations of domination between white settlers and Indigenous communities, therefore, I had been ignoring nuance within those groups as well as relations with other groups (such as the prospective Black migrants). Furthermore, my analysis is not just about different "categories" of difference and the relations between them – it is, more fundamentally about interlocking and interdependent *systems of power* (Razack 22). As Andrea Smith theorizes, white supremacy in North America operates through anti-Blackness, Orientalism, and Indigenous genocide – logics that are crucially distinct but also profoundly interconnected (2). My first section, which focused primarily on my ancestors' role in settler colonialism, therefore cannot be understood in isolation from this one.

When I heard Bowen's words, and saw the petition of thousands of names of white settlers like my predecessors, enraged at the possibility of Black neighbours, a whole set of relations, privileges, and complicities crystalized into focus. For the Canadian nation building project of settling the Prairies was not just about laying claim to the land – it was also about

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[42] This analytic insists that different relations/structures of oppression/difference are fundamentally interconnected, "mutually constituted and organized" (Dhamoon 62) and "part of one overarching structure of domination" (Collins in Dhamoon 62).

[43] While I gesture to interlocking gendered and classed dimensions periodically, I want to acknowledge that my analysis of these processes, due simply to the limitations of time and scope, is not as thorough as the frameworks posited by Dhamoon and Collins necessitate. Their multidimensional approach is vital but also reaffirms the impossibility of a perfectly comprehensive analysis, as it is not feasible to theorize *all* the possible relations of power in all of their infinite and shifting iterations, intersections, and interactions. Nonetheless, I think that it is crucial to be transparent about the limitations of our work.

making Canada white.[44] White supremacy was foundational to the dispossession and genocide of Indigenous peoples, in the Prairies and across the continent, but it also operated through other systems, positioning and affecting differently racialized populations in distinct, although not unconnected, ways. While I cannot do all of these histories justice, I gesture to the complexity of the homestead entanglements below. Tracing the implicit and explicit ways that white supremacy was reproduced in the founding of the Canadian nation – in this case, through the policies, processes, and daily lives of homesteading – challenges contemporary claims of naturalized whiteness and Canadian "benevolence."

The government's efforts to claim land and build a nation required recruiting a population, but not just any population: homestead opportunities were not distributed equitably or randomly. The goal was to find "high-quality settlers," those "exalt[ed] as preferred races," which meant, ideally, British (or French) immigrants, or settlers of the same ancestry from the United States or from eastern Canada (like my family). Given their urgent desire for a larger population to facilitate economic development and land settlement, however, compromises had to be made, and the government turned to other "less desirable" European countries for settlers (Thobani 83). These "lower caliber" immigrants were often fleeing poverty or persecution, and were tempted to make this long and difficult migration by government propaganda promising an easy life (Collins IV); the hardships that they experienced when they arrived on the Prairies (particularly for women and more impoverished people) are undeniable. Furthermore, while

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[44] Bringing in a gendered lens as well, Sarah Carter offers important insight into how "imperial-feminist" struggles for women's rights participated in the racial politics of prairie settlement: "the rationale for homesteads for women that increasingly held center stage was that land grants should be available to 'daughters of British blood,' rather than to 'hordes of men of alien race'" ("Homesteads-for-Women" 276). This gestures towards the many nuanced relations at play, and the complex intersections and interactions across matrices of domination.

considered valuable by government recruiters for their supposed "sturdiness," the many Hungarian, Bulgarian, Galician, Norwegian (who made up a significant number of the early settlers of Govan), and other less preferred European immigrants initially faced discriminatory pushback from their primarily Anglo homestead peers (Collins IV). Processes of integration were far from smooth, and "cycles of racial conflict, and racial accommodation, occurred within the dynamic and changing milieu of the emerging settler society" (Thobani 83). These immigrants were not, at first, always or easily accepted into whiteness.

Such emergent fault lines were evident in Saskatchewan during the heated 1920s debates about "foreign"[45] language instruction (Quiring and Center 137). As they arrived in the province in 1927, the KKK inflamed the (already-present) fear that Eastern European immigrants would join with French Roman Catholics to take over power from the Protestant Anglo-Saxon elites, and turned it into outright hostility (Appleblatt). The Conservative Party capitalized on this widespread racial anxiety among the Anglo majority to defeat the Liberal government in 1929 (Appleblatt), including my great-great-great uncle Samuel, the then Liberal Minster of Education (Quiring and Center 137). The tensions between the more exalted and less exalted white settler subjects notwithstanding, however, the difficulties experienced by European immigrants must also be put in perspective. These communities found accommodation and acceptance in the national imaginary, and the genuine opportunity for land ownership and upward mobility, in a way that non-white immigrant groups never did. The "politico-symbolic borders of the nation…

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[45] Ukranian, Icelandic, even – exposing the ridiculousness and internal contradictions of white colonial logics – *French*: all are here constructed in a taken-for-granted way as "foreign" languages. Of course, they *are* foreign languages; the indigenous languages of Saskatchewan are Cree, Saulteaux, and Dene, among others (Wolvengray). But English is also a thoroughly foreign language, brought to this land through colonial force and then, through the transformative powers of the settler colonial imaginary, constructed as "native" (Morgensen, "Theorizing" 9).

chang[ed] and shift[ed]" to eventually include "less preferred" European ethnicities (Thobani 83–84), allowing the core national commitment to whiteness to be maintained while expediting the settling work so essential to colonial dispossession.

As highlighted by Bowen, the homesteads that were so readily available for white immigrants did not come so easily to Black ones. Even after the outright ban had been repealed, a rigged Immigration Act enabled racially targeted administrative procedures, such that "medical problems, pauperism, and moral turpitude" were used as "pretexts for excluding black American settlers" from crossing the border (Collins IV). Furthermore, those Black people that did make it to the Prairies would only be granted a "license of occupation," rather than the ownership that white homesteaders received (Thobani 91). Purely on the level of policy and government practice, "a clear message [was sent] to this community" (Thobani 91) – Black immigrants were not desired and their success was not facilitated. The relatively small number of Black people who settled in the Prairies was not coincidental; it was the result of the hegemonic whiteness that structured nation-building efforts. The homesteads granted to my family and denied to Black arrivants connect my history to histories of anti-Black racism, transatlantic and plantation slavery, Jim Crow segregation, forced migrations, and more.

While her grandparents romanticized a "disremembered"[46] image of Canada – as the promised land, the "end of the underground railroad," a place where Blacks were accepted and lived freely and peacefully with the white population – Bowen's research unearthed evidence of widely held racist beliefs and well-documented racial violence on the Prairies during the early 1900s ("Artist's Talk"). Indeed, many have challenged the dangerous erasures that stem from

[46] This process of disremembering – the conscious effort to forget and suppress certain stories or painful aspects of stories ("Artist's Talk")– can happen on a familial level and on a national one: I take up the construction of memory and history more in the next section of this paper.

Canada identifying itself as the anti-racist counterpart to the United States – a place of freedom not slavery, of integration not segregation (Bakan; Lane; Yeoman). For those Black settlers who did make it through the racist immigration system, primarily settling in Alberta, racism was a pervasive reality. The 1911 petition that received thousands of signatures (see Figure 4 above) warned the government of "the serious menace to the future welfare of a large portion of Western Canada, by reason of the alarming influx of negro settlers" ("Invisible Empires"), and newspapers across the Prairies ran sensationalist anti-Black propaganda (Collins IV). White settlers were not just passive beneficiaries of state racism that granted them rights, lands, economic opportunities, and legal privileges that others were denied; they were active participants in creating hostile environments for potential or actual Black settlers.

The intertwining of different systems of oppression is also evident in the story of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Building the railway across the country was a crucial project for the settler colonial state in the late 19th century. Dubbed "the National Dream," it gave coherence to the nationalist narrative of a sovereign Canada (Earle 345), and facilitated the settling of the Prairie provinces and expansion of the market economy (Thobani 91). Govan's local history – alongside many narrations of Saskatchewan's development – cites the railway as an important part of opening up that area of the province for substantial settlement, as extensions started being built off the main transnational line (GDLHA 9). Despite the state's explicit and foundational commitment to whiteness, more (dangerous) labour was needed to make the National Dream possible, Thobani notes, and so "Chinese (and later South Asian) men were recruited" to fill the gap (91). Indeed, "so critical was the labour they provided that without it, the building of the railway would have been 'indefinitely postponed'" (Thobani 91–92). While exploited Chinese migrant *labour* was necessary for this project, the people themselves were often seen as

disposable and undesirable.[47] Homesteading was not an available option, but neither, often, was citizenship for those already here or (legal) immigration for those who wanted to migrate (Thobani 92). The restrictions did not result in a complete absence of Chinese people in early Saskatchewan, however, and communities emerged, primarily – due to rampant discrimination from the white population and the relative safety and support offered by peers – in larger towns or cities . That said, "Chinese restaurants," one of the few options available for making a living given racist barriers to many sectors of the economy, were established in many small towns as well, including on Govan's main street as early as 1910 (GDLHA 78). Discriminatory laws, media scapegoating (Criminality! Immorality! Swarming!), and prevalent racist attitudes impacted the lives of Chinese migrants and other racialized people in communities dominated by white settlers who felt that they were *more entitled* to land, jobs, and rights (Collins IV).[48]

An important lesson from these histories is that the predominant (although certainly not universal) whiteness of Prairie settlement was far from coincidental, inevitable, or natural; the whiteness of homesteading and of the early Prairies was highly produced and policed. I will quote at length from Thobani, who demonstrates how Canada could have looked very different:

> Colonization and the opening of the country to mass immigration attracted not only Europeans but also other colonized and enslaved populations, including Black and Asian migrants, many of them fleeing the ravages of slavery, economic underdevelopment, poverty, and political upheaval. … The potential certainly existed for their emergence as

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[47] Important continuities can be drawn between these processes and the current regulation of temporary foreign workers in Canada (Thobani 99).

[48] With more time, I would look through copies of the Govan Prairie News, to see if I could assess the attitudes of my family member who founded, edited, and wrote the publication, and see if and how the Orientalist panic dominant in media publications across Canada manifested in their work and community.

> a significant sector of the nation's swelling population. … However, the racial policies of the state and the racial preoccupations of the white population destroyed this possibility, which would have rendered more difficult, if not entirely impossible, the consolidation of Euro-Canadian hegemony. (76–77)

A whole system of laws, supported widely by the population, was explicitly set up to "Keep Canada White" (Thobani 90). Whiteness is already taken for granted in such a framing, erasing and ignoring the crucial fact that Canada could not be *kept* white; rather, through processes of colonization, genocide, controlled settlement, racist immigration regulations, and more, it had to be *made* white. Here again, the connections between interlocking systems of power becomes visible. Colonial governments and their affiliate white settlers forcibly take possession of land from the Indigenous populations, and then claim such rightful and original ownership over it – claims that are legitimized on "an explicitly racial basis" (Thobani 84) – that they then have the "right" to prevent others from entering or belonging to the new nation.[49] Hand in hand with the settler colonial impetus for and process of settling the Prairies, "white supremacy had to be established on the ground across the country. It had to be constantly defended and reproduced at the level of daily life" (Thobani 83).

My ancestors, as well-established residents of eastern Canada with optimally British heritage, would have been considered perfectly situated for enacting the Canadian nation-building project, targeted by homestead advertisements and facilitated by the affiliate legal apparatus. They would have been deemed the "right" kind of white settlers: able to enact the

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[49] This dynamic continues into contemporary debates about immigration and refugee programs– see Thobani (Ch 3–5) for more on this. The assumed naturalness of Canadian whiteness also continues to have profound consequences, allowing Black, other racialized, even Indigenous bodies to be seen as "out of place" in Canadian spaces.

dispossession of Indigenous communities on the ground, valued as a better (i.e. more Anglo) kind of white than other European settlers, chosen as desirable at the expense of prospective Black settlers attempting to escape racial persecution but still persecuted for their race, benefitting from the labour of Asian migrants who would then be denied rights and belonging, and embroiled – inevitably – in a host of other nuanced relations. They were the ones granted good quality (stolen) homestead land. Their successes, modest as they may have been, were expedited, not just by a *lack* of racial barriers, but also by whole structures of legal and social supports enabling their participation in the white settler colonial project. Harry Latta identified himself in the 1901 census with the race "English," and in the 1911 census with the race "Canadian." This naturalization of white settler belonging, even over ten years of one person's life, begs some important questions: Who is allowed to identify as "Canadian"? And who will always be marked as "Other"?[50] The fact that Harry Latta, and myself as his descendent, are able to unquestionably claim Canadianess is not just about the length of time that our lineage has spent on this land – it is crucially about our shared whiteness. An explicit race analysis of settlement histories, enabling a more nuanced understanding of Canada's foundational violences, is crucial, because the structures, events, and attitudes discussed above continue to have profound consequences today.

"A Virgin Plain": How this history is remembered (and how it is erased)

My ancestors in Saskatchewan were certainly part of particular colonial and racialized histories and processes, but the way we relate to those pasts and "the stories we tell about *what happened then*" (Hartman 133) also merit close attention. In examining the stories we tell, we

[50] Harry was born in Ontario and his family been lived in Canada for generations – I can't help but wonder if the timing was unrelated or if participation in nation-building and homesteading during this decade contributed to his shift in cultural identification.

must also consider the stories that we ignore, erase, or minimize: "as a community, we forget as much as we remember, and what we choose to forget tells as much about us as what we choose to remember" (Francis 12). On a national and on a personal level, the telling of the "settling the west" history, to which I am so intimately connected, is structured by both memoralization and disavowal. This mutually supportive process and the other disconnects that allow us to palatably celebrate this history, I argue, are necessary for upholding the settler colonial imaginary and have particular salience in the Canadian context.

On the one hand, histories of settling the Prairies are far from erased: these ancestors are "mythologiz[ed] as adventurous pioneers and explorers" (Thobani 87), celebrated as hardworking farmers who reshaped untamed wilderness into agriculturally productive land (Coombes, "Memory" 6). A Canadian Heritage Minute – "a cultural project aimed at strengthening the nation" (West 213) – shows a couple tilling their new land and building their homestead house, persevering and triumphing in face of adversity ("Soddie"). Although increasingly placed alongside (often tokenistic and static) depictions of First Nations communities, history textbooks – "the only history books that most people will ever read" – celebrate brave settlers as expanders of civilization (Francis 13; 72). Saskatchewan's 2005 centennial celebrations were marked by a great deal of remembering and "honouring Saskatchewan's pioneers" ("Centennial News"). Alongside public commemoration of settling, these histories are held dear in intimate spheres as well.

In trying to piece together my family's stories, I have found a whole network of systems in place to facilitate my tracing my connection to this past. Narrative details are harder to find, but census records, genealogical societies, profiles of prominent citizens, local histories, government databases, maps and records, and other sources documenting homestead settlement

abound. It seems that pursuing one's familial connection to homestead histories is a common endeavor (albeit likely motivated, in many cases, by investments different than my own). A Saskatchewan program even honors families who have farmed the same land for a hundred years with a Century Farm Family Award (ISC, "Century Family Farm Awards"), an ironic move to celebrate connection to the land without acknowledging the displacements and dispossessions of the Plains Cree nations that enabled that century of connection. Through narrating a connection to early settlers, Thobani argues, "subsequent generations of Canadians [are able] to define themselves as repositories and preservers of the national inheritance" (87). By taking on the labour and homestead land of my ancestors as a kind of symbolic endowment, I can – according to settler logics – make a *more authentic* claim to citizenship, Canadianess, and this land itself. My familial link enables me to enact the narrative of settler indigenization, whereby settlers become constructed as "originat[ing] from the lands where they arrived by force" (Morgensen, "Theorizing" 9). As the homestead fantasy goes, after all, it was *my* predecessors who cleared the wilderness, braved the dangers, and built this country.

Crucially, Thobani clarifies, this supposed link "becomes comprehensible only within the context of the continuity of their shared racial identity" (87); descendants of Black homesteaders, for instance, would still – even after many generations – face skepticism about their belonging in Canada, where as no one would question my identification as a non-hyphenated Canadian. Most recently, Stephen Harper's aptly criticized remark about "Old Stock Canadians" shows how salient this pattern continues to be. While he later clarified that he was referring to "the rest of us — Canadians who have been the descendants of immigrants for one or more generations," the language has been widely interpreted as an obtuse code for whiteness (Edwards). Furthermore the presumed calculation that authentic Canadianess is based on the number of generations that

have lived here (with the noted exclusion of actual Indigenous people) demonstrates the value, in such an ideological economy, of drawing on a lineage of earlier settlement history.

The tellings and retellings of homestead histories act, however, alongside and in relation to vast absences, gaps, and erasures. As Coombes notes, the very word "'settler' has about it a deceptively benign and domesticated ring which masks the violence of colonial encounters" ("Memory" 2). Canadian national histories likewise try to mask what Freeman calls "*that other histor*y of dispossession, war, and subjugation of the indigenous population" (*Relations* 413), and those other "other histories" as well, such as the racist exclusions and differentiated belongings discussed in the previous section. As I research my ancestors' pasts, I am struck by all of the stories that are not told, not seen as connected in any way to the founding of this small Prairie town and the farming of the land that surrounds it, the relationships that I cannot find documented, the people deemed irrelevant. The focus always seems to be on the struggles faced by homesteaders, Thobani argues, which erases both:

> [T]he colonial violence which in actuality brought far more "hardships" and "dangers" to Native peoples than it did to the early explorers and settlers, [and] the widespread race hatred expressed by the "pioneers" [that]… presented far more hardships and dangers to these migrants. (87)

The framing of the story as exclusively one of pioneer perseverance dangerously ignores the wider context and silences important stories and relationships.

The town that my Latta ancestors settled, as noted earlier, is called Govan. *Last Mountain Echoes,* published in 1980, remains the only local history focused on this region specifically. This excerpt from the book was originally published in 1955, in a special edition of the Govan

Prairies News (the newspaper founded by my great-great grandfather's brother) marking Saskatchewan's 50th anniversary:

> At the turn of the century, the area now covered by the town of Govan, Saskatchewan was a virgin plain. Apart from the surveyors and the early explorers, few white men, if any, had passed over the land and none had stopped to build a home" (GDLHA 9).

This quote narrates the "very beginnings" of Govan in ways that are now easily dismissible as outdated but, I argue, are still relevant for shaping dominant historical understandings. This area of the Prairies is considered empty and untouched because of the absence of white men and their built homes. A virgin plain. While Indigenous history is not quite outright denied (as the qualifier "white" technically leaves space for other "men" to have lived on the land), it is ignored, silenced, and deemed unworthy of consideration; the land is "emptied of Aboriginal life *as human life*" (Thobani 60, emphasis added). It would be more comfortable to dismiss this passage as a relic of an archaic way of thinking, out of sync with Canada's "progressive," "multicultural" politic that prefers to acknowledge some cursory awareness of Indigenous people before moving on. But the logic evident in this passage and throughout tellings of settlement history is one that continues to dominate the national imaginary; as Thobani argues, once Indigenous people are sidelined from the picture, settlers' "mythologized relationship to the land" can be celebrated while their "colonial violence fade[s] into insignificance" (60). The taken for granted assumptions that can be glimpsed in this local history continue to allow my ancestors actions to be innocently memorialized; homesteads cannot be tied to theft or displacement or colonial violence if there was nobody *really* there to begin with.

Yellow Wolf's 1887 observation – "only his own best deeds…has the white man told" (in Thobani 40) – is certainly evident in the popular Canadian understanding of the settlement of the

Prairies. Public and personal proud claimings of early settler histories are grounded in the erasure of the colonial violences, dispossessions, and racist exclusions necessarily enacted through the same process – and this serves a particular purpose. The dual memorialization/denial process is especially crucial in Canada where a "myth of benign origins" is *necessary* for maintaining our particular brand of purportedly compassionate and benevolent nationalism (Thobani 87). While American frontier imagery is perhaps more explicitly linked to images of violent confrontation, Canada's reserved wagons-in-a-row fantasy upholds a "founding narrative of general benevolence" (Thobani 151), allowing Canada to continue to imagine itself as tolerant and self-aware (Asch 23). This nationalist construct of innocence is still deployed today to sideline efforts to challenge the racist, imperialist, colonial, and other violences that are so foundational to the contemporary nation-state.

Of course, there have been many "indigenous [and, I would add, Black, POC, feminist, queer, and other] intervention(s) into standard narratives of Canadian history" (Phillips 122). Particularly in the last thirty years – attempts to "fill the silences and challenge the old prejudices" have received more and more widespread attention from the Canadian public (Carter, *Western Canada* 5). But as Tricia Logan argues, there are profound differences between *including* and *integrating* a different historical perspective (152). It is therefore possible for the Canadian mainstream to *include* a "rubber stamp" acknowledgement of Aboriginal history without *integrating* that history and its decolonizing perspective, which allows the hegemonic national history to emerge substantively unaltered (Logan 152). This disconnect is pervasive: "rarely do the histories of 'Canada as a safe haven' and of immigrant homesteading become fairly aligned with the parallel histories of Aboriginal eliminationism and massive dispossession" (Logan 152). Because these stories are seen as parallel instead of interconnected, the settler

fantasy of empty plains and hardworking nation-building farmers manifests in the public imaginary essentially untainted by unpalatable associations with racism and colonial brutality.

I am not arguing that we should forget or ignore settlement histories altogether. And indeed, my Latta ancestors likely *were* hardworking people, facing challenging conditions and just trying to live their lives. But to celebrate these homesteader roots without any acknowledgement of their role in implementing settler colonial dis/possession and upholding white supremacy on the ground is dangerous (Thobani 83); these histories *must* be remembered with some complexity. There is a risk in allowing a gap to remain between the stories of our brave hardworking predecessors and the stories of colonial violence, as if those stories are not in any way connected, as if colonization was something done long, long ago and by other, distant people, a process to which I have no connection (and therefore no responsibility to address). My great-great-grandfather's story was very ordinary and very common, but, knowingly or not, he played an important role in a violent system. And while it would be easier and more comfortable to celebrate our ancestors' bravery and perseverance without asking the harder questions, without thinking about the consequences of their actions, without acknowledging the structures that facilitated their successes, to do so would be to remain dangerously "complicit in comfortable family stories" (Fulbrook 17). To disavow his role in that system would be to allow settler fantasies and Canadian nationalist myths to wrongly go undisrupted.

Conclusion: As *Exalted Subjects*…

"In the case of Canada," Thobani argues, "the historical exaltation of the national subject has ennobled this subject's humanity and sanctioned the elevation of its rights over and above that of the Aboriginal and the immigrant" (9). These processes of exaltation are evident in this cluster of family stories from Prairie homesteads, but also evident in my life as a white settler

who, despite other intersecting identities and "disparaged" positionalities, is firmly located within the imagined national community of deserving citizens (Thobani 4). What do I do with my status as an "exalted subject" of the white settler colonial nation-state of Canada and with the fraught histories that I have inherited? There are many crucial (material, cultural, relational, structural, discursive, and other) sites of intervention and resistance, but through a nuanced engagement with my white settler ancestors' stories, and the interlocking matrices of domination in which they played a part, I do hope to contribute to the disruption of dominant colonial erasure. Jodi Byrd argues for settlers' recognition of our connection to colonial histories as a crucial step among many: "it is time to imagine indigenous decolonization as a process that restores life and allows settler, arrivant, and native to *apprehend and grieve together* the violences of … empire" (229, emphasis added). From there, perhaps, we can find ways to move forwards.

CHAPTER 4

"The Colonial Way of Life":[51] Contextualizing and Learning from My Family's Experience of the Raj

Introduction: How to tell this story?

Our mythic origins in India loom large in my mother's family's sense of themselves. "Origins" is perhaps a misleading word – my British great-grandparents both moved to Calcutta in the mid 1920s, where they met and married. My great-grandfather rose through the ranks at Dunlop Rubber, eventually working in the colonial government to source wartime resources for Britain. My grandfather and all four of his siblings were born there before the family relocated back to England in 1945, right after the war ended and right before the Raj fully collapsed. These are the stories I explore in this chapter: my ancestors' part in an imperial economic structure; the day-to-day life of a young family in the Raj and the ideological and tangible underpinnings of that life; World War II and its impact on the Empire and on the British in India; decolonization and the family's displacement back to England; and, lastly, the legacies that live on in my family, three-quarters of a century later.

Unlike the previous chapter, much of this history is still within living memory. This relative proximity brings some of the challenging aspects of my project to the fore. The shifting terrain of familial (or any) memory is made abundantly clear: when asked, for instance, my grandfather and his siblings do not even agree on the year that they left India for Britain.[52]

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[51] This is a quote from my great-aunt's memoir (RAL 43), introduced later.

[52] I found a ship record from their return (Figure 6, included later in this chapter) that pegs their arrival date in Liverpool as Dec 5th 1945. My grandfather, who has always said that he has memories from their time in India, would have been almost one year old when they left. Memory is never "untainted" – stories told around the dinner table, experiences permeating a family

Despite such inevitable discrepancies and contradictions, I rely for information about this time on one of the siblings, my great-aunt, because she was the eldest of the children and so had the most substantial recollections from India, and also because her interest in recording and passing on family history led her to write a memoir about her life and what she knew (or could find out) of her parents' and grandparents' lives.[53] Furthermore, our relationship is such that she has felt comfortable sharing her written recollections with me and we have been able to have conversations about her childhood and history.[54] The relational and emotional stakes of this chapter are heavy: the stories I talk about below are not just abstract historical events but the lives of people I know and care about. Even as I offer my own interpretations and perspectives, I am deeply grateful to my family for sharing their stories with me, and need to respect the truth of their experiences as they experienced them. I do not seek to condemn, reject, or demonize my predecessors; rather, I want to learn, by analyzing and contextualizing their memories of India, about the complexities of personal involvements in colonial processes and the consequences of how these stories are told.

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culture, images and sensations shared and treasured – can so easily become incorporated into your own sense of your self and your past. When does "reliability" cease to be the relevant metric?

[53] This memoir, given to me by my great-aunt, is the primary source of information used and discourse analyzed in this chapter. She described the document as rough and in progress so I will note – in light of possible future revisions – that I am working from her version as of July 2015 (that said, the incomplete sections are those focused on more recent episodes of family history, which are not of relevance here). It is a beautiful account of her life and family, and much of the personal texture that I find fruitful and touching cannot be contained by the scope of this chapter. I cite it with the relevant page number and, where necessary for clarity, her initials (RAL).

[54] Another joy and challenge of family history work is the emotional labour of navigating a set of concerns completely apart from the substance of your research questions, those that have more to do with fraught familial relationships and personal histories than with the subject matter that directly drives your work. This is an inevitable and important part of the process, but it may also present barriers to certain questions being asked, or certain people being approached at all.

The memories I explore exist within a fraught landscape of stories from the perspectives of those who grew up in British Colonial India, heavily slanted towards nostalgia and efforts to "resuscitate the Raj" from the "hostility" of post-colonial critique (Buettner 252). Since the 1980s, Elizabeth Buettner's seminal analysis shows, there has been a swell of memoirs and commemorations from those who grew up in the British Raj, often – like my great-aunt's account – focusing on their "happy childhood memories of India" (253). In face of condemnations of colonial oppression, these texts tend towards "authentic," "first hand" accounts of their fathers' benevolence, selflessness, and sacrifice (258), the supposed contributions that the British made to India and the gratitude and appreciation they received in return (259), and their love of the country and the close relationships they had with its people (ironically, these reported 'intimacies' were almost exclusively with employees and servants) (260–261). There are frequent resonances between these nostalgic Raj accounts, and the memories passed down in my own family.

For those familiar with the genre, in fact, strands of this story, and even passages from the memoir that I draw on, may feel eerily familiar. This body of work's repetitiveness, or "unity," to borrow Edward Said's language ("Introduction" 31), is hard to miss. Said demonstrates the *power* that lies in the "created consistency, that regular constellation of ideas" that make up Orientalist discourses; particular images, words, and stories appear and reappear as texts refer back to one another either explicitly or implicitly ("Introduction" 13; 31). It is through such a process of reiteration and replication that Orientalism works to establish itself as the "truth" about "the Orient" – the intertextual resonance itself becomes productive. Despite the trend towards homogeneity amongst the wider oeuvre, I see value in examining this particular story and text. As Said argues:

> [U]nlike Michel Foucault, to whose work I am greatly indebted, I do believe in the determining imprint of individual writers upon the otherwise anonymous collective body of texts constituting a discursive formation like Orientalism. … Accordingly my analyses employ close textual readings whose goal is to reveal the dialectic between individual text or writer and the complex collective formation to which his (sic) work is a contribution. ("Introduction" 31–32)

In some moments, my great-aunt's memoir departs from her peers' writings, due to unique aspects of her particularly situated experience and, at times, less generic representations and reflections.[55] The moments of consistency between her work and the influential collective are also worth examining, however, as they represent the solidification of certain produced "truths." Taken together, this body of celebratory and revisionist Raj memoirs have become dominant in the (British) cultural imaginary. They have contributed to a somewhat disturbing trend: "[w]hat Stuart Hall identified as historical amnesia about imperial history within cultural and political discourses before the late 1970s has been balanced with, and arguably become superseded by, imperial glorification thereafter" (Buettner 267).[56, 57]

The stories of the British who participated in and benefitted from colonialism in India are certainly not untold. The terrain is inevitably, however, dominated by those "who *wanted* to

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[55] Given the focus of my analysis and the constraints of space and scope, I would add that this chapter is not entirely representative of the memoir itself, which contains many personally-inflected anecdotes and reflections on specific people and familial relationships that I wasn't able to work into this chapter.

[56] Stephen Howe even notes that, "in Britain right now, some politicians urge that it is time to 'stop apologising' for the imperial past and instead celebrate its positive achievements and the abiding virtues of Britishness" (14).

[57] Although heavily contested and debated, "imperial glorification" continues to emerge in academic discourses as well. Richard Gott's scathing analysis of the recent *Oxford History of the British Empire* (106), for example, makes it abundantly clear that, "like the aftermath of colonialism itself, colonial history lives on" (Dirks 95–96).

recall them and tell their version of the Raj to others," and so often by those who saw "their parents' Indian work in a favourable light" (Brendon Intro: para. 9). This plethora of golden "family romances" can obscure and overshadow the violent structures of power that underpinned and constituted the Raj experience, which has led some historians to argue "for the rejection of these 'one-sided interpretations', hoping that they would soon 'become extinct along with the "tribe" of former colonizers'" (Brendon Intro: para. 9). I think that to simply ignore these stories would be dangerous, given the influence that they have had in shaping wider cultural narratives about a benevolent British Empire. For those of us who are more directly connected to the histories at hand, disavowing accounts of our predecessors' formative experiences could be particularly unproductive, and even contribute to the erasure of our intimate complicity in empire. Are there, then, other ways to tell these stories?

Rather than dismissing and burying British recollections of Raj childhoods altogether, or simply embracing these mostly celebratory accounts of empire as "fact," I aim towards other, more nuanced interpretive pathways. I believe that it is possible to approach my family's history in India with a relational and critical eye, and look for the gaps and breaks that disrupt the romanticizing narrative, the moments of self-reflection on the part of my relatives about their participation in this history, and the pieces of the story that demand contextualizing. I aim to scrutinize these events, themes, and representations with my attention carefully attuned to the structures of power from which my ancestors benefitted, and the violences of empire that are sometimes masked by supposed benevolence or nostalgic revisionism. At the same time, I strive to hold space for the humanity of my predecessors, and to have empathy for people who – although part of larger processes, as are we all – were just living out their lives at a particular time and place. It is this situated lived experience of empire that I try to examine –

compassionately, unflinchingly, and with an anti-colonial political investment – in the chapter that follows.

"The East is a Career":[58] Upward mobility and economic imperialism

My great-grandfather – James Pomeroy Anderson – was born in Kilmarnock, Scotland in 1904. His parents, having previously been missionaries in Northern Rhodesia, brought their young family to South Africa for several years to continue with their mission work, before returning to Scotland for good (RAL 2-4). Jamie – as he was then known – seems to have had a happy upbringing: his sister's memoirs indicate close relationships amongst the three siblings and their parents, and offer humanizing childhood snapshots of family games and laughter (MMES 9). They were not particularly wealthy and – having joined the Plymouth Brethren – were invested in frugality and the collective ownership of property (RAL 5). "My father often remarked that it was always jam OR butter on one's bread, never both," my great-aunt writes (5). At 17, Jamie started a degree in Chemistry at the University of London, only to have his studies interrupted by his father's sudden death in his 40s, attributed vaguely to an unspecified neurological cause. Their father's unexpected passing brought both profound grief and financial instability to the family. Jamie had to immediately find work to support his widowed mother and his two siblings (RAL 6). This interwar period in Britain was dominated by "horrendous levels of unemployment" (Laybourn 105): "[James'] stories about his early jobs are quite heartbreaking, and have an almost Dickensian feel to them" (RAL 6). He worked at the London docks for a while for a spice importer, and then started selling shoes, lugging the load from store-

[58] Edward Said opens his seminal book, *Orientalism*, with this quote from Benjamin Disraeli. "To be interested in the East was something bright young Westerners would find to be an all consuming passion," argues Said ("Introduction" 13), where they could not only reap the material benefits, but also seek adventure, adopt a colonial identity, and participate in consuming and producing Orientalist knowledge about the East and its "exotic" cultures and peoples.

to-store with little success. In early 1926, the same year that the company expanded its operations to India and incorporated its national subsidiary ("Dunlop in India"), James saw an advertisement in a London newspaper. Dunlop Rubber – "the first global multinational company" ("History") – was looking for "young men with management potential to go out to India as trainees" (RAL 6). At 21 and without significant prospects in Britain, Jamie applied, and was offered a position (RAL 6).

These are the human moments of empire. My great-aunt writes of her father, weighing the costs and benefits of moving to India:

> It was dreadfully difficult for him to make this decision: to leave his mother alone and his brother and sister, to go so far away. But he saw it as a real career opportunity, with the potential for earning enough to contribute to his mother's support and was, of course, excited by the adventure of such an exotic destination. (6)

This is an illustrative passage. James was not moving overseas with the conscious intention to participate in a larger imperial project of economic expansion and political rule, or with a desire to perpetuate racial inequalities in more tangible and intimate ways. He was looking for career opportunities – one of many who migrated to India and sent remittances back home, an understandable financial decision. That said, this was not just "any" job – it was one that tempted James with the prospect of "an exotic destination." His choices were made in the context of a culture flooded with Orientalist discourse, constructing India as inferior and backwards but also as mysterious, sensual, and romantic (Jouhki 1, 7), where "bright young Westerners" could find passion and find themselves (Said, "Introduction" 13). Materially, the upward mobility that my great-grandfather sought meant participating in *and benefitting from* particular imperial and racialized structures; his personal motivations and the larger systems are necessarily imbricated

and mutually dependent. His whiteness and Britishness (and maleness) opened the career opportunity to begin with, and would – when he accepted the job and migrated to Calcutta – make possible his rapid rise in Dunlop's managerial hierarchies and his newfound privilege on the imperial frontier.

Debates about the economics of colonial relations throughout the Raj are contentious and complex; rather than attempting a comprehensive account of the various positions, I will simply outline the arguments that inform my understanding of the context in which my great-grandfather worked. As David Washbrook suggests, colonial relations, through various means and manifestations, profoundly disrupted India's economic mechanisms and were unable to replace them with sustainable (or domestically beneficial) alternatives (73). The economy under the Raj prioritized resource extraction, and an export oriented and import (from Britain) dependent economy (Bagchi 86), in which corporations like Dunlop played a role. The idea of a "drain of wealth" from India to Britain has been a longstanding and important way to describe the functioning of British India:[59] arguably, "the capitalist economy in Britain had been built up, stage by stage, on the exploitation of Indian resources" (Rauf 50). This unequal relationship did advance Britain's economy, Washbrook states, even though the Jewel of the Empire was never *as* profitable as intended and was disappointing to "large sections of British economic enterprise [who] felt themselves unable to create the relations necessary to 'drain' *enough* profit out of India" (49; 58; 50, emphasis added).[60] Indeed, contradictions between strategic political interests

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[59] This analysis was foundational to Indian nationalist movements (Washbrook 44) and aligns with compelling "'world systems theories' [that] argue that development in the world's economic 'core' (effectively Europe and the US) depended upon the underdevelopment of the periphery" (Dilley 109).

[60] Historical claims that metropoles sometimes *lost* money in their colonies rather than gained it show only that, in certain contexts, "colonialism could be characterized by the search for

and those of private profiteers highlight the complexity of a colonial arena driven not only by the government but also – in fundamental ways – by "sub-imperialist groups" such as missionaries and, of relevance here, corporations (Dilley 108; 105). The colonial state's actions may not always have been in the interest of British capitalists (Gooptu and Peers 6), but Amiya Bagchi argues that the British Empire initiated contemporary neocolonialism, as the system "depended more on economic power … than on direct use of political power at every stage for obtaining the lion's share of the surplus of the dominated economies" (78).

The realities of profit extraction may not have been as "successful" or unidirectional as excessively simple models might indicate; as Douglas Peers and Nandini Gooptu argue, "the direct remit of imperialism was never as complete or systemic as its proponents and critics have argued" (2). However, to presume a set of mutual exchanges between similarly positioned players, or to deny the profound impact that colonialism did have on capitalist formations and other structures in India, is also dangerous. Despite their claims of restoring subjectivity to Indians in India's history, Partha Chatterjee finds these revisionist historiographic trends deeply suspicious (29): "there is something magical about a 'historical theory' that can with such ease spirit away the violent intrusion of colonialism and make all of its features the innate property of an indigenous history" (Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments* 32). Other accounts that claim neutrality – not by ignoring empire but by asserting that imperialism cannot be "seen any more as *necessarily* inducing inequality" (Roy 2, emphasis added) – manage to erase the profound

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economic and political advantage without concomitant *real* economic or political gains" (Nandy 125). The complexities of local engagements and global markets – and the many forces at work above and beyond the colonial government's agents and agenda – make the empirical evidence a hard-to-interpret place, but don't undo the immense inequality of the dominant power relations.

power differentials at play.[61] While nuance and complexity are crucial, work that does not condemn colonialism or acknowledge the power inequalities that it encompasses, allows colonial rule to be either sidelined from the picture altogether, or nostalgically framed as benevolent. Taken to the extreme, neoconservatives can then advocate for "the British empire's guardianship of the Indian economy as a model for the present" (Washbrook 45) rather than denounce it as a fundamentally unjust system. As Catherine Hall argues, the diversity and variety amongst different kinds and forms of colonialism, and the contradictions, complexities, and relationships within any given case, should not be interpreted as the lack of an overall logic of domination (7).

This logic of domination was set up to benefit some at the expense of others. For corporations (and individuals) seeking to make more profit, India was a tempting and often lucrative place to set up shop. Despite the complexities at a large scale and the diversity of experiences within and between each "group,"[62] there were tangible and substantial benefits available to the British in the colonies. As Buettner argues: "For those... falling below the highest levels of metropolitan society, time in India could provide career opportunities and salaries far more difficult to obtain at home, along with other trappings of power including numerous servants, honor, and prestige" (200). This was certainly the case for my great-grandfather, whose social, racial, and class status increased substantially during his time overseas.

Having migrated as a manager-trainee with Dunlop Rubber, he settled into life in British India, complete with moustache and motorcycle, sharing a flat in Calcutta with a couple of other

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[61] Colonialism is not *the only* source of exploitative relations or unequal power structures, but still needs to be analyzed – and, its current manifestations, resisted – as such.

[62] The "colonizers" and "colonized" are not homogenous, static, or natural categories. They are, however, categories in which colonial ideologies are heavily invested in producing and maintaining, and therefore – despite their constructed nature – ones that had profound consequences within colonial power matrices (Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge* 179).

recently arrived British men (RAL 8). Calcutta was the center of the "classic colonial business sector in India" (Tomlinson 117). The British business community there had close ties to the colonial political elite, and the Bengal Club – a prestigious and exclusive social club the likes of which my great-grandparents, along with many of their compatriots, would frequent for recreation and socializing (RAL 17) – was called "the unofficial headquarters of the Raj" (Roy 255). It was a very racially charged community – the aforementioned club, for instance, was itself known for its role in "fashioning a white British self'" (Ward 230). Stuart Ward explores how racial attitudes emerged in imperial settings:

> Ideas and assumptions about community and belonging that may only have been latent at home were thrown into sharper relief by the sheer, incomprehensible distance from the mother country, and the strange and often threatening encounter with indigenous peoples. (219)

While markers such as class, connections (or lack thereof) to Britain, education, accent, and racial ambiguity (i.e. perceived belonging or proximity to the highly stigmatized Anglo-Indian[63] community) certainly disrupted any uniformity amongst Europeans in India, these destabilizing differences made the British elite *more*, rather than less, invested in "maintain[ing] and polic[ing] boundaries which divide[d] them from less-privileged groups" (Buettner 74).

Over the next five years, my great-grandfather would advance into managerial positions with Dunlop, reportedly well respected by his superiors and colleagues (RAL 8). As his career advanced, he moved up the social and corporate structures of Calcutta, a fraught and complex landscape of race, business, and politics. Maria Misra argues that the "commercial British

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[63] When it appears in this chapter, "Anglo-Indian" describes people of mixed European and Indian ethnicity, in line with the term's contemporary usage.

perhaps outdid the official British [i.e. political, civil service, and military agents] in their conformity" (132) and investment in whiteness (141). In Calcutta, the relationship between European and Indian capitalists was "*particularly* unstable, distrustful, and antagonistic," more so than in the other large Indian cities (Roy 255, emphasis added). "Even though it would have been in their commercial interests to form alliances with dynamic Indian firms which could offer them expertise and capital," British corporations and businessmen continued to prioritize "the preservation of their racial exclusivity" instead of working with their Indian counterparts (Misra 124). Despite political pressure from nationalists (and from segments of the Raj eager to try to appease them), British businessmen resisted "indianization"[64] for decades, drawing on racialized tropes about the "lack of character" and untrustworthiness of Indians in general, and of Bengalis in particular (Misra 127). Even when firms and companies did reluctantly start to indianize, Indian recruits were almost universally stuck in junior or clerical roles, and considered "unsuitable" for promotion to managerial or senior positions (Misra 127–128);[65] they were also, Misra concludes, forced to assimilate to European norms and endure oppressive and racist work environments (131–132). The profound racial arrogance of the British business community throughout India – and especially in Calcutta – would, in the years leading up to decolonization, fuel the nationalist cause (Misra 135–136). I provide an overview of the racialization of British firms in India to contextualize my great-grandfather's work and also to mark the ways that his success in Dunlop was not just about his purported likability, dedication, and professional

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[64] Misra uses this term to refer to efforts to increase the proportion and influence of Indian vs. British employees in a given firm's corporate structure.

[65] While Indian people were (mostly) kept out of British firms and corporate management structures, they were heavily relied upon for "unskilled" (often dangerous and poorly paid) labour on plantations and in factories (Roy 236–237), including in the Sahaganj factory, "the first tyre manufacturing plant in Asia," opened by Dunlop in 1936, just outside of Calcutta ("Dunlop in India") (See Figure 5).

capacities. It was also facilitated (at the expense of the success of other qualified and hardworking individuals) by the ideological value attributed to (and therefore material benefit accrued through) his race and nationality.

Figure 5. Workers arriving at Dunlop's Sahaganj factory outside of Calcutta in the late 1930s (Dunlop Rubber Company (India) 4).

"Land of Wonderful Excesses":[66] Family life at an imperial frontier

While in Calcutta, James met Gwendolyn Muriel Newton Hancock. She had moved to India as a teenager, with her reportedly domineering and deeply religious mother, and her middle-class, Merchant Marine Captain father (RAL 10; 1). From the stories that my great-grandmother told, it seems that that her childhood was strict, lonely, and heavily disciplined, and that her parents' relationship was frequently troubled (RAL 1). By the late 1920s, however, she

[66] This quote captures the romance and exoticism (and appreciation?) with which my great-aunt remembers her upbringing in India (RAL 25).

had emerged into the social scene of well-to-do British India, and was considered "an acknowledged beauty, 'the belle of Calcutta'" (RAL 13). After a successful courtship, the two married on August 12th, 1932, at Saint Paul's Cathedral. Although perhaps influenced by nostalgia and a desire to present her parents in a good light, my great-aunt paints a portrait of a strong and happy partnership between the two; a vast collection of their often-daily correspondence still exists as a testament to a relationship that was certainly close and communicative (RAL 16; 18).[67] Soon after their marriage, Gwen became pregnant, ushering them into the complex and contested world of child rearing in the colonies.

There was substantial paranoia about raising children at imperial frontiers due to the perceived potential for racial contamination and degeneration (Buettner 30). This anxiety was symptomatic of a foundational fallacy of colonial thought: that "the boundaries separating colonizer from colonized were thus self-evident and easily drawn" (Stoler, "Carnal Knowledge" 178). Ann Laura Stoler has demonstrated that, in reality, this (terrifyingly ambiguous) boundary between colonizer and colonized had to be produced and policed through, in large part, "the discourse and management of European… reproduction, and… domestic arrangements" ("Carnal Knowledge" 178–179). She even notes that, in the late colonial order especially, the refrain – "'the health of nations is determined not on the battlefield but in the nursery' – was heard again and again" (*Education of Desire* 163).

The longevity of the Raj, with many families remaining for several generations, coexisted with the continual positioning of India as a part of the empire that was unsuitable for permanent white settlement (Buettner 81). This combination made India a perfect stage for the

[67] Perhaps, one day, I will study these letters: it would demand a massive amount of time and labour to make sense of them, however, and is more material than I could possibly work through and do justice to in this project.

aforementioned anxieties, and led to an extensive regime of discourse and regulation. "India was almost universally seen as a risky environment for rearing British children," so warnings, cautionary tales, and rigid advice regarding how to avoid the most corrupting effects of the subcontinent, proliferated (Buettner 28). Many experts recommended that children be sent back to Britain before adolescence to escape the "threats stemming form [India's] climate and indigenous population" (Buettner 28), and to ensure that their education, accent, cultural attributes, and character – which all acted alongside ancestry and appearance to define racial lines – would clearly mark their identities as British (74). While the expert opinions, anxieties, and norms did not wholly define or reflect the realities and lived experiences of British family life in colonial India, they certainly influenced and constrained people's choices.

My great-aunt's memories of her childhood contain hints of the doctrines that contextualized her upbringing. Her commonsensical and taken-for-granted comments often reference bigger structures and ideological constructs about children's place in racial and colonial matrices. "With the advent of the next 'hot weather'," she writes, for instance, "came the necessity of getting [her and her brother] into the hills" (21). The cooler climate of the higher altitudes may indeed have been more comfortable than the heat of the plains, and the anxieties that she remembers fixated on the "exotic and terrifying crop of potentially deadly diseases" that the hot plains weather produced and from which her parents wanted to protect her and her siblings (36). *And* other lurking anxieties may have prompted these choices as well, anxieties more about racial slippage than comfort and "health."[68] During the Raj, racial ideologies, through

[68] While writing this chapter, I noticed that many of my paragraphs were falling into a repetitive and perhaps reductive structure – yes, this memory needs to be respected, yes, this choice is understandable in the circumstances, BUT privilege, BUT structures of power, BUT hidden violences, BUT consequences borne by other people. Yes, in this case, they sent their kids to the

a complex logic of compatibility, fixated on the purportedly negative impact of the hot climate on European children's bodies, characters, and claims to whiteness (Buettner 30–34):

> …most came to view European acclimatization as either impossible or highly undesirable throughout the later imperial era. That members of the "master race" might acquire characteristics of indigenous subject populations that would enable them not only to survive but to thrive was unthinkable, yet at the same time an omnipresent fear. (Buettner 30–31)

It was risky rather than advantageous to adapt and learn to live in and with the heat of the plains, because it was seen as blurring what were supposed to be firm and natural boundaries, sliding treacherously towards racial ambiguity. The medical expertise therefore advised that children be sent to temperate climates (England, ideally, or hill stations, at the very least) at regular intervals so as to supposedly improve their health and vigor, and certainly attempt to maintain their racial status (Buettner 46). While I cannot assume to know my great-grandparents motivations, this context doubtless impacted their decisions to send their children to the hills and, at times, to Britain.

Household organization and domestic servants, Stoler argues, were also a "charged site of European anxieties" in the colonies:

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hills to keep them healthy, BUT they also sent them to the hills to keep them white. Etcetera. The "but" seemed to define the relationship: negating the first piece of the story, and closing – rather than opening – the possibly productive tension between them. It felt like nuance and complexity were being consumed by an overly simplistic and static word. I tried to experiment, then, with a different word: "and". They sent their kids to the hills to keep them healthy. And, with a (perhaps even unconscious) investment in racial purity and superiority, to keep them white. These motivations can exist, side-by-side, offering texture to a fraught experience without holding back an analysis of the ideological context and power structures in which my family was embedded.

> Servants policed the borders of the private, mediated between the "street" and the home, and occupied the inner recesses of bourgeois life; they were, in short, the subaltern gatekeepers of gender, class, and racial distinctions that by their very presence they transgressed. (*Carnal Knowledge* 133)

While this was the case across various colonial locales, cheap labour, British interpretations of caste divisions, and a desire for prestige, social status, and spectacle – as well as robust cultural production romanticizing the Raj – have made British Indian life and culture almost synonymous with a large domestic staff (Vernède 88–9, 96). Colonial common sense prescribed immense anxiety over the "unavoidable contact with native servants" and particularly about the damaging effects on children's health and character from close proximity with the colonized (Buettner 36–37). Concerns about negative cultural influence, overindulgence, confused language learning, and a lack of solid British role models in their day-to-day lives, Buettner argues, fed worries amongst commentators about how an upbringing in India would lead to "debility and falling short of 'English' qualities [due to] 'infectious' social contacts" (39–43).[69] The fact that many children felt care and delight in their relationships with their servants only incited further panic as this dangerously blurred what was supposed to be "an unbridgeable gap between rulers and ruled" (Buettner 40).

Servants certainly were part of my great-grandparents' household, and were an essentially universal presence in Raj households, even amongst the less elite or less affluent who would never have been able to maintain such a staff in Britain (Buettner 37). They can be glimpsed in

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[69] Buettner shows how large servants loomed in the cultural imaginary, and the contradictions in their supposed influence on British children, by examining the stark portrayals in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* and *A Little Princess*. The former showed India as having corrupted and spoiled the protagonist, while the latter painted a picture of an idyllic domestic life full of warmth and love (27).

the background of my great-aunt's memoirs: sometimes as unspoken presences (i.e. presumably watching the children so that their parents could get dressed up and go out in the evenings (17)), sometimes as cherished characters (their bearer Kanari and their ayah Mylie, in particular, are remembered with great fondness). She speaks with such gratitude about the time that she was quarantined at an army hospital for possible leprosy (sic) when "dear Kanari" came to care for her and keep her company until she was cleared of infection (RAL 34-35). My great-aunt treasures what she experienced as a playful and affectionate bond. Kanari, for his part, "may well have been fond of [his] employers' children" but nonetheless would doubtless have been acutely "aware of the distinctions dividing them and the importance of … accord[ing] with parental wishes" (Buettner 60). I wish I had access to his individual perspective, for Indian people who worked as Raj servants, of course, held diverse (and perhaps contradictory) views of the British families whom they served, "rang[ing] across the spectrum from fond admiration to bitter resentment" (Masani 6).

I wonder, also, how my great-grandparents, the heads of the household, felt towards their employees.[70] Class hierarchies positioned the servants in the household, to be sure, but in India, "religion, race, and gender issues all added special complications to the power structure" (Chaudhuri 558). Domestics in Britain were also "held…in low esteem" by their employers, Nura Chaudhuri argues, but "this perception of servants was in general further lowered in India because of the skin color of the indigenous population" (558). At one point, my great-grandparents enlisted a British governess, Miss Craske, to "give [the children] lessons and generally look after [them]" (RAL 20). This was a common move, even among British families

[70] I am particularly curious about Gwendolyn's experiences and perspectives as a white woman with "authority" over a diverse staff.

who trusted their Indian ayahs, driven by the perceived inadequacy of native servants to perform certain tasks of education and socialization, and the desire to bring European influence into raising their children (Buettner 54). The children did not appreciate her presence – "after an easygoing regime with devoted ayahs we did not take kindly to the strict and inflexible reign of a governess" (RAL 23); perhaps the racial differential had facilitated a comfortable degree of subservience?

Regardless, a desire for European (rather than Indian) influence was clear, and perhaps nowhere more so than when questions about education were at play. Doctrine had long been to send your kids back to Britain for their school years, and this was the practice amongst any family who could afford it for most of the duration of the Raj. "Leaving India for a metropolitan education became a rite of passage that positioned an individual within the… better-off community marked as 'European,'" while schooling in India came to indicate "domiciled, poorer, and racially ambiguous status" (Buettner 80).[71] Boys were usually prioritized, if needed (Buettner 97–98): my great-aunt notes that, a year before the whole family (unexpectedly) left India for good, her parents "began trying to secure a passage back to England for [her younger brother] who, they thought, needed to get established at a school in England and acquire a

[71] Many accounts emphasize the sacrifice of parents, and the loneliness of children, when Raj offspring were sent to distant British boarding schools, often not seeing their family for years at a time (Brendon Intro). While my great-aunt never experienced this (in large part because the war changed the ease of such arrangements), she does mention this "miserable fate" and echoes dominant framing of parental sacrifices (36-37). Certainly, such long separations would have been difficult, especially for children who would have had little choice in the matter. Alongside acknowledging this difficulty, Buettner intervenes in simplified "sacrifice" narratives: "Suggesting this was undertaken out of necessity because there were 'no schools' for them in India denies the extent to which sending children to Britain was a choice based on class and racial ideologies and aspirations (110)." Education in England was not unavoidable – it was desirable, because it helped to mark you, socially and racially, as firmly British, and untainted by India or Indians.

'proper' education" (23). Increased cost and risk during the early years of the war, however, forced even those elite British families who usually paid for a European education to instead send their children to schools in India (Brendon Ch 6: para 6). The pre-existing boarding schools had long been populated by Anglo-Indian and poorer white pupils who did not have access to education in Britain; they were therefore seen as unsuitable by elite families who feared the acquisition of the scorned "chi-chi" accent seen to mark ambiguous racialization and the potential loss of social status (Buettner 107–108). Instead, Buettner argues, brand new schools were established to cater to these families, such as the New School in Darjeeling (1941-1944), with "prohibitively high fees" to ensure that the pupils came from desirable social and racial classes (107–108). My great-aunt and uncle were themselves sent to the New School as children (RAL 21). Her memoir does not hint at the racialized and status-oriented motivations for her parents' choice of institution, which she may never have been aware of, but their attendance at the elite wartime schools in India do demonstrate the complex racial and imperial matrices in which they were embedded.

To do justice to the memoirs and memories from my family's time in India, I need to emphasize that my great-aunt looks back on her childhood with, primarily, joy and gratitude. From the children's perspective, at least, the family's time in India seems to have been one of adventure and discovery, warmth and care. Indeed, despite the professional and ideological panics about British children growing up "contaminated" in/by colonial spaces, the broader tendency from first person accounts has been for people to describe their Raj upbringings as "magical," delighting in their exposure to Indigenous culture and geography, and their indulgence from Indian servants (Buettner 57). Many children who grew up in the Raj share a "perennial nostalgia for the floral and fauna, and the timeless artifacts and customs of the

subcontinent" (Brendon Ch 6: para 5).[72] As argued earlier, the consistency of the body of work is itself discursively productive (Said, "Introduction" 13). In this case, a plethora of golden childhood fantasies about British India – often drawing on the same language – can claim authority, in the British cultural imaginary, over defining the Raj's legacy.

My great-aunt's memoir certainly participates in this oeuvre. She frequently talks about the devotion of her Indian caregivers (23, 25) and the fun that could be had as a child in "India, land of wonderful excesses" (25). She speaks of excursions into the jungle to receive chai and chapattis from generous village strangers (26-27), the many "monuments and tombs and palaces to visit on weekend expeditions" (29), riding horses (30, 38) and building forts (32, 37), and one beautiful visit to the Taj Mahal at moonrise – "magical; unearthly; beauty beyond word" (41). "Life then was immeasurably rich and varied and fun" (29), she writes:

> At a time when children were usually closely and strictly supervised we were given an amazing amount of freedom… This independence was a gift beyond all value: we recognized it and were grateful. It permitted us to get to know the villagers and small farmers in the surrounding hills, listen to their stories of tiger, leopard and evil spirits and experience their amazing generosity and hospitality. The "Missy Baba" and the "Chota Sahib" were always welcomed warmly wherever we went. (RAL 33-34)

Perhaps more so than other children of the Raj, my great-aunt and her siblings were allowed to explore independently, and roam outside of the confines of the British elite, giving them a different perspective on the country of their birth. The memories of adventure, warm welcomes,

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[72] Zareer Masani acutely exposes a disturbing pattern from these memory formations:

> In this mythical, imperial frontier, with its swashbuckling heroes, lost jewels and far pavilions, Indians themselves have tended to dwindle into colourful but insignificant specks on an exotic landscape, figuring either as opulent and scheming potentates or as noble savages tamed into loyal soldiers and servants. (5)

seamless access, and exotic cultural destinations, however, do reflect discursive patterns common to Raj memoirs. They are also representations of a childhood that my great-aunt genuinely looks back upon with fondness.

In addition to the discursive resonances apparent in her telling, I want to make visible the material structures that enabled the joyful experiences recounted. What allowed my great-grandparents to have a glamorous evening "adult" life of fancy dresses and elite parties (RAL 17), and then take their kids on picnics next to glittering ruined palaces on the weekends (RAL 29)? A profound amount of domestic and child-rearing labour, performed by servants who – regardless of their feelings towards their employers and employers' children (Gratitude for their jobs? Resentment at their status? Fondness? Obligation? Care? All of these and more?) – were in lower positions of power in the pertinent (classed, racialized, colonial) matrix of domination.[73] Their employers in the household were part of the same elite British class that ruled their country, a complex synergy. How much were they paid for their work and "loyalty"? What choices did they have? What options were available to the ayah's daughter, Jethi, only a couple of years older than my great-aunt (RAL 34)? The contrast between their lives – girls growing up in the same household but on opposite sides of deep colonial divides – would have been stark.

Raj memoirs as a whole, Buettner argues, fail to notice or acknowledge such "underlying political and social inequalities" (262). While this gap is clearly part of what motivates my analysis, my great-aunt does, at moments, offer some (albeit circumscribed) reflection about the tense relationship between British and Indian people under the Raj. She expresses gratitude to her beloved bearer Kanari for teaching her "the manners appropriate for use with strangers when

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[73] Patricia Hill Collins describes a "matrix of domination" as a "historically specific organization of power in which social groups are embedded," constituted by a given set of intersectional oppressions (228).

one is seeking hospitality" (RAL 27), and for nurturing competencies around navigating the cultural divide. Without such guidance, she says, she would "doubtless have caused offence on numerous occasions and topics" (27). At the same time as she acknowledges the insult that the British enacted with their ignorance and rudeness, however, she distances herself and her family from that pattern. They were "the good ones," the narrative goes. And while she and her brother may well have been more informed and polite than other white children, and may have been more conscious of racial arrogance, there is something inadequate about appearing more respectful in the midst of the same structures of power. My great-aunt attributes the welcome that she and her brother received when they wandered through the bazaar (25) or stumbled on villages in the hills (27) to their politeness (and the "open-hearted kindness" of the Indian people (27)); but how did their *privilege* act alongside their politeness to facilitate their "welcome"? The compassion they received may well have been genuine (who can tell?) *and*, given the ever-present "possibility that acquiescence by the colonized might not reflect free will" (Buettner 262), it may also have been circumscribed and facilitated by an expected and perhaps disciplined degree of subservience towards the "Sahib's" precious children.

While I am trying to interrupt stories of British India that ignore power and colonialism, my own life is far from "untainted." Because it occurs through the networks of global capitalism rather than in the intimacy of my home, I do not need to think about the ways that my quality of life still depend on other peoples' (often underpaid and unsafe) labour. While colonial structures of privilege, exclusion, and oppression are perhaps less visible in 21st century Toronto than they

were in 20th century India, they are no less *present*. I ground my analysis in compassion and the many commonalities between our positions, rather than in scorn and distance.[74]

Risks, resources, and an Empire at war

My family's lives were of course impacted by the outbreak of World War II, as were the lives of millions of other diversely situated and diversely implicated people. Although the Pacific theatre has "long been neglected in the literature of World War II" (Daugherty 2), the war had profound consequences for and in India; as Yasmin Khan states in her stunning new book, "Britain did not fight the Second World War, the British Empire did" (xiii). The Raj's unilateral decision to go to war – without consulting the increasingly powerful (although antagonistically divided) nationalist political bodies – was blatantly undemocratic and treated India "as a passive pawn of British policy" (Rauf 51). In a context of long standing nationalist organizing and anti-colonial resistance, this move was not well-received, despite sympathy with the war effort from many Indian leaders early on (Khan 10). Very quickly, the fragile equilibrium of "cooperation" was abandoned as even the façade of "sovereignty… was sacrificed in the name of war" (Khan 140). The way that the war played out "grievously lacked legitimacy with colonial subjects in South Asia" (Khan 321) and it had profound effects on British society, Indian society, and the future of empire.

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[74] This project has challenged me to develop a relational approach to this history. When the details of my family's role – or of the history of the Raj generally – were so patchy, it was easier to dismiss my ancestors as misguided colonialists, to shake my head at their lack of ethical clarity, to feel ashamed of their unpalatable involvement in an archaic and shameful violent structure. I now feel less able to honestly distance myself from them and their privileges. I don't see my ancestors as more right or as less complicit in colonial violence – indeed, I now know more about the ways in which they were actively engaged in it. But I hold more intimately the tension between scathing critique and disturbing familiarity.

My family was spending a brief period in England in 1939 when, my great-aunt remembers, "war became imminent and hurried arrangements had to be made for our return to India" (20). "India soon became a site of escape and release from war-torn Britain" (2), Khan notes, and – protected by servants and unfettered by strict rationing – "[t]he colonial class felt indulged and fortunate compared to their relatives in Britain" (3). In the early days of the war, the British in India (and the growing Indian elite) were able to continue the "routine business of life" with relatively little interference (Khan 4). However, especially in the later years of the war, with rapidly rising prices and the increasingly tangible threat of the Pacific front, wartime began to take its toll – "we found that war would change our lives quite dramatically" (20), my great-aunt remembers. The family moved to Delhi, "where an acute housing shortage prevailed, due to the large influx of military personnel" (RAL 23), and the children were pulled from their boarding school: "[o]ur father was concerned about the rapidity of the Japanese advance through Burma towards India, and as Darjeeling lay right in the path he wanted us out of any danger" (RAL 23). Abdul Rauf argues that the possibility of a Japanese invasion into eastern India was the subject of "exaggerated fears … and fanatic rumours" (55), but – uncalled for or not – the threat loomed very real at the time (Khan 93).

Certainly, the war had consequences for my great-grandfather's career, as he shifted from the business sector into the official machinery of the Raj (RAL 21). I do not have as many details as I would like about the specifics of his work, but his daughter's memories shed some light on the role he played. As the war began, my great-aunt remembers, "[her] father was to be co-opted into the Government of India… as Controller of Rubber" (20). Rubber was "a vital commodity of which there was not enough" (RAL 20-21), and it was in heavy demand for supplying the Allies' militaries. "[T]he loss of the Malayan rubber plantations to the Japanese resulted in an

all-out effort to grow rubber in India" (RAL 30), and my great-grandfather oversaw this project. My great-aunt mentions joining her father on a trip to a rubber plantation where they were trying out a new species, *"Cryptostegia Grande Flora*, [which] looked especially promising and was being closely watched" (30).[75] As John Tully argues, successful tropical agriculture and rubber production during this period "relied on the super-exploitation of the estate workers," clearly marked by a "sharp cleavage of color and class" (244). Exploitation is not unique to situations of colonial rule, but I nonetheless want to highlight the "pure force" upon which colonial (economic, ideological, etc.) systems rely (Fanon in Tully 244) and the immense costs hiding behind these familial involvements.

My great-grandfather was later, according to my great-aunt,[76] "given the huge responsibility of supplying all troops operating in India and Burma, as Deputy Director General of Supply [and] later [as] the Director" (20). While I have little information about his personal activities during this service, a book published in 1945 notes: "the organization of supplies for all requirements of the Defence Services has been the task of the specially created Supply Department of the Government of India which places war orders to the value of millions of pounds a month" (Hartog 87). The resupply effort for the China-Burma-India stage of World War II was a complex and crucial part of the Allies' military apparatus (Daugherty 20–23). India supplied Britain with millions of soldiers (Simha), but also – as part of this massive project – with enormous resources (rubber, cotton, jute, and others (Hartog 87–88)), land (for air fields,

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[75] The Allies' ultimate solution to the supply crisis provoked when "the lightening advance of the Japanese armies into Southeast Asia cut off their supply of natural rubber from Sumatra and Malaya [was] to launch colossal projects to build *synthetic* rubber plants" (Tully 280, emphasis added).

[76] Unlike his work at Dunlop and as the Controller of Rubber ("Personal Pars"), I have not yet been able to confirm these Director positions with outside sources.

factories, and other military infrastructure (Khan 163)) and manufacturing labour (Khan 84).[77] While some industrialists (including some Indian-owned companies[78] alongside British-run and multinational firms) made huge profits (Khan 85), there were also costs to the war supply apparatus. The government seizure of tens of thousands of acres of land and the forced evacuation of 300,000 homes for the war effort contributed to a devastating set of circumstances in Bengal: "there is little doubt that the members of many of these families became famine victims in 1943," reported the Famine Inquiry Commission (Khan 163–164). The unfolding of WWII in India – with decisions made from above and immense costs paid from below – starkly exhibit the workings of Empire.

Khan sees the war itself as just, "a necessary but painful corrective to the rising tide of facist and expansionist politics, which threatened the rights of millions of people" (xiv). The Raj, however, mismanaged the war politically, strategically, and ethically (see Khan for a detailed analysis). Exposing its inherently unequal and undemocratic nature, and leading to disastrous and often deadly consequences for tens of thousands of Indian people, the way the Raj handled the war arguably paved the way for the imminent end of British rule in India: "the timing of decolonization relied heavily on the damage done to the structures of the state by the war, and by

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[77] "After years of drawing on the empire for raw materials in exchange for manufactured goods, Britain now needed its colonies to provide ready-made products: guns, uniforms, paper, steel, leather boots, [and others]," Khan establishes. In fact, "[w]ithin three years, India would be producing as much for war supply as Australia, New Zealand and South Africa combined" (Khan 84).

[78] Given historiographic trends that Nicholas Dirks views as profoundly misguided, he clarifies, regarding this point, that "the salience of the historical structures of colonial rule cannot be trivialized by pointing to a handful of Indian 'capitalists' who managed to secure wealth for themselves during colonial times" (101).

the empire's complete lack of legitimacy when the conflict finally ended" (xvi).[79] Right after the war, my great-grandfather was "rewarded for his efforts by being appointed a Commander of the British Empire" (RAL 20), even as the formal empire – having lost even the illusion of legitimacy – was slowly crumbling.[80] [81]

Decolonization: Tales, travels, and transitions

The end of the Raj was a complicated time for those who were directly part of it, involving personal shifts concomitant with political ones. The British had to "make myths as fast as they unmade colonies" (Darwin in Buettner 263), and those who had been part of those colonial structures had to reconceptualize what the Raj had been in a new light, often aiming to protect their personal investments and involvements in the now collapsed colonial structure from being discredited. Even as they made new meaning from their time in India, these returning British also had to navigate new geographic and social realities, and understand their identities as *ex*-colonials.

Narratives of benevolence have long been part of the ideologies of British imperialism (Burton 40). "Colonialism was not seen as an absolute evil" (129), Ashis Nandy contends, and

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[79] Khan argues that the war impacted the *timing* of Indian Independence, which was far from inevitable even as of 1939, but it certainly wasn't the only factor – she doesn't want to undermine the "considerable achievement of the nationalists [and] their sustained resistance to the Raj" (xvi).

[80] My great-aunt celebrates her father's achievement, and notes that "[t]he medal will be with the letters and the Deed of Grant is hanging on my study wall" (RAL 20). This is how family archives are "organized" – notes and boxes and study walls. Information passed on to the next generation so that things are less likely to get lost in the turnover of our lives.

[81] The Order of the British Empire (with the possible ranks, in increasing order of prestige, of Member, Officer, or Commander) still exists, and the archaic language seems to support Buettner's argument that Britain is uniquely (or perhaps just most explicitly) unashamed, even celebratory, of its imperial past (268). According to a list leaked to the BBC in 2012, however, hundreds of people have turned down these honours, often citing their criticism of government actions and anti-imperialist sentiments as their motivation (Lyall).

the Raj saw itself as a civilizing "agent of progress" (128). This argument was, of course, entirely dependent on an elaborate "national-imperial ideology" of British moral and racial superiority (Burton 40). Particularly in the post-imperial moment, many of those involved in the Raj – unable to ignore nationalist and anti-colonial critique – explicitly aligned themselves with this generous idea of what their role in India had been, quieting any "personal anxiety" about colonial wrongdoings (Buettner 259). To inoculate their depiction of the Raj as fundamentally righteous, personal post-independence accounts often included bracketed acknowledgements of anti-imperialist critiques while still "extol[ling] [their] ancestors' (and [their] nation's) heroism, accomplishments, and good intentions in the subcontinent" (Buettner 258). "Colonial exploitation was [seen as] an incidental and regrettable by-product" (Nandy 129) – neither inevitable in, nor integral to, the colonial system or ideology.

My great-aunt seems to echo an understanding of empire as being, at its best, benevolent and courteous. Indeed, an emphasis on being "decent" and "honourable" seem to have been a frequent refrain of my great-grandparents' approach to parenting at a colonial frontier: "Behaving badly to natives was a Bad Show; we were in their country and were its supposed leaders, it behooved us to behave ourselves accordingly. We were not permitted, ever, to be rude to servants…" (RAL 33). To "behave badly to natives" would not reflect well on them personally, but – more importantly – it would not reflect well on the British race as "leaders" of India. In a telling moment, my great-aunt reflects on the tutelage received from one of her servants about cultural norms and manners, and imagines how things could have turned out better with more sensitivity:

> Such a simple thing – understanding another culture's social mores – and if only every British official in India had had a Kanari at his elbow to direct him away from causing

> insult, showing him how one action would provoke anger and another would smooth the path of coexistance, the history of the British in India would have been very different. (27)

Certainly, some cultural humility and an effort to avoid causing offense are desirable aspirations when in "someone else's country"; her comments reflect a degree of self-awareness and doubtless warranted criticism of the inconsiderate behavior of (other?) white people. However, I find it noteworthy that she gestures to "insult" as the reason that peaceful coexistence between colonizer and colonized was not possible, imagining that politeness could have mended the Raj's fundamentally unjust hierarchy.[82] In this view, racial and colonial violence in its many forms (economic, physical, ideological, cultural, etc.) – what Richard Gott calls the "routine horror of the Empire" – can be benignly sidelined or ignored altogether (108–109).[83]

Reflecting on their time in British India, my great-aunt refers to the sacrifices of her parents and their compatriots: "People rarely appreciate the appalling cost paid by parents for the privilege of serving in India. Every hill-station and railway halt has its cemetery; these tell stories of dreadful losses, heroically borne" (36). Her comments are grounded in her experience, and, indeed, the British working and living in India experienced many risks and costs. And yet, the emphasis on their "heroically borne" traumas positions them as generously motivated by the "greater" good of imperialism and, implicitly, as sacrificing themselves to bring civilization to the "natives"; "clearly, however, their activities in the subcontinent were anything but altruistic"

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[82] The reformist agenda present in these words – that the system would work just fine if people could be "nicer" or more understanding – is an attitude that continues to appear and undermine demands for structural change.

[83] I do wonder how my great-grandparents' assessment of the costs of empire would have differed. While they may have felt more invested in colonial ideologies and structures, they may also, as adults in the Raj, have had a less blinkered perspective.

(Buettner 16). Furthermore, as Janaki Nair stresses, the frequently circulated idea that it was British officials and families who paid the "price of empire" serves to "trivialize the price paid by the colony" (in Buettner 16). For all the talk of hardship (and the real, horrific losses), they could have left the colonial stage at any point, and chose not to. Clearly there was a lot – financial, social, and cultural capital, for instance – that they were getting out of their posting in India.

Ex-colonials did not just retroactively construct understandings of their service, they also had to "describe" and interpret the *end* of the Raj. My great-aunt narrates her family's last days in India (late 1945):

> [R]eligious and ethnic factions were at each other's throats and the campaign to "free" India from British rule was getting ugly. We took the train right across the country to Bombay. It was a scary time. Already trains were becoming targets and every day one heard of massacres of hundreds of travellers when a train was attacked by one or the other religious group. (41)

From her perspective, the transition was from stability and order, to chaos and violence. This (scary and experientially challenging) shift informs her assessment of anti-colonial resistance (note her skepticism of the "'free' India" movement). Her narrative about the end of the Raj even seems to offer retrospective justification for colonial rule, seeing its collapse as coinciding with a turn to "savagery": "It is almost impossible for me to equate the warmth and tolerance of these open-hearted and simple people with the callous savagery displayed by those who, a few years later, attacked trains and massacred the passengers - all in the name of religion" (27). This period of the subcontinent's history and the violence of partition is not a topic that I can even attempt to cover (although I would note that the departing British did not bear the brunt of the "massacres"

of the late 1940s). I am interested, however, in the work that is performed by the stark contrast that is established between the beauty of India's "golden age" under colonial rule, and the violence and disorder of decolonization. Such a comparison erases the violence that permeated the colonial system, albeit in ways that were invisible or unimportant to a child growing up in the colonial elite. It also assumes that the British acted as a preventative antidote to native divisions and bloodshed, rather than acknowledging that various aspects of the colonial structure, as well as particular actions by British rulers (Panigrahi 5), contributed to partition and the violence it involved. Without glorifying nationalist movements or the bloodiness of the late 1940s, there are clearly dangerous consequences to conceptualizing the "end" of (formal) colonialism as the end of civility itself.

From Bombay, the family boarded the S. S. Burma and set sail for Liverpool (see Figure 6). "I was always rather irritated by the references to Going Home," my great-aunt writes, "it was not 'home' for me, or for my brothers" (42). Words like "displacement" and "forced migration" have different valence when those "fleeing" are part of a colonial state apparatus, and the impetus for departure is a rising tide of anti-colonial resistance. But nonetheless, and especially for children, the sudden departure from everything you had ever known would have been stark, scary, and populated by sad departures from familiar people and places.[84] "Very

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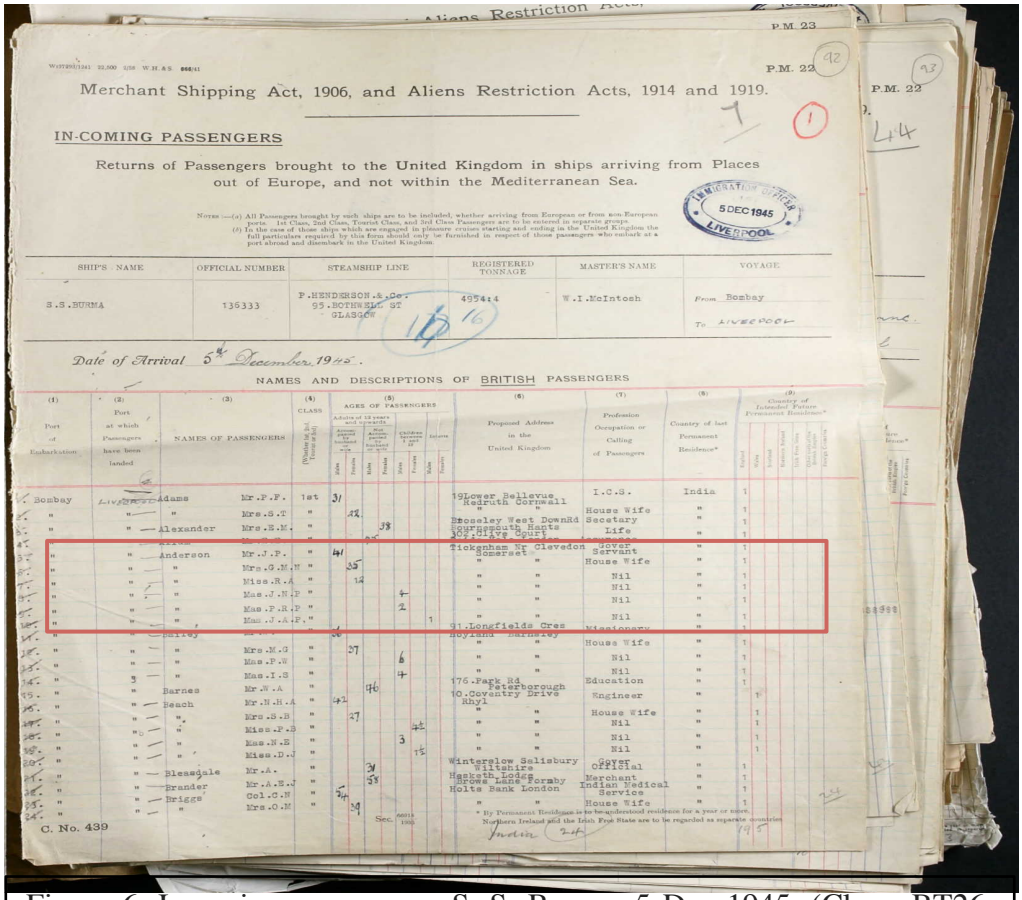
[84]My great-aunt reflects on leaving the beloved servants who had been so central to her upbringing:

> I often wonder what happened to [Kanari], in that chaotic post-Independence period. He had been provided with a good post and a pension that would tide him over bad times, but I wonder what he thought of all the Sahibs running away from the troubles, taking all their armaments with them and leaving their people unprotected. I fear he cannot have had a very high opinion of us, though I hope he had affectionate memories of us, his "chota babbas." (35)

This compelling quote demonstrates a combination of care and imperial paternalism for "their people." Reflections on these relationships offers personal texture to larger narratives of

miserable I was about the whole thing," she writes, "Not only leaving India and Jethi, but my beloved Stella [her horse] and the faithful Kanari: all to be left to return to this place that everyone called 'home' of which I had only the vaguest and most dismal of memories" (RAL 40). Furthermore, like many migrations, this one provoked questions about national affiliations and belonging. "It sometimes feels odd," my great-aunt reflects, "being fundamentally British, to have spent so little time actually living in England, in fact to have spent less time there than in either India or Canada, and I do not feel particularly rooted in any of them" (43). Rootlessness is, perhaps, yet another side effect of the transnational circuits of empire.



Merchant Shipping Act, 1906, and Aliens Restriction Acts, 1914 and 1919.

IN-COMING PASSENGERS

Returns of Passengers brought to the United Kingdom in ships arriving from Places out of Europe, and not within the Mediterranean Sea.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER 5 DEC 1945 LIVERPOOL

SHIP'S NAME	OFFICIAL NUMBER	STEAMSHIP LINE	REGISTERED TONNAGE	MASTER'S NAME	VOYAGE
S.S.BURMA	136333	P.HENDERSON.S.Co. 95.BOTHWELL ST GLASGOW	4974 4	W.I.McIntosh	From Bombay To LIVERPOOL

Date of Arrival 5th December 1945.

NAMES AND DESCRIPTIONS OF BRITISH PASSENGERS

C. No. 439

Figure 6. Incoming passengers, S. S. Burma, 5 Dec 1945. (Class: BT26; Piece: 1212; Item: 92. UK, Incoming Passenger Lists, 1878-1960.

decolonization, and I wonder how, indeed, Kanari and my family's other staff felt about the departure of their employers and the other British colonials.

The transition back overseas was also a transition into a different social context and social position. Colonial India afforded higher incomes and more lavish lifestyles to middle-class Britons than they had access to in Britain. Moving back home was a stark change, and former residents of the Raj made "frequent reference to their 'comparative poverty at home'" (Buettner 200; 202). Particularly after the war – the time that my family moved back – the lifestyles possible in Britain were constrained by high living costs and a lack of affordable domestic labour (Stockwell 287). The experiences of my great-grandmother, who, "of course, had never cooked a meal in her life [and] was now faced with feeding five children, a husband, a Nanny and, often, a Mother-in-Law" (RAL 48) demonstrates how the shift in household organization was felt in profoundly gendered ways. My great-aunt's recollections of those early days are full of the immense work that the family needed to perform in order to "render… the house habitable" (45), maintain the household and property (48), grow vegetables (44), and care for livestock (47), among other tasks.[85] In those post-war years, "all food was rationed and [they] had many mouths to feed" (44). Without negating that hardness or the "class shock" that came with the return to the metropole, some perspective is also important; like most other returning colonials, my family's "standard of living far exceeded that of the vast majority of the British population" (Buettner 202). My great-grandparents were able to buy a Victorian country house that, although run down, was large, attached to acres of land, and was – through their labour – eventually polished and furnished with carpets and paintings, a piano and a mahogany dining set, and more (RAL 44-45). My great-grandfather returned to his pre-war employment with the rubber company, this time at their central office – Fort Dunlop – in Birmingham (RAL 43). My family

[85] Although not to simplify, my great-aunt reflects on auction-hopping to furnish their new home as "some of the happiest [days] I spent with my mother" (45); not all "labour" is unpleasant or unwanted.

may well have felt the stark difference in their new, metropolitan household arrangements and class positioning, but they were far from impoverished.

There was another major difference between India and Britain that, although no less salient, was less explicitly spoken about – the contrast in racial context. The change from a majority non-white society to 1940s Britain would have been noticeable – "I was unnerved by the presence of so many white faces all in one place" (46), my great-aunt writes. The shift was more than numeric; it would have been a change in relative social status and in the very meaning of their whiteness as well. Whiteness, as a dominant racial category, is often left uninterrogated and naturalized, but it is an explicit marker on the imperial frontier, identifying the British "as rulers rather than ruled" (Buettner 199). As Buettner articulates:

> Even those situated beneath the higher echelons of British-Indian society enjoyed greatly enhanced prestige and opportunities because of their racial status and national affiliation to the imperial power. Upon returning to the metropole, however, they shared this symbol of imperial privilege with nearly everyone. (199)

White privilege was less immediately tangible in a majority-white context, and this may have shifted their sense of self in relation to their society, and their day-to-day experiences of power structures. Perhaps this "loss" contributed to my great-aunt's life-long sense of attachment to the "colonial way of life" (RAL 43).

Conclusions: Legacies, inheritances, and a family at home in empire [86]

What remains from this history in British India? The impact of the British Empire on South Asia (and the current iterations of neocolonial structures) is a whole body of literature that

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[86] This language resonates with, and reframes, the title of Catherine Hall and Sonya O Rose's edited collection, *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World*.

I will not attempt to do justice to here, but one that must be understood in political, economic, and cultural terms, at the very least. What I have more intimate access to, and which Sarah Stockwell argues is also worthy of analysis, is colonization's (and decolonization's) "impact on Britons whose lives took them overseas" (282). In line with "post-colonialism's interest in locating the 'post-colonial' among colonizers as well as colonized" (Stockwell 270), and in an effort to offer textured personal accounts of empire, I want to explore some of the intergenerational traces, the reproduced legacies, of my family's Raj past.

For many members of my family, the most palpable connections are direct and relational, actual memories of actual people. While I never knew my great-grandparents, my mother remembers them from her childhood with great fondness. Her slightly distant Nana, brushing her long hair on the porch of their farmhouse, playing mah jong at the table.[87] Her Vava, warm, affectionate, so present with his grandchildren. He would take the kids on long rambling walks over the farm fields in Quebec and by the river near their house in Ottawa, enchanting them with magical (and now forgotten) stories, walking-stick always in hand. It was not until after they had died that my mother became more consciously aware of their positions in particular historical contexts; she's expressed regret that she never had a chance to have an adult relationship with

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[87] My mother most clearly remembers the sound of the tiles clicking against each other. So do I. I never learned the rules of the game, but my mother, sister and I would play a solitaire version, mostly to enjoy the tactile sensation of those same beautiful ivory pieces, stored in that little faux-leather satchel. I am struck by the continuity, the memory somehow reinscribed, generation after generation, when I stumbled on my great-aunt's recollection:

> I do have scattered memories of earlier houses [in Delhi], one of which we shared (having the ground floor) with a large Indian family who lived upstairs. The ladies of this family played mah jong every day, and I sometimes went up to watch the slim brown hands moving among the ivory tiles coloured with Chinese symbols, the only sounds the clash of bangles as they flashed and glinted across the table and the click of the tiles as they were moved about in play. It was here that our mother learned the game but never found other European women to play with. (23)

her grandparents, never had the chance to ask them about their pasts, to try to come to an understanding of their involvements, to unpack the legacies they had left her.

Sometimes it is material objects that bring the past into the present, visceral manifestations of memory. When I was maybe eleven, visiting my grandparents' Ottawa valley farmhouse one summer, I was looking through the closet of the bedroom where my sister and I always stayed. I stumbled on a fancy-looking sword, a beautiful sculpted hilt, the blade covered with dents and scratches; clearly, it had not always been tucked away in storage.[88] It was my grandfather's father's sword, I was told, from his time in the Raj. This was one of the encounters that first crashed this history into my awareness. It had, until that moment, lurked in a more indistinct and fuzzy corner of my mind, a piece of my family and my past that I had not had to consciously or critically engage. There are other bits and pieces of "India" in my family's possession, artifacts passed down and residing in the homes of my grandfather and his siblings across the Ottawa valley. Steamer trunks embossed with initials, for instance, treasured for their connection to a particular place and history, for their role in a rich family lore.

There are other traces as well, texts and touchstones held dear even these generations later, which I have only noticed upon reflection. Who can say how directly linked they are to my family's time in the British Raj,[89] but cultural artifacts that circulated in my extended family and influenced my upbringing certainly bear the mark of empire. There are words that have lasted

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[88] My mother also has childhood memories of this sword – she recalls the sensation of drawing it from it from its sheath with rich tactile detail. I have no evidence that it was ever used in combat, but both of us populated its history with dramatic speculation.

[89] Not restricted to the colonial frontiers, imperial texts were a profound part of British culture more broadly; recent historiographical and sociological work has focused on "the impact of colonialism's cultures on metropole as well as on the colonized" (Howe 2).

from British India, twisted from their original context and inserted into a new one.[90] For my mother, a key memory is the smell of curried eggs in the morning, the kind of traditions that emerge from attempts to taste the familiar flavours of "home" (India) after returning "home" (Britain), familiar attachments to curry without the materials, knowledge or experience to recreate what they had gotten used to. One of the most vivid (and still cherished) memories of my childhood times with my grandfather involved dramatic readings of *The Jungle Book*, with stories of Mowgli and Shere Khan sending shivers up our spines. This was my first image of India, the Raj-informed imaginings of Rudyard Kipling, "chief apologist of the Imperialist elite" and firm believer in British superiority (Cody).[91] *A Passage to India* – another text frequently referenced when discussing colonial constructions of India – was shared with me on another of those childhood visits, my grandfather's favourite movie. As Said argues, novels (and other parallel representations) reflect and produce political realities, and need to be seen as connected to "the imperial process of which they were manifestly and unconcealedly a part" (*Culture and Imperialism* xiv).[92] The cultural texts that I was exposed to throughout my childhood were part of this discourse of Orientalism, "tales of the Orient which claimed to successfully to represent it

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[90] At my grandparents' farm, for instance, we would often use the phrase "to throw it over the khud side" if we wanted to get rid of something – I had always imagined it spelled "cud-side," and had pegged the phrase to Ottawa Valley vernacular. It dates back earlier in my family tree, however, "khud" having been used to refer to a ravine or cliff in British India.

[91] Kipling's reliance on ideas of the moral necessity of empire (to bring civilization and stability to "dark places?) (Cody) reflect a genre of supposedly benevolent imperialism that seems to resonate with some of the beliefs about empire discernible in this branch of my family.

[92] I am not arguing that these cultural texts are without merit because of the imperial discourses that they reproduce. As Said himself qualifies:

> To believe that politics in the form of imperialism bears upon the production of literature… is by no means equivalent to saying that culture is therefore a demeaned or denigrated thing. Quite the contrary: … we can better understand the persistence and the durability of saturating hegemonic systems like culture when we realize that their internal constraints upon writers and thinkers were productive, not unilaterally inhibiting. ("Introduction" 22)

[and] depended on a set of binary oppositions between Europeans and Orientals which always worked to the detriment of the latter" (Hall 14). An Orientalist gaze eastwards is one of the legacies that have been passed down within my family.

Alongside these memories and traces, I feel that my extended family's *culture* more broadly entails certain imperial ways of being, certain feelings of being "at home in empire." Many ex-colonials from the Raj would end up in imperial destinations (Buettner 242), just as my great-grandparents would eventually retire to Jamaica:[93] "once established, the pattern of imperial migrations resulting in empowerment was likely to remain part of family life, even if this also meant rootlessness" (Buettner 190). My great-aunt is self-aware and self-reflective about this attachment to a certain mode of living. Leaving India was a huge transition in her life and her family's position in the world. She notes that she never really felt as comfortable in Britain or, later, in Canada – "India… has the strongest pull on my heart" (43). Many years later, her son moved to Kenya, and she and her husband spent a lot of time visiting there:

> [Kenya] began to feel more and more like the place I really belonged and today … it is still the place where I feel most at home. That this has much to do with the colonial way of life and was thus a reflection of my childhood experience has not escaped me, nevertheless the idea of Kenya as it used to be feels like the home of my heart. (RAL 43)

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[93] This imperial at-home-ness was distinct from what they found here in Canada, Buettner clarifies:

> Attitudes concerning racial privilege developed after time in India, moreover, played a role in leading others to choose retirement in settler colonies… There, as in India, they could remain part of a small and empowered community within a predominantly non-white population, whereas in Canada or other "white" dominions they merged with the majority of the inhabitants in racial terms just as they did in Britain. (242)

As my great-aunt recognizes, in an astute moment of autoethnographic analysis, my family felt at home with/in this "colonial way of life". This comfort and ease is an inheritance with which I need to grapple.

Although itself a settler state, Canada – where my great-grandparents moved their family from Britain – did not offer that lifestyle. The Ottawa Valley, where my grandfather, great-aunt, and one of their brothers still live, was a dramatically different cultural milieu for the next generation to grow up in – "colonial," but not in the same way. Stories from India were passed down, however, freshly embellished with each repetition. As a child growing up there, my mother remembers invoking her family's connections to the "Orient" as a way to claim proximity to the "exotic," the large exciting world far from rural eastern Ontario. I can discern this pattern in my extended family even now: a feeling of being more cultured, through articulated ties to Britain, more worldly, through mythic ties to empire. There was perhaps an investment in maintaining a sense of distinction: for instance, the desire for their children to not pick up the "Ottawa Valley twang."[94] My mother always thought of her Nana and Vava as rich, but my great-grandparents upper-class cultural bearing was not necessarily matched by material wealth; rather, they had cultivated a sense of themselves when they were part of the colonial elite and held onto ghosts of these habits and attitudes long after their social status and material realities had shifted.

Conversations with my mother also helped me clarify my participation in a lineage of shifting emotional responses to our shared past. Many of the contradictory feelings she describes are deeply familiar, making up a fraught affective inheritance. Susan Luhmann talks about

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[94] It is fascinating to note the parallels between these anxieties about undesirable accents (on lines of class, social status, and ruralness) and those experienced a generation earlier in India (regarding class, social status, and race).

complex "affective inheritances" grappled with by the descendants of Nazi perpetrators or supporters; in those circumstances, it seems, repression, silencing, and denial characterize familial legacies (Luhmann 116–7). In this very different context, denial is not my extended family's dominant frame. Rather, stories about my great-grandparents' participation in empire are still recounted with pride. My mother remembers the first time she was confronted by a less idyllic portrait of the Raj: after watching the then recently released film *Gandhi* (itself, of course, a Western construction), she viscerally realized that her family was on "the wrong side of history." This may seem like an oversimplified conclusion, but – experientially – it was a profound shift. With no previous political context or critical analysis of colonialism to draw on, my mother was lurched from habitual and unencumbered celebration of her family's involvements, to carrying a taint of imperial shame, suddenly forced to associate the film's depiction of British soldiers shooting into a crowd with her beloved Vava. Even as political analyses evolve, over the course of my mother's life as well as my own, (nagging?) loyalty to the family remains present. This loyalty is grounded in very real affection for real people and relationships, and it makes this process of retelling and reframing a fraught one. I do not, however, think that loyalty to people *necessitates* complacency towards Raj nostalgia or complicity in dangerous historical revisionism. It is possible, as I try to do in this work, to hold all of these feelings simultaneously.

After all, the last generation of children to grow up in the Raj has been particularly influential in shaping a collective imperial nostalgia (Buettner 23). I think it is crucial to intervene in these public memory formations that romanticize empire and erase colonial violence, which continue to thrive (albeit heavily contested) in public discourse, cultural production, political rhetoric and more. But dangerous patterns must also be unpacked in

intimate contexts. We must interrupt the imperial sympathies that live on in our own families, memories, and attitudes, even that which may feel like harmless nostalgia. Private memorialization requires unsettling alongside public memoralization. Despite the thrill of my ancestors' exciting childhood tales, I refuse to let echoes of empire romanticization be seamlessly passed down to future generations. I am not intending to reject my family or discount their experiences: I am so grateful for much of what I have learned from them and for the stories that have been shared with me. What I aim to reject, then, is the dangerous tendency towards telling the story of the Raj through a lens of generosity, benevolence, romance, and excitement that erases the racialized and colonial violence that underpinned it. Understanding my familial history in British India – and deconstructing the ideological and material power structures that make up that history – is part of my attempt to do the deeply personal work of denaturalizing white supremacy and my own imperial histories.

CHAPTER 5

Toronto's Past in My Present: Land, Time, and Resistant Insistence

"The landscape itself as a trace as a story as a setting as an obstacle as a site as a question as an opening as a language…" – Peter Kulchyski (21)

Approaches to Land and Temporality

Throughout this thesis, I have explored my family's histories, and delved into what can be learned from their experiences and from my relationship with their stories. But I have not yet engaged with the histories of *this place*, Toronto, and my relationship with this land on which I live. Normative western conceptions of time, so fixated on a linear progression from past to future (Byrnes 8) – and settler logics, so reliant on notions of a "'new world', a fresh start, a clean slate" (Epp 23–24) – would see the distant histories of Toronto as far outside of the frame of what matters now. These dominant paradigms position people who lived here long ago as irrelevant, and their histories as distant and disconnected from contemporary realities; "the dead," however, "do not like to be forgotten" (Alexander 289). With an eye to disrupting assumptions of neat breakages (a history that, if remembered at all, starts with European settlement) and to troubling the Western epistemologies that I tend to rely on, I find it instructive to turn to critical Indigenous approaches to time and land.

Anishinaabek temporalities, particularly relevant when thinking about this land that is now Toronto, tend to imagine "past, present, and future infus[ing] each other in an experience of immanence in place" (Freeman, "Toronto" 15): the boundaries between times inexorably permeable, and experience of time literally grounded. In fact, many Indigenous approaches to history, Dakota scholar Vine Deloria argues, are "much more concerned with geography and spatiality, 'what happened here,' than with chronological origins and temporality, 'what

happened then'" (in Brooks xiii). Dwayne Donald (Papaschase Cree) conceptualizes the relationship between time and place by thinking about "history" as a series of layers:

> The layers symbolize the sediments of experience and memory that come to characterize … particular places and [their] shared, albeit contested, significance. … [This] fosters attentiveness to an ethic of historical consciousness [which] holds that the past occurs simultaneously in the present and influences how we conceptualize the future. (6–7)

What (scholarly, ethical, political, spiritual, relational) possibilities are opened up by careful attention to the layers of memory that this land holds?

Resistant Insistence: The threads and the layers

Taking these insights seriously necessitates engaging with the many histories that are part of experiencing this place. I believe that by acknowledging that the past can be present, and that the land can remember its stories, settler amnesia can begin to be disrupted and resisted. Thinking about the history of Toronto as potentially proximate generates the opportunity to build relationships – with land, with events from long ago, with other people for whom this land has been meaningful – that are rooted in intimacy rather than insurmountable distance.[95] As Victoria Freeman argues, "the tendency to separate the stories of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people is one symptom of the legacies of colonialism and paternalism" ("Toronto" 10). This "separateness" not only hides violent structures of power and erases both complicity and resistance, it also makes non-colonial relationships impossible to imagine or work towards. This chapter flows, therefore, from a "desire to treat [histories]—and lives—as relational and braided rather than isolated and independent" (Donald 9). From an insistence that land is and has always

[95] I do not mean "intimacy" in the sense of "sameness": rather, this approach can "highlight difference (racial, cultural, historical, socio-political, linguistic) without essentializing or erasing it, while simultaneously locating points of affinity" (Chambers et al. in Donald 9).

been so much more than (and other than) property, to be used in service of capital and a settler nation state. From an ethical, political, and "spiritual invocation to remember" (Alexander 287). From an insistence on the *relevance* of the various histories of Toronto to our contemporary lives, to our political realities, to our social relations, to our future possibilities.

In telling the stories of my family, I am looking at the places, peoples, histories that I come from. *Threads* through time, legacies passed down generations, migrations across space. In telling my stories of this city, I am looking at the places, peoples, histories that I have come in/to (and engage with everyday). *Layers* of seeping stories, interwoven with each other and with the land itself. Both the threads and the layers matter… Donald's emphasis on relationality crucially motivates the work I am trying to accomplish here: "it is an ethical imperative to recognize the significance of the relationships we have with others, how our histories and experiences are layered and position us in relation to each other, and how our futures as people similarly are tied together" (7). Both the threads and the layers are valuable for understanding ourselves as enmeshed in a complex set of relationships, which stretch across time and space, and through which colonial encounters and ideologies continue to reverberate. From the work of acknowledging historical and ongoing relationships, and building new and hopefully more accountable ones, can potentially emerge more responsible ways of being in the world.

This chapter was not planned from the outset of my writing: I had intended to more nominally engage with my history and this city's history as a way to open my Conclusion. The theories, approaches, and histories that I encountered, however, led me to believe that a longer and deeper engagement was a necessary part of the process and integral part of the final project. Challenging "the mistaken belief that books were the dwelling place of wisdom" (289), Jacqui Alexander urges scholars to learn, also, from landscapes (287), memories (316), embodiments

(319), feelings (315), and rituals (316); I have tried to heed her call by opening myself up to connections between lives and stories that are, through conventional methods and default "secularized" modes of knowing, invisibilized. Throughout the "landscape" that follows, I employ autoethnography (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner) to productively contextualize and theorize my personal experience in relation to larger historical, social, and cultural processes. This chapter is less structured and less conventional in form than the previous ones: *story* – as a valuable research method, as a powerful means of sharing knowledge, as a way to acknowledge and build relationships (Kovach) – is inherently a bit messy. I began this project with Celia Haig-Brown's prompt to consider "tracing [colonialism's] roots through personal narrative and family history… [as a] first step in the long journey of possibility for decolonization" ("Decolonizing Diaspora" 14). While I have been working through the family history portion of this call throughout, I here turn my attention to my personal narrative, and offer the following as an unsettling engagement with my own stories and attachments.

A Landscape of Memories, Histories, Relationships

This place: Toronto

I was born in my parents' small apartment on Vaughan Road, just north of St Clair West. I was raised in the east end, on the other side of the valley, but returned westwards years ago, now raising my own kid just a 15 minute bike ride away from where I began. I have never lived anywhere other than here, in Toronto. How, then, after decades, could I know so little about this city and this land, its pasts and its peoples? I was ashamed that, even as a politicized adult, only a couple of years ago, I had to turn to Google to figure out *who* I should be naming, recognizing, thanking in the requisite land acknowledgement at the event I was organizing. I offered the gesture, but – with no sense of the peoples, relationships, or histories that I was gesturing to –

that is all it was. It is only through this process that I have begun to gain a deeper understanding of the Indigenous and colonial histories and presents of Toronto, the land on and from which I am learning, writing, and producing knowledge.

I do not think my lack of historical awareness about this place is coincidental. Canada, Olive Patricia Dickason notes, has long been called (by those not indigenous to this land) "a country of much geography and little history" (xi). As often occurs in settler colonial contexts, pre-colonial histories have been either erased altogether or, if acknowledged, are packaged through particular frames (Donald 5). Even Eurocentric colonial histories, however, seem relatively absent from Toronto's sense of itself. As Freeman argues, there seems to be a dominant historical amnesia here, a widespread "attitude that Toronto has little history worth remembering" ("Toronto" 38):

> The city currently defines itself largely in terms of its present ethnic diversity rather than its history, in contrast to some other North American cities of comparable size, such as Boston and Montreal. Toronto is also anomalous in that there is currently no museum or large-scale institution devoted to the whole span of the city's history or that situates the history of Toronto in a larger context. (Freeman, "Toronto" 7–8)

What is lost (or hidden) through this mode of self-definition? Long indigenous histories on this land and the city's emergence through dispossession and colonialism are both obscured from the contemporary view. So are unpalatable and ongoing local histories of white supremacy and racism: two hundred years of Black enslavement that are so often erased by a narrative of Canada as the end of the underground railroad (Yeoman 10), decades of city bylaws unfairly targeting Chinese businesspeople (Wai-Man), the KKK organizing in Riverdale in the 1980s (and the government responding with inaction) (Sher), the Children's Aid Society's vastly

disproportionate seizure of Black and Indigenous children (Contenta, Monsebraaten, and Rankin), and on and on. These violent histories and continuing practices are important to remember because they disrupt the notion of Canada (and Toronto especially) as a place of racial pluralism and tolerance (Bannerji; Mackey), a dangerous belief that is used to silence demands for racial justice. It is also important to acknowledge the long presence of thriving communities of colour, and the thousands and thousands of years of Indigenous history, to undermine "whiteness" as the naturalized default. *Re-membering* (in the sense of putting the body parts back together) Toronto's complex and contested histories can be a personally unsettling and politically powerful process.

The Don River

For thousands of years, the Don River Valley offered vibrant hunting grounds, salmon fisheries, and rich agricultural soil to various vibrant Indigenous peoples (Ford 1). The Don played a role in the settlement of York and then Toronto, as a site for industrial development, and then as a neglected dumping ground (Bonnell). Today, the Don is slowly recovering from the resultant pollution, erosion, and wetland destruction; various environmental and city groups have been working to restore the valley into a thriving ecosystem and recreational space (TRCA). A park stretches up the river for kilometers, just next to the neighbourhood where I grew up. For me, the valley evokes summertime bike rides with my dad and sister, class fieldtrips for tree planting restoration projects, the sight of red-winged blackbirds in the grasses, high school make-outs on the river bank. Part of my personal topography, and more familiar to me than, I think, any other patch of "nature" in the city.

I've known since I was a child, in some abstract way, that Toronto was on "stolen land." But I had never even thought to ask about the specifics. What happened? When? Where? Who

was involved? As I have learned, the Toronto Purchase, simplistically remembered as a one-time deal signed in 1787, was actually a land seizure that took place over "years of murky, dishonest, misrepresented, confused, unethical 'negotiations' in context of major power discrepancy" (Freeman, "Toronto" 41). The Mississaugas have been characterized as naïve for selling the huge swath of land to the Crown for a mere £1,700 worth of goods, but the truth is much more complicated (and I can only offer some broad strokes of the intricate history). The context of the negotiations is crucial to understand. For one, the 1764 Fort Niagara Wampum Belts had affirmed a nation-to-nation alliance between the Anishnaabeg and the British Crown, to mutual benefit and without a loss of sovereignty (Freeman, "Toronto" 52); "subsequent agreements must be read in light of these original promises," Darlene Johnston comments, "that their alliance would be life-giving and sustaining, not impoverishing" (in Freeman, "Toronto" 55). Furthermore, different philosophies regarding land meant that common terms for negotiations were hard to establish: "the colonists spoke of owning the land, [while] Aboriginal peoples believe that they are caretakers of the land, interconnected with all of creation" (Methot). While the Mississaugas thought that they were agreeing to share land with the settlers – with an ongoing supportive alliance with the British, exchanges of gifts in perpetuity, and continued access to the land for hunting and fishing – the "purchase" was enacted by the Crown as a unilateral and permanent sale of the territory (MNCFN, *Toronto Purchase Booklet* 10). Negotiations taken on in good faith instead led to the loss of their land and "destr[uction of] the hunting and gathering economy of the Mississaugas on the Credit" (Freeman, "Toronto" 74):

> Significantly, they also lost much of their relation to their own past as embodied in the land and in their daily practices, since the land had lost its power to provide sustenance, health, identity, and happiness and thus the link between past, present, and future. The

> Mississaugas' world became unrecognizable, their historic presence negated and erased through the settlers' transformations of the landscape. (Freeman, "Toronto" 74)

Their historic presence and relationship with these lands continues to be negated in Toronto's dominant cultural imaginary.

Many of these miscommunications characterized land treaties across the continent, but the Toronto Purchase was particularly fraudulent. As a recent video by the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation states, it was "controversial because the amount of land taken far exceeds the original amount identified, and in the place of proper signatures there were pieces of paper with chiefs' totems that had been glued into a blank deed" (MNCFN, *A Sacred Trust*). The absent and incomplete paperwork was considered legally dubious even by the low ethical standards of colonial administrators, so the purchase was "reconfirmed" in 1805. The crown explicitly took advantage of the lack of documented boundary to try to secure more land than what had (even according to the chief British negotiator Sir John Johnson) been original discussed (MNCFN, *Toronto Purchase Booklet* 10). "The Mississaugas were adamant that the eastern boundary was the Don River," but the Crown unilaterally pushed it three miles east of the river, thereby including the Toronto Islands (still a peninsula at the time), a place of significant spiritual significance that the Mississaugas insist they never ceded (MNCFN, *Toronto Purchase Booklet* 10). The Don, sustaining Indigenous peoples in the area since time immemorial, was also a crucial marker in the contested process of colonial land seizure.

It feels important to learn about the long series of deceptions and coercions that facilitated the settlement of Toronto, this place that I call home. And being able to align maps of land theft with maps of my life has helped to bring this history into the present, where it really always is. The abstract feelings from my politicized gut that (probably?) this land had been taken unjustly,

became crystallized – actual negotiations, actual landmarks, actual betrayals. The same land at play for different people at different times, holding layers of meanings and complex stories, both personal and collective. I remember a recent conversation with my mother: she recalled the strange feeling of being presented with a deed to property, the land underneath the house that she and my father bought. The act of *owning land* making settler colonial relations more concrete, and participation in dispossession more explicit. This patch of land – on which my parents still live and over which they have legal rights – is just east of the Don, and I cannot help but feel that that land is doubly stolen, even more unjustly appropriated than the rest of the city.

The Humber

My Omi (grandmother) moved from Sudbury to Toronto when I was a child, into an apartment, where she still lives, on Bloor just west of the Humber. Every family gathering, my Omi, sister, parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and I would all walk out through the apartment's back parking lot onto the path that runs along the river, the park named after French explorer Etienne Brulé. Year after year, we would walk up the Humber in the fall to watch the salmon jumping up the weirs, migrating inland to their spawning grounds. You can see fish after fish leaping out of the water, only a couple making it up the damns successfully.

The rich salmon fisheries and bountiful watersheds are part of what have long drawn people to settle, meet, trade, and live in relation with this land that is now Toronto (Freeman, "Toronto" 8–9). A plaque just steps from my Omi's home, that I only just noticed, recognizes that the Humber River – Little Thundering Waters, Niwa'ah Onega'gaih'ih – has been home to Indigenous Peoples for at least 12,000 years (Canadian Heritage River System). Twelve thousand years of stories – it is almost unfathomable. The plentiful population of Atlantic salmon that had long flourished in Lake Ontario and the waterways of the Toronto area collapsed almost

a 150 years ago, after profound changes to the ecosystem brought on by destructive European settlement of the area (City of Toronto 4). It is Chinook and Coho salmon, Pacific species that were introduced from British Columbia into the Great Lakes systems and have been self-sustaining since the 70s, that we now watch make the run up the Humber every year to their headwaters in the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges Moraine (City of Toronto 33).

A couple of years ago, I took a day trip with my family, canoeing down the Humber from that same park to the lake. Canoes hold a precious place in the Canadian cultural imaginary, part of how we define ourselves as a nation (Francis 129). The iconography of the canoe – cutting through a clear blue lake, surrounded by vibrant evergreen forests, Canadian Shield rocks poking through the shoreline – is also deeply enmeshed in my family's culture, a dominant scene from my upbringing. This is the landscape that comes to me when I close my eyes to imagine where I feel calm. Some of my most precious memories are from our annual camping trips: my mother and I in one canoe, my father and sister in the other, paddling through cherished provincial parks (Algonquin, Massasauga – let's think about the roots of those place-name – and Kilarney, French River – let's think about the routes of those ones) to pitch our tents on the shore for the night. This was our family ritual every summer. Planning our camp stove and camp fire menus, looking over maps to strategize our trip, portaging lake to lake, jumping – sweaty after a day under the sun – into the cool clear water. Cherished times together. A grounding moment away from the city, connecting to rock and water and tree.

It feels like a loss to complicate and contextualize these precious memories, but it is important to do so. After all, canoe discourse can have dangerous implications: "the sentimental place of the canoe in Canada is the result of a set of narratives that attempt to legitimize a particular (and dominant) vision of the nation," Bruce Erickson argues, one "that can justify a

history of colonialism" (xiii). Because the canoe is "presented as our link to the land, to the past, to our Aboriginal forebears, and to our spiritual roots" (Francis 129–130), it participates in the colonial process of settlers symbolically erasing and replacing actual Indigenous peoples and histories. There is disturbing alignment between "enjoying nature" – the kind of summertime wilderness experience that has become a central touchstone of a genuine "Canadian" identity for the white urban middle class (Francis 132) – and frontier-logic fantasies of exploring empty landscapes. Much as I would like to isolate my family's adventures from these fraught cultural politics of nation-building, the resonances are undeniable. I still hold these times dear but I need to think about how to introduce my child to our family traditions of canoeing and camping with the necessary context, nuance, and complexity… How to learn from and honour a relationship with land without erasing indigeneity and colonialisms? Without reinforcing dominant nationalist narratives?

It was after years of canoeing outside of the city that we decided to paddle the Humber. The landscape was different, of course, and as we approached the lake, we canoed underneath the Gardiner Expressway, the thunder of the many lanes of highway traffic above feeling so discordant. Indeed, the experience was dominated by what felt like a stark contrast between our location in the middle of the country's largest city where "nature" is somehow unimaginable, and the resurging and resilient wildlife that surrounded us. South of the highway, just as the river opens into the lake, the white arches of the stunning pedestrian bridge loom above us, displaying images of a Thunderbird and a canoe, purportedly intended to acknowledge the significance of this place to so many Indigenous peoples, past and present (Howie).[96] Different etymological

[96] Although prominent artist, Ahmo Angeconeb (Lac Seul First Nation), was "consulted for the project, unfortunately there was not much First Nation input" ultimately (Howie).

possibilities for the meaning of the word "Toronto" exist (Freeman, "Toronto" 31),[97] but according to one interpretations, the root meaning "log in the water" refers to "the great white pine logs across the [Humber] river" that were used by Erie/Neutral, Seneca, and Mohawk peoples who lived and gathered at the crossing (Canadian Heritage River System). Certainly, thinking about my canoeing these waters with my family forced me to think about the various Indigenous (and, later, settler) people who canoed up the Humber. The river was part of a crucial portage route from Lake Ontario up to Lake Simcoe and Georgian Bay, one of the features that have made this area important to so many people over so many thousands of years. Land holds memory, and so can water. What do these waters remember? How many canoe strokes layer and echo through the river? What can I learn by opening myself up to their stories?

Garrison Creek

Garrison Creek is part of Toronto's hidden water systems. "By the early 1900's, settlement had become so dense and the creek so polluted with sewage and refuse that sewers became essential for public health reasons," the Lost Rivers project highlights, and "by the mid 1920's the creek had been completely buried" ("Garrison Creek"). Named for its mouth right next to Fort York, it once branched through much of the city's west end (and through many familiar current parks such as Christie Pits, Trinity Bellwoods, and Dufferin Grove). One of its branches also passed right outside our last apartment, where I lived with my partner for the first year of our child's life. Right outside, on the sidewalk, we walked over the medallions that the city has installed along the old path of the creek, acknowledging the waterway that once ran there. A community mural project a couple blocks south of us commemorates the plants and

[97] "In keeping with the Indigenous knowledge frameworks of the peoples of this area," Anishinaabe historian Rodney Bobiwash argues, different possible meanings need not be seen as inherently contradictory (in Freeman, "Toronto" 31).

animals that had flourished in and on either side of the Garrison. At some points along the route, especially after a storm, you can hear water bubble and flow underground down the old path of the creek.

Thinking about the land on which our apartment sat, and the river that had run there for hundreds of years, allowed sometimes-abstract concepts like memory, erasure, history, resilience, time, burial to feel more tangible. This kind of connection offers, I think, a tool for teaching and learning – crucial for pedagogy but also for parenting, in classrooms but also in families. What do I pass on to my child? What stories do I tell? How do I tell them? Even while he was too young to engage in such conversations, I had latched onto the lost creek underneath our home as a way to talk to him about the various stories still alive in the spaces and places that we live, not as the entirety or the end of relevant histories but as a concrete place to start, one that is comprehensible for a toddler.

Our apartment was actually just at the intersection of the creek (near Oakwood) and Davenport, that strange, winding road that snakes across the city just south of the St Clair hill. It marks what used to be a beach trail along the shore of the glacial Lake Iroquois, which existed 13000 years ago, at the end of the last ice age, and would eventually shrink down to present day Lake Ontario. I learned this information on a tour offered by First Story, an initiative that used to be called The Great Indian Bus Tour of Toronto, starting from the Native Canadian Centre and moving through different sites and landmarks and stories. It made sense, now, why Davenport's winding trajectory defied the grid imposed on this land, the settler architecture that underpins

this city.[98] Ironically, given that it is an organization dedicated to researching and building awareness about the Indigenous *history* of the city, participating in various First Story events has highlighted for me the vibrant present/presence of Indigenous communities here. Recognizing and celebrating Indigeneity in Toronto is not just about "ghostly absence" and forgotten histories (Freeman, "Toronto" 295–6): it is also about the diverse Indigenous people who make home in Toronto now, who are living, thriving, organizing, telling their stories, and "continu[ing] to imagine themselves into being even as they grapple with forces that threatened to annihilate them" (Brooks xxxiii).

Withrow Public School

I spent 8 years of my childhood attending Withrow Public School, north of Gerard, east of Broadview. This was the first site of my formal education. While working on this project, a memory suddenly came to me – my heart stopped for a moment. While I was a student, there was a display case on the first floor, in the hallway across from the office, with some photos, artifacts, and captions. I turn to the First Story app to confirm the memory[99] – indeed, there is a pin on the map marking my elementary school with a photo of the display itself (which is still there) and a plaque on the outside of the school that I had never even noticed. They commemorate an archeological dig on that very land. Workers excavating a roadbed originally discovered artifacts in 1886, prompting the exploration of the site by David Boyle, the province's first professional archeologist (Toronto Historical Board). The investigation resulted in

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[98] In his talk, "The Arrivant, the Native, and the Settler in Motor City," Kyle T Mays (Black/Saginaw Anishinaabe) offered parallel spatial and historic interruptions to the settler/grid geographies of Detroit.

[99] According to First Story Toronto's website, the organization collaborated with the Centre for Community Mapping to create the mobile app that I am referring to here, an interactive map of the city that marks sites of historical or contemporary significance to diverse Indigenous communities ("About First Story").

"recovery of one hundred skeletons and many projectile points and scrapers" (Archeoworks Inc. 4).

According to the plaque on the building, this land was the site of First Nations encampments 4000 years ago: groups of families camped there during the hunting season as it was an ideal site with a strategic view over the rich river valley (Toronto Historical Board). I tried to locate more information about the people who lived there, but found only vague and seemingly contradictory references.[100] Finally, I locate something more comprehensive: an article about the Withrow site from a 1996 Ontario Archaeological Society newsletter by Dr Mima Kapches. The report includes newspaper articles from a hundred years prior about the discovery of the ossuaries and slate tools, and the 1897 catalogue from the Ontario Archaeological Museum (now the ROM) that lists the artifacts and human remains (categorized as "specimens") that were found.[101] The article argues that the evidence points to "several time periods for the occupations of the site": "mainly, Late Archaic (slate point and knife), possibly Initial Woodland (represented by the basket pottery), pre-historic Iroquoian (the ossuary internments, with few grave goods), and European (the brass ornament)" (Kapches 14). The story is further complicated by different burial patterns (Iroquoian ossuary/burial pits, and single graves as would be expected of significantly older, pre-Iroquoian peoples) (Kapches 16), and by another

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[100] Archaeological assessments that mention the Withrow site vaguely name "Indian relics" (Archeoworks Inc. 4) or an "undetermined Aboriginal ossuary" (Archeoworks Inc. 6). One source mentions Indigenous peoples living at that site 5,000 years ago (Methot), one refers to a "500-to-600-year-old Iroquoian village" (Finley), and another says that the area "was likely occupied continuously for about 4,500 years (from 3000 BCE to about 1650)" (Toronto and Region Conservation Authority). The school's display case includes drawings of Ojibway birch bark lodges and images of a Huron village.

[101] The 1986 article states that the skulls and other recovered remains were at the time still stored in the ROM's collections; while I cannot confirm their current resting place, the ROM does have a policy (in place since 2002) committing to respectful treatment of Aboriginal remains and their return to descendent communities, evaluated on a case-by-case basis (ROM Board Policy).

discovery (of two skulls in a tin box) at a nearby but perhaps distinct site slightly south of the rest (Kapches 15–16). These latter remains were, in fact, discovered on what was at the time known as Smith Street but is now Riverdale Avenue, the street on which my parents' house is located and where I lived until I was 18.

I had (ignorantly) been looking for a simple answer (one people, one time-point, one story) to explain the history of the land on which my former school stands; the truth, however, is a testament to the almost unimaginably long, many layered, complex history of this land and the various peoples who have lived here, in different ways, at different times. So many people grew up and grew old, struggled and flourished, made home, made families, and made communities, right there. So many people have lived in relationships with the land that I would then use, oblivious to the history that it holds. Who created and used and touched and cared for the objects now sitting dusty in the school hallways? Who else played on the same ground that so many school children later would? This school, in particular, had a direct, tangible connection – the profound reality of sharing land and space – with specific people and histories, opening up powerful pedagogical opportunities. But I have no memories of the history of the land on which we learned being discussed in our classrooms. Instead, I remember learning about how X (static, long ago, homogenous) group built longhouses and Y (static, long ago, homogenous) group lived in teepees. Engaging in more research to connect the material traces from this particular land with what is known about the various pre- and post-European contact histories of the area, and sharing these stories with the students, could offer a valuable learning opportunity.[102] Such a pedagogical tool, I believe, offers the possibility of nurturing personal and relational approaches

[102] While I will not have time to engage in this knowledge translation intervention before completing this thesis, I see it as a viable and exciting next step, particularly in partnership with First Story Toronto or a parallel organization.

to talking about the land, the past, and Indigenous peoples as contemporary as well as historical subjects.

University of Toronto

Later, I spent years studying at UofT's St George Campus. While my parents are left-leaning and politically engaged, it was during my years there that I started to think through politics, identity, history, and power in more nuanced ways, both in classrooms but also fundamentally through conversations, relationships, and time in activist communities. I also started thinking about academia in more complicated ways – it can be a site of exciting and important knowledge production but also has a long history and a deep present of exclusionary structures, unethical research, and presumed authority at the expense of other crucial perspectives and sources of learning (Kuokkanen 1–22). Throughout this research and writing process, I have reflected often about the potential and also the constraints of what this work can be and can accomplish from the space of academia.

I do not remember who it was (one of my gender studies instructors, I believe) that added a (then) recent Toronto Star article onto the beginning of our course syllabus. It was about the university having finally, after four years of negotiation, agreed to repatriate its collection of Indigenous human remains; originally disinterred from gravesites across southern Ontario, many as recently as in the 1970s, they had been stored for decades in the basement of the Anthropology building (Swainson). As articulated by Huron-Wendat Family Chief Gaetan Sioui, "[t]here are a couple thousand of our people waiting to return home… When we went to see them, we almost cried to see our ancestors lying in dusty boxes for so long" (in Swainson). I spent so many hours, late nights, writing essays in the study room of that very same building, unaware that mere meters behind me were the sacred bones of Indigenous ancestors, pillaged

from their graves. It took another three years before the long-disrespected remains were returned to and reinterred by members of the Huron-Wendat nation in September 2013. By then, I had already graduated.

The University painted the situation as a successful partnership and patted itself on the back for bringing closure to the whole affair, but it is horrifying to think that it took *seven years* of urgent advocacy on the part of the Huron-Wendat Nation before the institution deigned to return the remains of their ancestors. Much as it would be more palatable to think of this story as being about a historical wrong that has now been resolved, it is perhaps more honest to understand it as a testament to the evolving-but-ongoing nature of many forms of colonial violence. It is evidence also of ongoing resistance to said oppressive structures.[103]

Victoria Memorial Park

While at UofT, I took a course with Dr Alissa Trotz on the subject of Black Diasporic Feminisms. She said something that stuck with me (and has informed this project) – that land could be understood as a palimpsest. So many stories resonate here, including not only the ones that have taken place here for thousands of years, but also all the stories that diasporic peoples have brought with them, passed on, and lived/created here in Toronto. Some of these journeys are recent and others took place long ago, but many arrivants ended up here through profound conditions of unfreedom. One afternoon, our class went down to Portland and Wellington, to Victoria Memorial Park. There, we experienced Camille Turner's brilliant Sonic Walk, "Hush

[103] There is so much more that could be said, but I would like to nod to a petition which circulated while I was writing this piece, from UofT's Native Students' Association, in support of their advocacy for the implementation of "a mandatory Indigenous studies credit … at Canada's largest university" (NSA).

Harbour,"[104] an audio art installation listened to through headphones while walking through a particular space and interacting with its environment. Through this work, she sought to "to (re)imagine Toronto's Black past and to remap Blackness onto the Toronto landscape." By telling immersive stories *in place*, she "enables participants to travel back in time" to learn about Black life in the late 18th and early 19th centuries in what is now Toronto (Turner). Turner both insists on the importance of these often-suppressed histories, and draws on Afrofuturism (for instance, introducing Afronauts from the future to guide the participant through their time travel) to imagine liberatory future possibilities.

The story that Turner tells is that of Peggy Pompadour, a woman enslaved by an Upper Canada government official in York (the city which preceded Toronto). In the piece, Peggy critiques the inhumane conditions of her bondage, and the new/1793 *Act to limit the further importation of slaves* which "freed" enslaved people who came to Canada from the United States but did nothing to change the conditions of slaves already here (who remained enslaved for life, until Britain finally abolished slavery in its colonies 40 years later). Turner's work is a deeply affective history. Enslaved peoples can never be reduced to their enslavement, and so Turner imagines the inner life of her character beyond the archival presence of an 1806 advertisement for the sale of Peggy and her son: we hear flirtation, conversation, caring relationships, music, and psychological escape, alongside their anger at oppressive structures. I cannot pass the park without thinking about the "Hush Harbour" experience, or the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade and its manifestations here in Toronto. These stories are denied in our city's short memory and our country's tendency to define ourselves as a somehow less racist America, but are present

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[104] The title "hush harbor" refers to secret gatherings of enslaved peoples to pray, sing, and connect: "part church, part psychological refuge, and part organizing point for occasional acts of outright rebellion" (Maffly-Kipp).

if you pay enough attention, and are being rewritten onto our landscape by artists, activists, and story tellers.

Fort York

Fort York, a site of preserved military fortifications near Bathurst and the Gardiner, is one of very few widely known markers of the city's history. As Donald argues, however, forts are spaces for the production of certain kinds of Canadian national myths:

> The fort, as a colonial artifact, represents a particular four-cornered version of imperial geography that has been transplanted on lands perceived as empty and unused. If we consider the curricular and pedagogical consequences of adhering to the myth that forts facilitated the civilization of the land and brought civilization to the Indians, we can see that the histories and experiences of Aboriginal peoples are necessarily positioned as outside the concern of Canadians. (3)

Donald opens this article with a story about his visit to Fort Edmonton Park, where he watched the "Indian" reenactments and cultural performances taking place outside the walls and reflected on the division and exclusion implied through fort pedagogy, even when Indigeneity was being purportedly "celebrated" rather than erased (1–2). Fort York – unlike many spaces that I take up here – has never been a touchstone of my "home" geography, but I recently experienced a similarly dissonant and telling encounter with the fort as a space of remembering.

Last June, looking online for something to do with my family, I found a post about an Indigenous Arts Festival happening at Fort York that weekend. The location felt somewhat counterintuitive, despite the Mississauga and Ojibwe soldiers who had fought alongside Canadian and British forces during the 1813 American attacks and occupation (Benn), but we still decided to go and engage with the art and performances. As we walked through the

courtyard and chatted with the Indigenous artists who were selling their work – jewelry, prints, books, sculptures, and more – we witnessed a bizarre scene: through the middle of the pavilion emerged a row of performers-cum-soldiers, dressed in red and white 19th-century uniforms, carrying muskets, marching in time with the commands that one of them was shouting, snare drums beating out some military rhythm. The artists and the few visitors all paused and watched the intrusive spectacle unfold. The whole thing took maybe 10 minutes, but felt profoundly uncomfortable – to be unintentionally participating in a celebration of a nationalist and imperialist military and to see this embodied metaphor, the oblivious performance of the Canadian nation state interrupting Indigenous artists trying to make a living.

The juxtaposition that I found more concretely instructive was between the different origin stories offered in that space on that day. A big sign at the entrance to the Fort announces, "Toronto began here," and claims to be "honouring the past." But, as Donald contends, it is a particular past, a particular beginning, that are recognized through fort logics (3). Recognizing the establishment of Fort York as the "beginning" of Toronto inflicts a clean and complete break between the earlier histories of this territory, and indeed the many troubling histories that complicate and contest an easy settler origin myth. That same day, however, "Indigenous assertions of alternate historical readings were present," as they have always been, despite being "rarely acknowledged or heard by city residents" (Freeman, "Toronto" 21). The work of several Indigenous artists were exhibited in the visitors' center, and one of the installations was particularly striking: "Dibaajimowin (What happened to us/News/Our Story)", a set of banners

created by a collective at Na Me Res.[105] They tell a different story of the history of this land, a deeply disturbing root that should also be remembered.

This story took place near what is now the St Lawrence Market, which had been a site of trading between Europeans and Indigenous peoples long before a permanent market structure was established. In August 1797, Wabakinine, chief of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation and "important signatory on several land surrenders including the Toronto Purchase in 1787" (Sandy), travelled to what was then York with his wife and sister (whose names, notably, I have not been able to locate in any account of these events). They spent the day selling salmon to the local settlers, and then set up camp by the nearby shore of Lake Ontario. That night, a soldier named Charles McCuen, who had accosted the chief's sister for sexual "favours" earlier, came to their camp with some friends and grabbed her from where she was sleeping. Wabakinine's wife heard them and woke her husband; in the ensuing confrontation, the assailants attacked both Wabakinine and his wife. The next day, the band left for Credit River, but Wabakinine and his wife both died as a result of the attacks shortly thereafter (Sandy; D. B. Smith). The chief had been a widely respected leader of his people and also (making the whole incident appear particularly egregious) an ally of the British crown; news of his murder rightfully outraged the Mississaugas who demanded retribution (Plummer). Authorities of Upper Canada feared an uprising, but the Mississaugas – upon the advice of Six Nations leader Joseph Brant – decided not to attempt to engage the colonial forces in military conflict (Sandy). Eventually (and at least in part due to pressure from the Mississaugas), Charles McCuen was arrested and tried by the colonial authorities but – as legal historian Brendan O'Brien argues – there was little effort to

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[105] More information about the Na Me Res (Native Men's Residence) artists who worked on this project is available at:
http://redpepperspectacle.weebly.com/dibaajimowin-2015.html

convict him and he was swiftly released due to a supposed lack of evidence (Plummer). This murder and its aftermath represent an important moment in the history of colonial relations here:

> The Mississaugas, in the interest of strengthening friendship, had once been extremely conciliatory in negotiating land surrenders with the British, but Wabakinine's death marked a turning point in their relationship with the Crown. They no longer trusted British intentions, or that promises made at treaty councils would be fulfilled. (Plummer).

"Friendship" was no longer a tenable way to understand the structures at play.

Remembering this story, I believe, can be a useful intervention into Toronto's public memory. As Historian Donald B Smith articulates, "the story of [Wabakinine's] violent end and its consequences helps dispel the traditional belief that relations between whites and Indians (sic) in Upper Canada were generally harmonious." Any illusion of colonialism without violence crumbles. Furthermore, the installation that I encountered at Fort York that day – "Dibaajimowin (What happened to us/News/Our Story)" – drew particular attention to this incident as part of a larger narrative of ("permissible") sexual violence against Indigenous women; the artists, indeed, position this as "the first documented case" of what has now become a horrific epidemic of colonial, racialized, and gendered violence. Amber Sandy also notes, in regards to the supposed lack of evidence (or lack of legal will) to convict McCuen, that his release was hardly surprising and "is usual in these cases" even now. I had never encountered the story before this day, but I think that seeing it as one of many moments that have profoundly shaped our city's past – just as core a narrative as the establishment of Fort York – duly (and disturbingly) complicates how we see our past and our present. This story is inherently relational rather than perpetuating a myth of settler-foundings-on-empty land, and does not flinch from the oppressive power relations and violences that were foundational to the emergence of this city and continue to take place here.

Conclusions

I have begun to uncover connections, disconnections, contradictions, and encounters but it is an ongoing and unfinished process – this historical and introspective exercise could go on indefinitely. The findings that I share above elaborate an approach of relating to, and learning from, land and history. Through the practice of opening myself up to other ways of knowing, and recognizing the place-based intersections between different lives and histories, I have tried to "mak[e] the invisible tangible" (Alexander 287); this method has exposed how I am intricately imbricated in a complex set of relationships (both concrete and more abstract, both intimate and more structural) across time and space. I believe that the process has profound pedagogical merit, for enabling learners to dig deep within themselves to unearth and unsettle dominant ideologies, and to rethink their familiar geographies in potentially transformative ways,[106] As one of many voices, this work can serve to chip away at settler amnesia in, and simplistic narratives about, this city, my city, Toronto.

[106] In a seminar class with Jacqui Alexander, she had her students engage in an exercise she called "Mapping Sacred Toronto." It forced us to rethink how we move through the land on which we lived, and engage imaginatively, affectively, intellectually, and spiritually with the potential meanings of different spaces. I see immense pedagogical potential in a parallel tool of "Mapping Toronto's Memories" and the intersections between those memories and our lives, as I have done above.

CHAPTER 6

Im/Parting Words: Conclusions, Contributions, Possibilities

"Isn't pretending that any of our pasts survived untouched by colonialism itself a dangerous thing?" – Marcia Crosby (Tsimshian/Haida) (in Kuokkanen xv)

This thesis, at its core, is about *connections*: between individual lives and larger structures, between the ways we tell our own stories and the ways that histories are constructed, between colonial pasts and colonial presents. These connections are not smooth, not about sameness or unbroken continuity, but I insist that the messy, uneven, sometimes contradictory relationships still merit attention. Combining autoethnographic practice, archival research, discursive analysis of family texts, and conversations with my family, I have embarked on a process of untangling several clusters of structures, legacies and histories: the early settlement of the Canadian Prairies, business interests and child-rearing in the British Raj, and contemporary settler amnesia in relation to Toronto's layered histories. While the content of my research has spanned these distinct contexts, my investments (simultaneously historical and methodological, personal and political), and my intimate relationship to the entanglements at hand, offer coherence to the body of work. In this final chapter, I lay out the possibilities and contributions that I see having emerged from the project as a whole.

Historical Contributions: Intimate engagements and structural insights

Researching history is not only valuable because of its contemporary ramifications and potentially productive social use: generating and extending historical knowledge has value, too, in and of itself. My affectively, theoretically and politically engaged work illuminates "new" particular contexts, *specific* sets of people, texts, relationships, and structural intersections that have not been explored in these ways before. Like Emma Rothschild's "new kind of

microhistory," my work has spread across geographic borders and spanned "the frontiers between different kinds of historical inquiry" (6). It has brought together an exploration of the "inner lives" of the individuals at hand with an exploration of the "larger scenes of which they were a part… the important or 'macrohistorical' inquiries" (Rothschild 7). By examining the (in many ways, ordinary) experiences of my ancestors, I am therefore adding to the historical literature regarding the broader contexts in which they lived. I have been able to explore of the complexities of agency, memory, relationships, affect, story-telling, and intergenerational legacies through my focus on the intimate, but by bringing new stories and new framings into conversation with larger histories, I have also been able to add important texture to sweeping structural accounts. "Personal and family stories can be braided in with larger narratives of nation and nationality," Dwayne Donald argues, "often with provocative effects" (8). Indeed, this interplay across different scales has generated insights throughout my research.

The method has helped to elaborate the ways that large systems and historical processes (colonialism, settler colonialism, white supremacy, and others) unfold *in their particular iterations*, *at particular moments* and *through particular lives*, as well as at theoretical and structural levels. Without obscuring systemic power or reducing ideologies to individual perspectives, I have tried to expose colonialism as something that also "had to be *practiced*, … by real people in real time" (Partha. Chatterjee xi–xii, emphasis added). The Canadian state needed to concretely settle the prairies with white bodies: their own individual struggles and motivations notwithstanding, the very presence of ordinary farmers and families, as well as their agricultural and reproductive labour, enabled this colonial project. The British Raj, like other structures of empire, was sustained in large part through the actions of middling individuals, seeking to extract profits and anxiously policing the racial boundaries that benefitted them so

much. As contemporary settler subjects, my/our complicity and participation is multifaceted but *forgetting*, remaining comfortably oblivious to the violent structures and histories that live on in the current moment, is critical for upholding the ongoing colonial structures. These small stories help ground the everyday workings of the larger histories.

Pedagogies of Remembrance: Responsible ways to learn from the past

Conversations about pedagogical remembrance seem particularly pertinent right now, as even mainstream Canadian society is being forced to confront (or at least acknowledge) the legacies of residential schools, and educators are trying to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action (Faculty of Education). I too return to difficult histories, in part, with an intention to "learn... not only *about*, but *from* past lives and events" (Simon, Rosenberg, and Eppert 6). As Roger Simon, Sharon Rosenberg, and Claudia Eppert have pointed out, however, this frequently stated goal is often inadequately theorized: "What does it *mean,*" they ask, "on both ethical and pedagogical terms, to 'learn the lessons of the past'?" (3, emphasis added). How can we facilitate history's social impact without wholly instrumentalizing past lives (and deaths) for our own ends? How can we refuse to forget traumatic pasts without drowning in them? How can we responsibly learn from the past, and how can we share/teach/facilitate said learning for others?

In wrestling with these questions, Simon, Rosenberg, and Eppert offer a framework for responsibly and productively learning from (especially traumatic) histories:[107] "remembrance as

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[107] When working with violent histories, one must be cautious of tidying horrific stories into palatable narratives of redemption and perseverance (Baum 98). But, particularly for communities who have endured systemic oppression for centuries, there is wisdom and vision to be found in these difficult histories, legacies of struggle, resistance, and survival to look to and learn from. There is *pedagogical* remembrance but also, perhaps, "*divine* remembrance": "black feminist reflection," Silvia Regina De Lima Silva argues, for instance, "arises...from having legs

critical learning" (7). This approach, which has guided my process, refuses to just represent "what happened." It seeks also "to respond to and hold in remembrance the traces of these events" (7), traces that I see reverberating through personal, familial, cultural, and political contexts. Alongside centering the relationship between past and present, they also foreground the relationship between self (researcher/learner) and other (those who themselves experienced the histories at hand); working through "the story of the telling of the story" (7) allows the relational act of historical inquiry to itself be a space and source of learning. Such a process is challenging but potentially deeply transformative:

> Remembrance is, then, a means for an ethical learning that impels us into a confrontation and "reckoning" not only with stories of the past but also with "ourselves" as we "are" (historically, existentially, ethically) in the present. Remembrance thus is a reckoning that beckons us to the possibilities of the future… (Simon, Rosenberg, and Eppert 8)

This thesis has been a process of reckoning and learning for me at an individual level, and has the potential to help prompt others' confrontation with their pasts and themselves.

Following from this theorizing, I understand accountable and pedagogical engagements with the past to be at once political and personal, intellectual and affective. In order to embody such an approach to history, this thesis has entailed a process of "critical intimacy" (Gayatri Spivak in Freeman, "Toronto Has No History" xiii), vulnerability, and a willingness "to let traces of other people's struggles, passions, pasts, resonate within one's own past and present, and destabilize them" (Kaja Silverman in Simon 10). I have opened myself up to learning from and

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like roots sunk deep into the earth, so as to be able to take from history, from the past, and from the ancestors the strength and the critical vision needed to deal with the present" (in Fontenot). Holding onto the radical possibilities of intergenerational learning (which I would not restrict to familial relations but extend to community relations as well) is, for me, an important and empowering way to ground the powerful implications of historical memory.

being transformed by these histories, aspiring "not only to remember, but also to *remember well*" (Baum 93).

Alongside my personal process of learning and growing, certain concrete pedagogical tools have emerged from this work. For one, I have modelled my particular take on the practice that Celia Haig-Brown posits, writing (or at least beginning to write) my own "decolonizing autobiography" ("Decolonizing Diaspora" 14). My readers will hopefully have gained insight from my process and method, therefore, as well as from the particular content that I have explored. In Chapter 5, I mapped connections between some of my own life stories and some of the various stories of this land, exploring spatial and temporal intersections. I found this to be a powerfully relational approach to learning about suppressed histories and unsettling my home geography, and I believe that this method could be used as a learning activity for others, and even catered towards a workshop for children and youth. One of the places that I investigated was the site of my own elementary school, which has a long Indigenous history. A possible future knowledge-translation step would be to return to my former school and facilitate some interactive lessons about the history of that land, ideally in collaboration with an organization such as First Story Toronto, which itself is doing phenomenal work to research and share Toronto's Indigenous histories. I have learned so much from my intellectual and introspective process of *remembering*, and I believe that others could as well.

Colonial Memory Formations: Disrupting nostalgia, fighting erasure

The way that we view and make meaning from the past has ongoing consequences, and the stakes over remembering and disremembering (Bowen, "Artist's Talk") colonial histories are profound. When working through my chapter on the British Raj, one of the things that struck me was the romance, nostalgia, and self-congratulatory nature of so much of (British) public

memory about empire, even now. Empire histories still seem to be somehow celebrated and viewed with pride, both in many families (certainly in mine) and in dominant cultural discourses (Howe 14). According to a recent poll in the UK – prompted by debates about Oxford University's statue of celebrated racist Cecil Rhodes – 43% of respondents thought that the British empire was a good thing, and 44% felt that British colonialism was something to be proud of (Dahlgreen). There is often, it seems, not enough shame (with its own correlate and sometimes unproductive complexities) to even prompt the erasure or denial of colonial involvement. I aim to, alongside many others, challenge persistent nostalgia for the golden days of imperialism, reject the erasure of colonial violence, and expose the racist ideologies that allow empire histories to be glorified.

Much history is suppressed, distorted, and erased in settler colonial contexts as well. This is necessary, in some twisted way: to genuinely confront the violence, theft, and dispossession that enabled and underlie the contemporary settler state would delegitimize the whole enterprise. Indigenous peoples are too often positioned as stuck in the long ago past (Donald 5) and settlement histories are celebrated as benign, even beneficial, through narratives of civilizing savage lands (Thobani 87; Coombes, *Rethinking Settler Colonialism* 6). When colonial violence *is* included in the narrative, it is through particular frames: "the liberal consciences of North America today acknowledge wrongdoings of the past," but position said "wrongdoings" as long ago, distant, done by other (less enlightened) people in other (less enlightened) times (Kulchyski 1). What this acknowledgement dismisses is that colonial conquest and relations are ongoing:

> In the minutiae of quotidian life, in the presuppositions of service providers, in the structures of State actions and inactions, in the continuing struggles over land use, in a

> whole trajectory of policies and plans, the work of the conquest is being completed here and now. By our generation. (Kulchyski 1)

We have to find ways to remember and confront histories of settlement, dispossession, and genocide that refuse easy distancing, that honestly articulate complicities and responsibilities, and that demonstrate the ways that colonial structures have concretely benefited those of us who are not Indigenous to this land (and continue to do so). I have tried to participate in this important memory project.

As Peter Kulchyski reminds us: "You who remain silent while this injustice continues, you are responsible. Here. And now" (1). In this thesis, I am refusing to be silent, and attempting to challenge dangerous colonial memory formations. These patterns need to be disrupted at social levels: the ways that our nation imagines itself, the way that histories are (or are not) taught, the kinds of memoralization that gain traction, the ways that societal assessments of the past skew public opinion, the constraints historical narratives place on our collective liberatory imaginings, and more. But I believe that introspection about how colonial histories live on in intimate and personal contexts is important as well: such as my own relationship to Canadian and transnational histories, the biases I have internalized, the myths I cling to, the nostalgic stories (and sentiments?) about empire that I have inherited, and the linguistic/affective/material/epistemological/other traces of colonial pasts that are intimately present in my life. So much socialization and cultural transmission occurs across generations, so this latter layer of disruption means being critical and thoughtful in my parenting. It means thinking carefully about the stories (about our family, our pasts, our responsibilities, and more) that I pass on to my own child. It means trying – in academic, activist, and familial contexts – to remain *honestly* grounded in

history and to work towards being accountable to the webs of relationships in which I am situated.

Doing our Homework: Guilt and innocence, responsibility and unease

For those of us advantaged by various intersecting structures of power, acknowledging those privileged identities can be an uncomfortable but important act: naming my role as a white settler, for instance, moves me towards understanding my positioning and acknowledging structures of power. There are limits, however, to what these labels can, on their own, accomplish. Rauna Kuokkanen, in arguing that the colonizer/colonized binary needs to be complicated and re-examined, underscores that she is "not suggesting that the relationship does not exist or that its legacy does not affect our lives today in many ways" (xiii–xiv); similarly, my concerns with the performative naming of identity labels is not intended deny the power that they hold. Rather, I urge that a deeper, more nuanced, and more complicated engagement with whiteness, settlerness, and other identities/positionings can be more valuable. For me, this means seeing an acknowledgement of those identities as a starting point, which allows me to move towards seeing those roles as simultaneously structural and deeply intimate. It means attending to the specific contexts, histories, stories, relationships, journeys, and meanings at play, too easily obscured by an essentializing (and abstracting) category. It means heeding Gayatri Spivak's call for "moving away from the idea of the 'field work'… to doing one's 'homework,' articulating *one's own participation* in the structures that have fostered various forms of silencing" (in Freeman, "Toronto Has No History" xv; emphasis added).

These processes of recognizing one's own position of power and (current/historical) complicity in violent systems can lead to focusing on and getting stuck in feelings of *guilt*. I think that white guilt and (the distinct but in my case also intersecting) settler guilt are

unproductive end points that produce defensiveness (Lindsay), and may interfere with effective struggles against racial injustice and colonialism.[108] It is crucial, however, not to instead slide easily (back?) towards a sense of *innocence*, which may be even more dangerous. In their seminal article "Decolonization is not a Metaphor," Eve Tuck and K Wayne Yang build on Janet Mawhinney's analysis of white moves to innocence to unpack the dangers of "settler moves to innocence" (9). Through various strategies, they argue, settlers "make moves to innocence that attempt to deny and deflect their own complicity in settler colonialism" in order to relieve their guilt. This dangerous practice helps entrench colonial myths and settler logics. I am thinking through the merits, therefore, of finding ways to make moves *away from* settler innocence. Throughout this thesis, I have attempted to undermine denial, and make distancing impossible, for myself and for other settlers whose stories may resonate with my own in one way or another. Unpacking our concrete complicities in various (specific and distinct but inherently interlocking) systems of power has the potential to unsettle individual claims to innocence, and interrupt cultural myths of innocence.[109]

In attempting to reject innocence without being incapacitated by guilt, I try to hold *responsibility* (Freeman, "Toronto Has No History" 151; Edgington 128) and a healthy *uneasiness* (Racial Equity Tools 7) as central to the work I am trying to do. Responsibility, for me, is grounded in an honest reckoning with the structures and histories in which we are all implicated, and offers an inherently relational framing; it motivates action to address past and

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[108] That said, it is an important practice for white anti-racist activists and others to acknowledge, talk about, and strategize how to deal with guilt, rather than to deny that it is happening or ignore how it may shape our in/actions – this lesson is perhaps also useful for academics working on colonial and racial violence from places of privilege.

[109] For me and for many others, colonial complicities overflows this continent and stretches across various empire contexts, historically and in the present moment.

ongoing wrongs, rather than the incapacitating (and self-centered) burden of guilt. Uneasiness keeps comfort, complacency, and overconfidence at bay. As a white settler wading into conversations about race and colonialism, as important as it is to engage in these conversations, this unease provides a strong check and balance. I want to heed the leadership, knowledges, and experiences of Indigenous and racialized communities. For me, these are honest affective and political responses that support the work of building unflinching relationships with our identities, complicities, and stories.

Settler Harm Reduction (and making space for decolonial possibilities)

Another critique in Tuck and Yang's piece (which I will quote here at length) does point to the concrete limitations of my work:

> We don't intend to discourage those who have dedicated careers and lives to teaching themselves and others to be critically conscious of racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, xenophobia, and settler colonialism. We are asking them/you to consider how the pursuit of critical consciousness, the pursuit of social justice through a critical enlightenment, can also be settler moves to innocence – diversions, distractions, which relieve the settler of feelings of guilt or responsibility, and conceal the need to give up land or power or privilege. (21)

Much as I try to interrupt settler innocence in this work, my process is nonetheless privy to the limitations, as well as the exciting potentials, of the "pursuit of critical consciousness." After all, "Fanon told us in 1963 that decolonizing the mind is the first step, not the only step toward overthrowing colonial regimes"; it would be dangerous to position critical consciousness "as if it were the sole activity of decolonization" (Tuck and Yang 19).

I agree with Tuck and Yang that neither this project on its own (of course!) nor even our combined critical consciousness efforts will be *enough* to transform society much less decolonize. While I still affirm the importance of the stories that we tell about ourselves and each other, and the value of engaging with cultural politics and challenging oppressive discourses, I know that I will not lose land or power from my writing. I acknowledge that this work is not contributing to the kinds of material and structural transformations that Tuck and Yang remind us are *also* essential. Drawing on Anna Jacobs' work, they "understand the curricular pedagogical project of critical consciousness as *settler harm reduction*, crucial in the resuscitation of practices and intellectual life outside of settler ontologies" (21). These efforts are not "decolonization," but they can still be valuable to reduce harm, to lay the groundwork, to open up possibilities for other kinds of futures. I see my research as contributing, therefore, to this work of settler harm reduction – profoundly insufficient and deeply necessary. My work, alongside so many others' powerful interventions, can participate in making way for – if not taking steps towards – decolonial possibilities. **"**If colonialism is indeed a shared condition," after all, "then decolonization needs to be a shared endeavor" (Donald 4).

Donald specifically identifies the *separation of stories* as tied into "colonial frontier logics" and points out the danger of assuming that Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians "inhabit separate realities" (Donald 4). To counter this violence, he posits the value of "Indigenous Métissage," a curricular and pedagogical framework that resonates deeply with my thesis. We must "focus on relationality and the curricular and pedagogical desire to treat texts—and lives [and, I would add, histories]—as relational and braided rather than isolated and independent" (9). Crucially, this intervention does "not deny difference, but rather seek[s] to more deeply understand how our different histories and experiences position us *in relation to*

each other" (Donald 6, emphasis added). It is with these principles in mind that I insist on the connectedness of our many complex stories: I have refused to simplistically celebrate my ancestors as hardworking farmers – without asking whose land they farmed, or as hardworking businessmen – without asking whose labour generated their profits, or even as carefree children – without asking who paid the costs for their idyllic upbringings. Acknowledging these relations, and taking seriously the responsibilities that they imply, is an important step. As Donald lays out, the work of decolonization can only occur after Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples "face each other across historic divides, deconstruct their shared past, and engage critically with the realization that their present and future is similarly tied together" (5).

Donald's theorizing articulates much of what motivates and emerges from my work, but I have tried also to extend the critical engagements that he advocates beyond Canada, and beyond settler vs. Indigenous binaries. While holding onto the specificities of different contexts (and the important distinctions between different systems and structures of violence and power), I think that challenging colonial and racial logics necessitates thinking through the ways that histories have interacted transnationally. How have processes of empire forced people into often mutual/asymmetrical/complex relationships, across and beyond geographical borders? What obligations do I have, for instance, to honestly confront dominant myths about the benevolent British Raj that I have inherited from my family, alongside dominant myths about the benign civilizing of the Prairies so pertinent in the Canadian context? How can I carve out ethical space to work through historical relationships between my white ancestors and racialized arrivants, as well as Indigenous communities? Or conceptualize ethical obligations between myself and contemporary migrants, often displaced as a result of imperialism, resource extraction, or the violence of global capitalism, in which Canada is heavily involved? How can we reckon with our

positioning in and relationships across the distinct – but interlocking and mutually supportive – pillars of white supremacy (A. Smith)?

I hope that my transnational historical deconstruction and relational reckoning can participate in conversations about fostering "ethical space" for the "collective rethinking of the ethical terms and conditions by which future interactions and engagements can and will be guided" (Donald 5). I demand (and try to practice) the kind of historical confrontation and ethical relationality that Donald argues is so crucial by rejecting colonial amnesia, nostalgia, and distancing. From an insistence that my histories are deeply interconnected with other peoples' stories, and an (ever incomplete) understanding of the complex ways that various interlocking structures and systems of power position us, I am attempting to help carve out space for accountably working to dismantle those same structures. After all, "if we want to bring new worlds into existence," visionary author and activist adrienne marie brown reminds us, "then we need to challenge the narratives that uphold current power dynamics and patterns" (279); it is through this slow story-work that I seek to participate in opening up decolonial possibilities.

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