

The Asianadian, 1978-1985:

Hybridity and Resistance in Theory and Practice

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the cultural and political production of the magazine *The Asianadian* (1978-1985). *The Asianadian* was the first and only anti-racist, anti-sexist, and anti-homophobic social justice magazine in Canada. Using theoretical insights of Critical Race Theory, Indigenous Studies, Settler Colonial Studies, postcolonial theory, and the political philosophies of existentialism and phenomenology to develop a multi-layered and overlapping reading of *The Asianadian*, I argue for the ways in which Canada's first Asian Canadian social justice magazine established the ethical, community-based work of reclaiming unacknowledged histories and cultural consciousness while also disrupting and dismantling signs of destructive Orientalist stereotyping that saturated Canadian culture for much of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This work underscores *The Asianadian* as the "Third Space of enunciation" (Bhabha, 1994), or that which disrupts the classical colonial binary between the Settler and Native and generates a new discourse on history that breaks down colonial hegemonies and builds up communities of colour. By situating the *The Asianadian* as a hybrid text, I celebrate the magazine collective for its interventions upon white-washed representations of Asian people, their labour, and their exclusion in Canada. Ultimately, I demonstrate that *The Asianadian* introduced new critical insights using art and literature to inform their political consciousness, erupt grand narratives of Canadian inclusion, and to forge interstitial spaces from which scholars such as myself continue to write.

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Fanonian Introductions: Problematics of Chinese Womanhood

*I came into the world imbued with the will to find meaning in things, my spirit filled with the desire to attain to the source of the world, and then I found that I was an object in the midst of other objects.*¹

- Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*

*Fanon's Black Skin, White Masks reveals the doubling identity: the difference between personal identity as an intimation of reality, or an intuition of being, and the psychoanalytic problem of identification that always begs the question of the subject: 'What does a man want?'*²

- Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*

*Neither black/red/yellow nor woman but poet or writer.*³

- Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other*

Introduction

"What would you know? You're a Chinese woman. You're from the largest empire in the world."

This was what a second-year graduate student said to me in my first year of doctoral studies. I had no answer for such a question, nor was I able to comprehend quite clearly what he meant by "You're a Chinese woman." That a Chinese woman should have any knowledge at all about inequality in the white world was foreclosed to me—the answer predetermined in the unwieldy but confident delivery of the question. Nothing. A Chinese woman, even today, can still be seen as having no capacity for higher knowledge, no place in the masculine world of ideas. Small inputs here and there are welcomed (mostly in radical women of colour circles) but

¹ Frantz Fanon, "The Fact of Blackness," *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 1968), p. 82.

² Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (London: Routledge Classics, 1994), p. 72.

³ Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), p. 6.

the idea that a Chinese Canadian woman could be an expert in Western political philosophy is simply unimaginable. But this is what I wanted to do. The incredulity of this accusation was provoked by a visiting lecture conducted by feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti, who spoke about philosophy and localism in a packed classroom full of graduate students. Angrily galvanized by Braidotti's reading of Deleuze and Guattari, the colleague aggressively asked me what I thought philosophically about the idea of abstract male whiteness. When I explained what I now believe to be a very amateur understanding of how the power dynamics of whiteness engender the institutional management of racialized and marginalized bodies, I was thrown the retort about what I could possibly know as a Chinese woman, and nothing happened. This is how I came into this research. Like Fanon, who initially thought that his intellectual capabilities in the Western tradition could liberate his fixedness, I was sorely disappointed to find out that the gaze of the Other, when it did not try to subsume me, was content to sit aside and ignore my presence. I was offended. I wanted an answer. I approached the Other, who said: "He didn't say it in a classroom, so there's not much I can do;" an Other: "You should develop anti-oppression training and maybe others will attend;" and an Other: "It happens, so you need to grow thicker skin;" and an Other: "No, that is absolutely not racist." At every intersection I asked the Other for help, the legitimacy of my discomfort and unhappiness were questioned. Still, a Chinese woman has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man.⁴ Nobody else believed this to be a serious matter, so perhaps it was not.

Self-blame was my only rational mechanism of defense since university administration, faculty, and the colleague refused to take accountability for the racist event. Frozen by the

⁴ Original: "The black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man"; "The black man among his own in the twentieth century does not know at what moment his inferiority comes into being through the other," see Fanon, "The Fact of Blackness," *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 83.

gendered-racial fixedness I had been prescribed, I attempted to avoid that colleague at department functions for several months while I retreated to a basis of questioning that involved seriously considering why I had even entered graduate school in the first place. That no faculty member or dean could or would help me understand the splitting of my consciousness is constitutive of the broader patterns of isolation that racialized women face in predominantly white institutions. I knew of all the stereotypes that reinforced I had no ontology to express my history and geopolitical temporality. The gaze of the Other had been anticipating my abilities with *a priori* definitions for centuries and saw my kind as too docile to cause a fuss. Even the infamous Hegel had devoted an entire section in *The Philosophy of History* explaining my peoples' incapacity to develop self-consciousness and think independently. I wanted to learn about philosophy and culture, instead of becoming an object amidst other objects. Having just completed my Master's degree comparing philosophical Daoism with Heidegger, this was the work I wanted to continue to do. The complex and complicity of whiteness in the Western philosophical tradition is a contentious force for any racialized philosopher interested in the classical canon, since "if philosophy and intelligence are invoked to proclaim the equality of men [and women], they have also been employed to justify the extermination of men [and women]."⁵ Thus, in the displacement of my being, "an unfamiliar weight burdened me"⁶ and I was not entirely unaware that I was beginning to develop an inferiority complex.

In that student lounge, I was not given one, but two, three places and was held to account for my body, race, and ancestry. Though our sites of social and temporal emergence differ greatly, Fanon's universalist notion of liberation accounts for people like me. In the same way

⁵ Fanon, "The Negro and Language," p. 17.

⁶ Fanon, "The Fact of Blackness," p. 83.

that Fanon writes of being, “battered down by tom toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave-ships, and above all else, above all: ‘Sho good eatin,’”⁷ I too was entrapped by docility, exoticism, intellectual deficiency, the *Exclusion Act*, racial defects, the railroads and laundries, and above all: the empire of China. I discovered my yellowness, my “ethnic characteristics” that when externally deposited onto my being dissolved articulations of selfhood and agency and repressed the ancestral and historical traumas of gendered imperial violence. The weight of this colleague’s comments rebirthed a whole slew of nineteenth century myths about East Asians, including a particular focus on the infinitude of China’s inscrutable empire. The comment further implies an archaic gendered myth of feet-bound Chinese women living in slave-like conditions under an opium-smoking-Fu-Manchu patriarchy. The basis for this external characterization was a result of the Other, the white man who had woven me, just as he had woven Fanon, out of a thousand details to create legends, stories, and a historicity. While I admit that the comments made were not made by a white man, I am nevertheless reminded of how “*It is the racist who creates his inferior.*”⁸ In the early pages of *Anti-Semite and Jew*, Sartre writes:

There is a disgust for the Jew, just as there is a disgust for the Chinese or the Negro among certain people. Thus it is not from the body that the sense of repulsion arises...but one so deep-seated and complete that it extends the physiological realm, as happens in cases of hysteria.⁹

Indeed, when he wrote of the desire of the anti-Semite to create the Jew¹⁰ so that the former may exercise his racist passions, Sartre was not naïve to think that the configurations of this social encounter were applicable elsewhere. In Sartre’s formulation of the anti-Semite’s

⁷ Fanon, “The Fact of Blackness,” p. 84.

⁸ Fanon, “The Fact of Blackness,” p. 69.

⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, trans. George J. Becker (New York: Schocken Books, 1948), p. 11.

¹⁰ “If the Jew did not exist, the anti-Semite would invent him.” See Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, p. 13.

disgust for the Jew, Chinese, and Black man is a predetermined revelation that stems from the tradition of Eurocentrism and Westward expansionism—the same revelation of herd mentality that grounds the validity for not recognizing Chinese women in more dimensions than their prostitution or dependency on men. Maintaining the ambivalence of Chinese women under Orientalist stereotypes holds a “colonial currency” in the nascent development of settler colonial Canada. In general, I would say that the Canadian state’s exclusion of Chinese people in the twentieth century was a form of knowledge and power that oscillated between desire and passion. It was not merely a matter of economic or social contribution but a federal policy that rested upon the repetition of an Oriental fantasy of the mysterious Yellow Peril infiltrating the newfound colony. The repeatability of this ambivalence through a recycled Orientalist repertoire ensures that negating stereotypes are sustained even at “changing historical and discursive conjunctures.”¹¹ It appears no different today in cities such as Vancouver, and more broadly in Western Canada, where a minority of wealthy Chinese people who can afford luxury cars and real estate are conflated with the majority of poor and elderly Chinese citizens living in low income housing units and segregated communities.

As a second-generation Chinese born in Canada, I am aware of the ways in which anti-Chinese racism and gendered exclusion were undeniable elements of twentieth century Canadian state-formation. Chinese women in Canada came into political discourse first as excluded, non-British, non-assimilable, present-absent property. Founded in one segment of *The Chinese Immigration Act*, the 1923 amendment to the law stated that no Chinese women could enter the country without being either a wife of a merchant or a prostitute dependent on a man. Although I have no direct relations with those targeted by the *Act*, the dreadful events of Chinese exclusion

¹¹ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 95.

shape my approaches to social justice. The confidence with which the colleague spoke contained these traces of anti-Chinese resentment that emerged from the mid-twentieth century, and my inability to answer, call out, or sufficiently address the matter also contained traces of silence from this era. The gaze of the Other had confined me to three finite categories of inessential subject/object, woman, and Chinese; three classifications of being that I believe are generally overlooked and undervalued in discussions of social and racial hierarchies. I could only partially return to my traditions for answers since my problem was not with my tradition, but with the white world, which continues, for example, to subject the legitimacy of Chinese philosophy under Western intellectual scrutiny in the same way Chinese women continue to be viewed as docile playthings. Thus, the point of contention here is that Canada has always had (or, perhaps more accurately, inherited) a foundational problem with or towards Asians. Understanding the mere injustice of this situation was not quite enough for me to recover the sense of being I had prior to the incident. I was now living in “bad faith,” a mode of existence termed by Sartre, wherein the gaze of the Other fixed my orientation in the world as that of “Chinese” and “woman” and nothing else. What was the essence of this attack that isolated my gendered-racial orientation negatively? What was the underlying defect of being a Chinese woman? The amassing inferiority complex I developed throughout graduate studies will perhaps shape the rest of my academic career. Yet, the concern is not a matter of delving into how I manage personal attacks. Rather, the task is to identify what regimes of truth underwrite such a political claim and the discourses that configured a racially-exclusionary practice and conception of who could act with reason and moral sensibility, and therefore belong in proximity to the self-proclaimed superior West. Dissatisfied with the advice of the Other, which always involved reproducing some form of passivity or quietude on my part—a brazen reinforcement of all the exhausted anti-

Chinese woman stereotypes that prevented so many Asian women from fulfilling a life beyond stereotypical expectations—I sought other avenues of thought, ways of being, and forms of expression. In my endeavor to comprehend the nature of what a Chinese woman would know, I came across a small grassroots magazine called *The Asianadian*. It appeared to be exercised with many of the same issues I was now confronting as a young Chinese scholar. It was also a moment of intellectual serendipity.

What is *The Asianadian*?

The Asianadian: An Asian Canadian Magazine was Canada's first and only explicitly anti-sexist, anti-racist, and anti-homophobic social justice magazine produced by Asian Canadian artists and activists. It ran as a seven-volume quarterly between 1978 and 1985 with 24 issues and was co-founded by Tony B. Chan, Cheuk Kwan, and Lau Bo out of Toronto. The magazine featured various forms of literature, art, and photography by Asians Canadians for Asian Canadians. Published by the Asianadian Resource Workshop, the magazine was the first of its kind and sold in various bookstores throughout Toronto's Chinatown and was distributed by the editors and volunteers wherever their travels took them. The magazine successfully garnered approximately 300 subscribers from Canada, the United States, Asia, and Europe. The co-founders were friends, collaborators, graduate students, up-and-coming filmmakers, and activists concerned initially and primarily with the future of the Chinatown community of Toronto; however, as more editors and volunteers joined the editorial collective and by drawing on the lived experiences of Kwan, the scope of the magazine quickly grew to encompass discussions about the conditions of pan-Asian culture, politics, familial relations, and community in Canada. The combined efforts and insights of the editorial staff and contributors helped to maintain *The Asianadian*'s counter-hegemonic agenda, which remained largely uncompromised, despite

changes to the editorial team. Its radical criticality persisted until the end. The magazine quickly became an artistic platform that gave several now well-established Asian Canadian writers, artists, and scholars opportunities to express themselves, thereby forming the rising social justice collective of the 1970s and 1980s, which has come to form the grassroots foundations for theorizing contemporary contemplations of identity, cultural production, political recognition, and notions of freedom.

During its run, the small but mighty magazine was able to attract significant media attention from media outlets such as the *Globe and Mail*, *CTV News*, and others.¹² Beyond media attention, the discussions underlying the magazine at the time involved using creative expression to develop deeper and critical reflections on the nature of being Asian in Canada. These emergent discussions on political identity and social experience were heavily informed by the histories of social and political exclusion of early Chinese, Japanese, and South Asians peoples in the twentieth century, as well as a recognition of patterns of intergenerational trauma. Critically linked to these historical injustices were the Canadian government's endorsement and enforcement of these practices, which succeeded in maintaining several generations of social immobility. Of course, contingent upon these critiques of state-sanctioned power and violence are considerations of inter-generational and inter-personal history in relation to social expectation and identity politics. Pertinent to the magazine's analysis was to examine: *what did it mean to be Asian in Canada? An Asian Canadian? Asian-born-in-Canada? Asianadian?* Such investigation embodied what Trinh T. Minh-ha (by way of Jean-Paul Sartre) calls 'freedom and

¹² Cheuk Kwan (*The Asianadian* co-founder) in discussion with author, September 29, 2017.

the masses.’ These questions about life, existence, and belonging are interrogated by and through literature and art and are made to serve a political purpose. On this basis, Minha-ha writes:

...literature thus places itself within the context of the proletarian fight, while the writer frees himself from his dependence on elites—or in a wider sense, from any privilege—and creates, so to speak, an art for an unrestricted public known as ‘art for the masses.’¹³

In the development of this “art for the masses,” such intricate inquiries into diasporic life, dual consciousness, and responsibility compel readers and contributors to think about the future; they involve an internal and external assessment of the power structures that sustain and reproduce feelings of inferiority, guilt, and existential discomfort; they produce clashes in the soul. Amidst this internal dialogue between Asians of different generations, genders, and socio-economic affiliations, an array of answers, interpretations, and reactions towards these questions come through in each issue of *The Asianadian*, as well as an intuited understanding that these conversations are never complete. Thus, while the magazine was presented as a grassroots artistic and activist approach towards understanding the meaning of being Asian Canadian, I argue that there are latent critical and philosophical insights in *The Asianadian* that worked in tandem with creative expression to signal a mass political awakening of Asian Canadian artists and activists. Though the central history of *The Asianadian* to social justice organizing is well known to those within the Asian Canadian literati, the magazine’s comparative absence in broader discussions of race, identity, and social justice in Canada is an oversight that calls for redress. Again, while the magazine was not overtly philosophical, much of the contending discussion on identity and communal and national belonging (questions with which cultural studies and critical race theory are highly exercised) are indeed philosophical and coalesce rather

¹³ Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other*, pp. 11-12.

provocatively with many of the insights from other bodies of critical race theory—notably, those of postcolonial/poststructural theory, Black Existentialism, and Indigenous Studies. Thus, focusing on both the insights and oversights associated with *The Asianadian*, my dissertation deploys the political philosophies of existentialism and phenomenology, critical race theory, and critical ethnography studies as a way to understand the relation of Asians to the Canadian state and society (as well as my own relation to identity, *The Asianadian*, and the politics of writing against whiteness).

In my quest for experience-based truths, the magazine is inspiring and arises from formative moments at the nascent stages of Asian Canadian social justice cultural production. To read about the ways in which Asian writers and cultural activists experienced, persisted, and survived racist and sexist attacks on their intellectualism, professionalism, and culture in Canada's era of official multiculturalism is a sustained source of motivation that remains relevant today. Indeed, it is deeply relevant to my own experience with graduate school. In identifying the structures that continue to perpetuate anti-Asian hate, the editorial collective also engendered an ethical responsibility to Asian Canadian communities by presenting and sharing traditional wisdoms and methods of resistance and survival. On this basis, my analysis of *The Asianadian* contains more than an examination of cultural production and examination of historical stereotypes. Rather, in my quest for understanding the metaphysical implications of anti-Asian discourse under settler colonialism's¹⁴ unfolding, I examine the language, political concerns, and underlying philosophical themes of certain editorials, recurring columns, and features as they relate to the condition of Asian Canadians, their history, and social justice

¹⁴ I discuss and unpack the term in Chapter One. See Lorenzo Veracini "Settler Collective, Founding Violence and Disavowal: The Settler Colonial Situation" in *The Journal of Intercultural Studies* Vol. 29, No. 4 (November 2008): pp. 363- 379. Also, see Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native" in *The Journal of Genocide Research*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (2006): pp. 387-409.

movement. As a project of critical race phenomenology, then, the role of lived experience is fundamental to the development of a political awakening and as Lewis Gordon notes, “any theory that fails to address the existential phenomenological dimensions of racism suffers from a failure to address the situational dimension, what Fanon called *l’expérience vécue* (“lived experience”) of race.”¹⁵ While Gordon’s work is primarily in the realm of Black Existential thought, this particular piece of philosophical wisdom is certainly necessary for anyone considering the social experiences of racialized and marginalized beings coming into consciousness of their oppression. It is important not to negate this political awakening or its implications and risk reproducing Eurocentric standards of elitism because the space of otherness is always a site of emergence. Though this interstitial space of emergence necessarily uses the instrumentality of language, rhetoric, and references particular to Anglo-Canada, it contains its own hybrid vernacular, rationale, and therefore embodies an entirely different use of language, rhetoric, and reference. The development of this new and hybrid Asian Canadian sensibility was enhanced by the fact that the magazine began printing something called “Asianadian Aims.” These aims reflected the urgency to revitalize the Asian Canadian community. The aims of the magazine were printed on the inside cover of each issue until its end in 1985. The aims were as follows:

1. To find new dignity and pride in being Asian in Canada.
2. To promote an understanding between Asian Canadians and other Canadians.
3. To speak out against those conditions, individuals and institutions perpetuating racism in Canada.
4. To stand up against the distortions of our history in Canada, stereotypes, economic exploitations, and the general tendency towards injustice and inequality practiced on minority groups.
5. To provide a forum for Asian Canadian writers, artists, musicians, etc.

¹⁵ Lewis Gordon, ed., “Existential Dynamics of Theorizing Black Invisibility” in *Existence in Black: An Anthology of Black Existential Philosophy*, (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 69-80; 70.

6. To promote unity by bridging the gap between Asians with roots in Canada and recent immigrants.

The Asianadian's Aims, further discussed in the second chapter, represent the editorial collective's goals in accordance to the lived experiences of Asian peoples in Canada. Writing lived experience into the larger social justice discourse is writing one's responsibility in the movement. Language transcends its instrumentality as the connection to and expression of this responsibility and as Minh-ha argues, "to write is to communicate, express, witness, impose, instruct, redeem, or save—at any rate to *mean* and to send out an *unambiguous message*."¹⁶ Writing carries traces of one's sense of freedom. Certainly, the effective rearrangement of language and the production of new vernacular to make sense of historical mistreatment, internalized racism, and intergenerational trauma becomes a productive practice for collective dignity. Moreover, the collection (and collective) of lived experience found in the pages of the magazine makes visible dissimilarities within national experience that, according to Christine Kim, "inscribes the racialized figure as a part of a shadowy past that is loathed for the futures it forecloses."¹⁷ It is this grassroots attunement to reality and attention to lived experience that form the theoretical foundations for my cultural, political, and philosophical contribution to Asian Canadian scholarship.

I have chosen to conduct a cultural and discourse analysis on *The Asianadian's* social justice cultural production. Although my analysis will focus on the written aspects of the magazine, *The Asianadian* also contains an archive of art and children's photography that deserve productive analysis outside the confines of this doctoral project. A critical cultural analysis of the editorial collective's particular attention to personal memoir and life writing as it

¹⁶ Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other*, p. 16 (original emphasis).

¹⁷ See Christine Kim, *The Minor Intimacies of Race: Asian Publics in North America* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2016).

correlates to historical recovery and identity expression is necessary. As such, I am committed to a discourse analysis of the magazine's use of language, historical and/or cultural references, and internal community dialogues. This work involves interdisciplinary modes of inquiry and strategies of knowledge unification for utilizing political philosophy, philosophies of freedom, as well as critical race and postcolonial theory to read Asian Canadian social and political history through the cultural production of *The Asianadian*. In terms of theoretical arrangement, each chapter follows particular streams of thought and theory for explicating Asian Canadian histories and their resistance against Canadian settler colonialism in particular.

Chapter Breakdown, Methods, and Outlooks

The first chapter anchors the primary theoretical lens of this dissertation by delineating the 'settler colonial triad', defining the term 'arrivants', and reviewing histories of anti-Asian racism in Canada. Importantly, I use Confucian conceptions of reality to ground the worldviews of early Asian arrivants in Canada to theorize how they experienced and interacted with white settlers and Indigenous peoples on *gum san* (or 'gold mountain', the term many Chinese people used to refer to the continent of North America). In this framework, wherein embodied Asian histories produce different meanings and truths about Canada, I situate three histories of Asian exclusion, confiscation, and expulsion, which are critical contexts for anyone who is unfamiliar with twentieth century exclusionary practices and policies against Asian peoples in Canada. I rely upon secondary source materials to read the following three historical sites of Asian exclusion: the exclusion of Chinese people under the head tax law and the *Chinese Immigration Act*; East Indian expulsion during the incident of the *Komagata Maru*; and the forced relocation and incarceration of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War. The establishment of these histories and metaphysical orientations will be a meaningful point of reference for the

following two chapters, which look more directly at how *The Asianadian* collective carried and reorient, reinscribe, and remember these histories.

In the second chapter, I offer a reading of *The Asianadian* as a hybridized text that emerges through what Homi K. Bhabha calls the “Third Space of enunciation”¹⁸ from *The Location of Culture*. Here I engage directly with the editorials and features of the magazine as primary source materials to draw out the ways in which the magazine’s philosophical sensibility towards community freedom and responsibility introduced new conversations about Indigeneity, gender, and mental wellness. These emerging discussions are hybridized under existential and phenomenological discourses of freedom, responsibility, and bodily perception consistent with the philosophies of Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Frantz Fanon, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. The generative quality of these hybrid Asian Canadian sensibilities forms the grounds for Asian Canadian ‘reOrientation’, or a turning away from settler colonial social orders of belonging towards an interstitial space of collective identity and community cohesion.

Chapter three discusses the ways in which the magazine’s creative grassroots approaches to reclaiming destructive stereotypes and restructuring the English language contested the falsity of celebratory Canadian narratives of state-formation. I engage with Indigenous Studies and critical race theory to read two important recurring columns in *The Asianadian*: “The Dubious Awards” and “On the Firing Line”, which utilized humor and political critique to reclaim inaccurate stereotypes and make their own meanings out of histories of exclusion. These recurring columns bolster *The Asianadian*’s hybrid sense of being by animating its interstitial space of collective and individual identity formations and speaking harsh truths about Canadian

¹⁸ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 54.

history and contemporary reality. On this basis, the magazine collective produced its own authority on Asian Canadian representation.

After a review of the broader arguments made throughout the dissertation, my conclusion argues for the ways in which writing lived experience into social justice discourse counsels a return to foundational questions of race, land, labour, and identity within the (post)colonial context. I underscore how the social justice cultural production of *The Asianadian* collective fashioned for me tactics of survival and created powerful reservoirs of wisdom passed down from a global anti-colonial, anti-capitalist collective comprised of elders and ancestors of the social justice movement.

The purpose of this dissertation is two-fold. Ethically, I have a political responsibility to identify and critique the structures and discourses of white supremacy that continue to contest the agency and belonging of Asians in the Canadian diaspora. Pragmatically, I want to introduce philosophical ideas into the mainstream discussions of Asian Canadian scholarship, while also situating the same philosophical ideas as generative of hybridity outside of its traditional geo-historical context so as to widen application and engagement in both fields.

The wisdom contained within the pages of *The Asianadian* was made all the more compelling when I conducted interviews and personal correspondence with some of the magazine collective. Interviews were based on open-ended questions that were provided prior to meeting to allow time for editors/contributors to remember their participation or reflect on how to answer. Cheuk Kwan, the co-founder of the magazine, was responsible for bringing forth and maintaining pan-Asian inclusivity and the magazine's radical, unapologetic social justice agenda. As a worldly-being and Chinatown community activist alongside friend, colleague, and co-founder Tony B. Chan, Kwan brought eclectic global and local perspectives to the artistic and

literary forum. I also had the fortunate opportunity to meet Momoye Sugiman, a radical feminist and major contributing editor. Sugiman was with the collective since its first volume and led the two issues on Asian Canadian women in 1978 and 1985. Sugiman was largely responsible for introducing critical perspectives on the condition and treatment of Asian women in Canada under oppressive Orientalist stereotyping and lack of inclusion in the larger Anglo Second Wave feminist movement. Her perspectives on the socio-political situatedness of Asian women and their struggles with living in between two worlds were foundational articulations of an emergent Asian Canadian women or feminist consciousness. In addition to interviewing two major figures with the magazine, I also had the opportunity to interview musician, poet, and novelist Terry Watada about his experiences with working on *The Asianadian* as an interviewee and volunteer. I have included these voices throughout the dissertation (although in no particular order) and, while each member was asked similar open-ended questions about their experiences with *The Asianadian* and being Asian in Canada, their answers and comments vary given their different lived experiences and level of engagement with the magazine. These voices disclose a profound closeness with and responsibility to the pan-Asian community and so underscore an ethics of relationality that is conscious and weary of how power influences discourse.

The elasticity of racist discourse, behaviors, and attitudes pose serious epistemological challenges for anti-racist cultural workers and philosophers. Manufactured social control in institutional interactions ensures a concealing of voices, subjectivities, and histories unaccounted for by the archives. This has been clearly recognized and accounted for by postcolonial and critical race scholars. Seeing the parallels of how racism and lived experience produce existential ambiguities in Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* and the work of *The Asianadian*, it is possible to trace the lived experiences of racial fixedness across different sites of colonial and settler

colonial expansion. Much of this dissertation, therefore, remains exercise with the intersections of politics, philosophy, and personal experience within the context of racial relations in a settler colonial setting. To repeat, while I am primarily engaged with the histories and material conditions of Asians in Canada as well as the Orientalist regimes of racism which we have been subject, I want to theorize Asian literary resistance to Canadian forms of racism in a way that discloses the interwoven nature of our histories with Indigenous nations, Black existentialists and community organizers, and other scholars of colour who have critiqued their exclusion (or inclusion) within orders of Canadian social belonging. And because the Canadian settler colonial project emerged out of a British imperial venture, it is necessary to consider the genealogies of racism that connect European Orientalist fantasies to tangible expressions of anti-Asian racism in Canada.

It is not inconsequential to note, then, that Edward Said's *Orientalism* was published the very same year *The Asianadian* ran its first issue. As many readers will be aware, Said's *Orientalism* was motivated by the disparity between representation of the Orient and the lived realities of people in the Middle East. Elaborating on the interconnected layers of Orientalism, Said expresses how "The Orient is an integral part of European *material* civilization and culture," stylized against the ontological and epistemological distinctions made between "The Orient" and "The Occident."¹⁹ The preservation of such distinctions permits Orientalism to be a justified and justifying discourse and sign of power over the Orient. That the lens of Orientalism, by way of its framework, distorts the realities of Asian people is indicative of Western civilization's fear of alterity in the barbarous and unknown Orient. In identifying the singular unifying theory that captures the ways in which the Occident stereotypes the Orient, racial

¹⁹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), pp. 1; 2.

encounters continue to be marked by contrasting and generally incommensurable metaphysics, which are translated, interpreted, and subsumed by the West and marketed as empirical knowledge about the new and old Orient. As Said announces: “continued investment made Orientalism, as a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness.”²⁰ The extensiveness of this system operates on global and local levels, and therefore establishes an entire spectrum for reading through and thinking about the Orient and Orientals. These commitments to fabricating fantasies about the Orient are such that “the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action,”²¹ and therefore limited to the assumptions and expectations of a gazing Other who observes the Orient as an object of study. Being that we are outside of Europe, however, Orientalist representations of the Japanese, Chinese, and East Indians in Canada are different but similar to Said’s analysis of how Arabs are represented as Orientals by the British and the French. Colonialists, as Said notes, are nevertheless content to ignore differences in geopolitics. Instead, “the Orient and Oriental, Arab, Islam, Indian, Chinese, or whatever, become repetitious pseudo-incarnations of some great original (Christ, Europe, the West) they were supposed to be imitating.”²² Difference (racial and otherwise) among Asian people is erased so that they may better fit into the singular category of ineffable Orient.²³ Published in 1978, *Orientalism* remains a groundbreaking text that discloses

²⁰ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 6.

²¹ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 5.

²² Said, *Orientalism*, p. 62.

²³ “As anticolonialism sweeps and indeed unifies the entire Oriental world, the Orientalist damns the whole business not only as a nuisance but as an insult to the Western democracies. As momentous, generally important issues face the world—issues of nuclear destruction, catastrophically scarce resources, unprecedented human demands for equality, justice, and economic precarity—popular caricatures of the Orient are exploited by politicians whose source of ideological supply is not only the half-literate technocrat but the superliterate Orientalist. The legendary Arabists in the State Department warn of Arab plans to take over the world. The perfidious Chinese, half-naked Indians, and passive Muslims are described as vultures for ‘our’ largesse and are damned when ‘we lose them’ to communism, or to their unregenerate Oriental instincts: the difference is scarcely significant.” See “Crisis” in *Orientalism*, p. 108.

the ways in which the Europeans and North Americans construct epistemological truths about Asian peoples to justify economic wars and political resource extraction.

Yet, as fundamental as the text may be in relation to our unfolding discussion, Said's formulation of Orientalism is decontextualized from a settler colonial context. Indeed, the project in *Orientalism* is about how the imperial metropole and imperial periphery come together through difference. In a settler colonial context, 'settlers bring their work with them' (to paraphrase Patrick Wolfe), rather than relying on Indigenous peoples for labour as is the case in the classical colonial context. This racial configuration creates intimacies, proximities, and antagonisms between racialized labour forces imported by settlers and the original inhabitants of the lands to which these laborers are sent. As we shall see, it is unambiguous that labour remains a primary resource for growth in both colonial sites of dominance; yet, in settler colonial sites such as Canada, proximity to labouring bodies required white settlers to establish networks of defense, which were consistently tainted by classist discourses and political statements that bolstered Western civilization's obsession with the *either/or* classificatory model. Historically, this creates a history in which relationships between Indigenous, Asian, and other racialized immigrants are not figured prominent in the archive; analytically, moreover, this creates a difficulty in that critiques of global capital and labour relations must be adequately theorized alongside more national stories of settler colonialism if we are to produce anything like a rigorous understanding of what Iyko Day calls 'Alien Capital' or what Lisa Lowe calls 'The Intimacies of Four Continents.'

Canada emerges from a model of white settler metaphysical principles of reality that validates genocidal policies and practices against Indigenous peoples and the historical exclusionary measures exercised against Asian men and women. Such hostile relations were

deemed necessary for the biological, social, and ideological purity of white Canada with discourses of racial difference underscoring the totality of this truth regime. As such, settler colonial metaphysics are constituted by internal and external modes of relating to the world. For instance, internalized cultural assumptions projected onto “the colonial subject [are] always ‘overdetermined from without,’”²⁴ according to Bhabha in his reading of Fanon’s work. He further notes that “it is through the *image and fantasy* – those orders that figure transgressively on the borders of history and the unconscious – that Fanon most profoundly evokes the colonial condition as *it is the external configuration of reality*.”²⁵ Indissociably, external constructions of settler reality are informed by the same internal images and fantasies that overdetermine the Other. The image or fantasy displaces and replaces the existentiality of the Other, and “its representation is always spatially split – it makes present something that is absent – and temporally deferred: it is the representation of a time that is always elsewhere, a repetition.”²⁶ Overlapping and within these internal and external assemblages is the ethnocentric either/or paradigm particular to Western thought. *Either* one is absorbed into the state through various means of assimilatory and complicit praxes *or* face expulsion, confiscation, detention, exploitation, and ultimately, exclusion. The traces of this ideological dichotomy illustrate the colonial metaphysic of classification and compartmentalization that Bhabha challenges in the foreword to Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*. Yet, following Bhabha’s caution that if the sole emphasis turns to dismantling this colonial compartmentalization, “then the ‘new humanism’ of the Third World cannot properly emerge until the bipolar tensions, contradictions, and

²⁴ Homi K. Bhabha, “Interrogating identity: Frantz Fanon and the postcolonial prerogative,” *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge Classics, 2004) pp. 57-92; 61 (my emphasis).

²⁵ Bhabha, “Interrogating identity: Frantz Fanon and the postcolonial prerogative,” p. 61 (my emphasis).

²⁶ Bhabha, “Interrogating identity: Frantz Fanon and the postcolonial prerogative,” p. 73.

dependencies of the cold war are brought to an end.”²⁷ This is particularly true of racism faced by the Chinese globally. The work of decolonizing reality, then, must be approached through contextual fluidity as a ‘*project of futurity*’²⁸ served through counter-hegemonic work of movements like *The Asianadian*, which ultimately contain what Bhabha identifies and what I shall articulate as ‘hybridity.’ On this basis, the collaborative, community-informed, and action-oriented social justice work of *The Asianadian* resists and challenges the given, tranquilized reality of white settler dominance.

Conclusion

It is very difficult to safeguard oneself from attacks against one’s existence and ontology. It is especially difficult and cruel, moreover, to expect one to confront their situation alone. Being advised to passively confront the attacker and to grow thicker skin elides a reality wherein those less privileged in the white world are coerced into confronting an existence that negates possibilities for intuiting deeper structures of social experience, which can help subvert destructive metaphysics. In other words, racism makes writing against racism more difficult, and this is a way in which racism reproduces itself: by exhausting me/us. This project thus attempts to share the work *The Asianadian* to benefit from the experience and wisdom contained within and to draw inspiration from the ancestors of the movement I carry forward. And while I celebrate their labour and align myself with the writers, scholars, and activists who continue to center Asian peoples in both local and global fights for justice, I do so with a keen eye to lateral relations with Indigenous peoples and other racialized beings who find themselves thrown onto

²⁷ Homi K. Bhabha “Foreword: Framing Fanon,” *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004), pp. vii-xlii; xv.

²⁸ Bhabha, “Foreword: Framing Fanon,” p. xvii.

their lands. It is this awakening to the world and a sense of being-with-others that political consciousness begins its formation.

Chapter One: Histories of Invisibility: Early Asian Arrivants and the Settler

Colonial Metaphysics of Canadian State-Formation

*A study of the imagination and
psychology of settler colonialism is
therefore needed.*²⁹

- Lorenzo Veracini

Introduction: Genealogies of Anti-Asian Racism in Canada

As early as the 1860s, settlers on the West coast armed themselves with the idea that the Chinese and Japanese were a social, cultural, and economic threat to white people in Canada. Often categorized under homogenous and derogatory terms such as “Chinamen,” “Chink,” “Jap,” or simply, “Oriental,” early East Asian arrivants were the first targets of anti-Asian racism in Canada. In British Columbia, where a large population of Chinese and Japanese settled in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the frightening image of the opium-smoking-white-woman-luring-Chinaman (popularly referenced in dime novels and white Canada propaganda) held the ever-cautious gaze of white residents.³⁰ A general consensus informed public opinion and sometimes provoked hysteria: the Yellow Peril threatened all the things white settlers worked hard for: their property (including land, resources, and private property), jobs, women, and their racial supremacy. East Asian men were presumed to be an immoral and unsanitary group who lacked sacred Western mores and values, and therefore had prescribed onto them the characteristics and social expectations of a “Chinamen”—a figure of inscrutable quality, whose mysterious embodiment of the Yellow Peril was as intriguing as much as it was frightening. The

²⁹ Lorenzo Veracini, “Settler Collective, Founding Violence and Disavowal: The Settler Colonial Situation.” *The Journal of Intercultural Studies* vol. 29, no. 4 (November 2008): p. 365.

³⁰ See Hilda Glynn-Ward, *The Writing on the Wall: Chinese and Japanese Immigration to BC, 1920* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974).

reproduction of anti-Asian imagery and language, borrowed from Europe's already-established repertoire of Orientalism, co-constituted a particular form of settler psychology that transformed as it transited across the Pacific into contextually-specific forms of anti-Asian racism particular to Canadian cultural consciousness. The sedimentation of these fundamental cultural assumptions (grounded by the European Enlightenment concepts of freedom, rationalism, and progress that shaped the West's early modern view of the world) are aided by a metaphysics that contends that everything in the world holds a place in a comprehensive category in a "natural" hierarchy. As Tsenay Serequeberhan notes: "modern political philosophy—Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau—viewed the state as basically necessitated by the economic need of preserving life and property."³¹ Such notions of order retained cultural and intellectual prominence in Canada, where they were modified and adapted to fit a Canadian context as ideological apparatuses used to legitimate dispossessing Native people of their land, culture, and relations. In this worldview, the land and its bountiful resources are not seen as the product of any Indigenous labour or stewardship, but rather as the complete lack of any Indigenous control over the territory. The socio-economic and political exclusion of Asians in Canada—situated as they are firmly within the global modes of production and the politics of labour—took place on territory cleared out by material practices of settler colonialism bolstered in every way by discourses of dispossession. As such, *The Asianadian*'s social justice spirit not only emerged as a product of Canada's settler colonial history, its rhetoric was also partially anchored by responses from writers to these fraught historical foundations of Canadian state-formation. In this history, I theorize white Canadians and their ancestors as 'settler' Canadians and prefer to theorize Asian 'settlers' as 'arrivants,' at least in these early periods. Whether or not Asians to be considered 'settlers of

³¹ See Tsenay Serequeberhan, "The Idea of Colonialism in Hegel's Philosophy of Right," *International Political Quarterly* vol. xxix no. 115. (September 1989): pp. 301-318.

colour’ in the fullness of Canadian history is a question I do not take up here (or elsewhere in the dissertation); however, in my efforts to theorize comprehensively the histories of Asians in Canada, I prefer to make this necessary distinction between settler and arrivant to distinguish analytically between white settlers, Indigenous peoples, and other racialized Canadians. Thus, while I theorize Asian exclusion from Canadian orders of social belonging, I also grapple with the ways in which Asian labour made possible the continental project of Canadian settler colonialism.

Despite their exploitations as ‘cheap labour, therefore, the existence of the Asian sojourner population clashed against white Canada forever dreams to further settle and develop the land, introducing a lengthy history of anti-Asian disenfranchisement and eventual exclusion or expulsion. Putting forth these understandings that anti-Asian sentiment historically underscored the economic and socio-political formation of Canada leads us to an important delineation that this dissertation will attempt to qualify: mainly, that the social and cultural emergence of what we call Canada reflects specific structures of thought and ways of relation that are indicative of Western metaphysical ideals motivated by white supremacy and anti-Asian racism vis-à-vis Canadian settler colonialism. As Iyko Day suggests in *Alien Capital*, Asian racialization and settler colonialism in North America encapsulate the ever-moving spirit of settler colonialism as “a formation that is transnational but distinctively national, similar but definitely not the same, repetitive but without a predictable rhythm, structural but highly susceptible to change, *everywhere but hard to isolate*.”³² Metaphysically, then, Asian people pose a unique conundrum to settler colonial normativity by way of their ambivalent existence as

³² Iyko Day, *Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonial Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), p. 17 (my emphasis).

non-British and non-Canadian; similarly, being non-Indigenous, Asian peoples experience a triple embodiment as Canadian subjects consistent with racist histories of colonialism.

This chapter will map out three sites of intellectual history in Asian and white Canadian race relations and argue for the ways in which anti-Asian machinations both globally and nationally reinforced Canadian settler colonial metaphysics as much as they exposed their power and violence against the resources of other cultures. First, I review the historical foundations of anti-Chinese racism through head tax regimes and the *Chinese Immigration Act* (1923-1947). Next, I retell the story of the *Komagata Maru* (1914), which offers a good historical foundation for approaching anti-Asian forms of Canadian racism that target Sikh, Muslim, Indian, Arab, and Brown-skinned men. Lastly, I touch upon the creation of internment camps for Japanese Canadians developed during the Second World War. By bringing together these three sites of anti-Asian racism in Canada, I offer readers the historical backgrounds that bolster the social and cultural contexts of *The Asianadian*. Prior to analyzing these historical foundations, however, it is to spend some time explicating further on how settler colonialism and the philosophical branch of metaphysics becomes unified in a Canadian context.

On Hybridity and Eastern/Western Metaphysics

I am by training a political philosopher of the European continental tradition, yet I also come through the world by way of diasporic Chinese philosophy, language, food, and culture. Operating within this web of relations and lived experience, I write, theorize, and move with a being-in-the-world that I experience and identify as hybridity. In my usage, ‘hybrid’ is first and foremost a subjective definition that I engage with as a means to understand my own movements through social spaces as a Chinese person born in Canada. It is, at the same time, a weighted term in the context of cultural theory and postcolonial studies emerging largely out of the

conversation started Homi K. Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*.³³ Sometimes read as a critical intervention upon postcolonial studies that take the power relations of Said's *Orientalism* as fixed and unchanging, Bhabha view of the colonial condition is one wherein power relations are always already constituted ambivalently and therefore can (and often do) slip radically as with the Hegelian myth of the master who comes to rely upon the slave (and the slave's labour) to constitute himself as such. Within this reading, there is a potentiality for resistance in the colonizer's need for the colonized to share the celebratory story of colonialism, to read Christian texts in awe rather than laughter, and to take seriously the letter of Western law. The colonized, however, tend not to read history, scripture, or law in the same way. For Bhabha, "the ambivalence at the source of traditional discourses on authority enables a form of subversion, founded on the undecidability that turns the discursive conditions of dominance into the grounds of intervention."³⁴ Significantly, both Said and Bhabha make their respective critiques of coloniality in literary and cultural contexts. This is relevant to our present discussion not only in the sense that I am to theorize *The Asianadian* as a form of intervention reflecting hybridity, but also because I want to more clearly situate my own subjective reading of hybridity as a Chinese-Canadian woman whose 'being-in-the-world' is profoundly conditioned by a diasporic life lived between two worlds.

In the case of this work, then, my hermeneutical circle is constituted by the cultural sensibilities of China and the West—two important foci for understanding metaphysical difference and emergence in an increasingly globalized world. At the same time, I also recruit two different phrases of postcolonial theory by drawing upon Said's critiques of Orientalist

³³ Homi K. Bhabha. *The Location of Culture*. (London: Routledge Classics, 1994).

³⁴ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 160

discourse *as well as* Bhabha's reading of hybridity. To be clear, while I use the language of 'hybridity' and 'Orientalism' and use both Eastern and Western metaphysics to articulate my own reading of *The Asianadian*, I do not see these apparent contradictions as short-comings in approach, position, or theoretical orientations. Contrarily, being always already co-imbricated in the tradition of continental philosophy, the underlying and sometimes invisible interpretive tensions between the East and the West are not new to me and, more importantly, should not be seen by others as incommensurable or mutually combative given that both traditions have confronted and communicated these tensions through cross-cultural exchanges throughout history. Eastern and Western philosophies live comfortably within the single subjectivities of many people (particularly those who learn their own and the English language simultaneously). Given that I write in a Canadian context, however, my social location inside Western society as an "Oriental" subject produces what David Hall and Roger Ames calls 'cross-cultural anachronism'³⁵ (a term closely related to Bhabha articulation of cultural hybridity). The underlying metaphysical critiques of this dissertation are articulated from the 'Third Space of enunciation,' which necessarily draws on the epistemological traditions of both the East and the West to present and overcome the contradictions and ambivalences of cultural hierarchy. In *Thinking Through Confucius*, Hall and Ames contend: "the fact that we are predominantly influenced by the experiential and conceptual climate of Anglo-European cultures does not mean that we are unable to access responsibly the resources of alternative cultures."³⁶ Indeed, it would be helpful for any academic examining the socio-political history of early arrivants (who come to

³⁵ See David L. Hall, Roger T. Ames, "Apologia," *Thinking Through Confucius* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987): pp. 1-11.

³⁶ David L. Hall, Roger T. Ames, *Thinking Through Confucius* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), p. 8.

Indigenous lands through an array of movements³⁷) to recognize the nuances of cultural hybridity at work and to appreciate the underlying milieu of diasporic difference and alterity riven within each transit through space, time, and social interaction. That is, if one wants to understand in the theoretical and historical sense the existence and experience of Asian people in Canada, it is necessary to understand that we have our own metaphysical traditions that pre-existed our constitution as hybrid Canadian subjects. Moreover, these connections are not mere traces or loose connections to lands never visited but lived and known daily experiences in Asian languages spoken, food eaten, and ancestors honoured. Accordingly, before I delve any deeper into historical and theoretical elaboration, I will explicate further on the metaphysical grounding of early Chinese arrivants to contextualize my analysis of the historical and political relationship between Asian arrivants and the state, and so I begin with the metaphysics of what is familiar to me: Confucianism.

In the *Analects of Confucius*, the Sage offered the following wisdom: “human beings are similar in their natural tendencies but vary greatly by virtue of their habits.”³⁸ Although Confucius could have never foreseen the mass exodus of Chinese people to an island shaped like a giant turtle and other parts of the globe, he held the perspective that people and their realities ineluctably underwent constant change. Sojourning life was not uncommon to the Chinese. Given the Sage’s own extensive travels to various states during his lifetime in the Spring and Autumn period, it may not have been surprising for him to know that eventually Chinese people would sojourn all across the globe to different lands, taking with them the specialized

³⁷ See Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012), pp. 1-40.

³⁸ Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1998), p. 202.

knowledges of what we now call Confucianism or its eventual institutionalized branch, neo-Confucianism.

Confucianism, sometimes used interchangeably with Chinese philosophy, is a social philosophy about the nature of reality developed through a series of dialogues between Confucius and his students that attempts to form understandings of how people and nature³⁹ relate to one another and change over time. Without subverting the philosophical structures grounding Confucianism to fit into the language of its European counterpart, one may define metaphysics as a philosophical mode or method for analyzing, observing, and contemplating that which is beyond the realm of physical existence. Chinese philosophy is syncretic and encourages the perspective that everything in the world arises from a cosmology of *dao* (literally, “The Way”), wherein ontologies and essences, though distinct in their material or subatomic form, are ultimately and invisibly interconnected and driven by the power of nature.⁴⁰ The idea of individualized or independent ontologies is not a central concern to Chinese philosophy since all matter is presumed to be interconnected; therefore, because no object in nature is seen as having an ontology separate from other beings, objects, and nature, there is no urgency to transcend its anthropomorphic finitude. This means that notions of transcendence or the transmigration of the soul as discussed in Judeo-Christian religions is noticeably void in Confucian thought, although it may be a provocative anachronism of analysis for those who study the syncretism of the Three

³⁹ Nature is understood here as the fluctuating processes of change that occur in the natural world. Ames and Rosemont use the example of a tree to outline how nature changes. They write: “the tree seen in one’s front yard is clearly the same year all year long; its *substance*—underlying reality—remains the same, despite differing appearances throughout the year. *But in the world of lived experience, it is not forced on us to focus on the tree’s sameness, substance, or essence.* Rather, we can experience a tree with flowers and buds, a tree with green leaves, then brown leaves, and finally, a tree with no leaves at all. The tree *appears* differently, and why can’t the appearances be ‘real’?” See Ames and Hall, *The Analects of Confucius*, p. 21

⁴⁰ See Wu Kuang-Ming, *On Chinese Body Thinking: A Cultural Hermeneutic* (New York: Brill, 1997); Chad Hansen, *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought: A Philosophical Interpretation*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

Teachings (Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism) in China.⁴¹ Ames and translator Henry Rosemont posit that because the ancient Chinese did not believe in a creation myth, the world was intelligible as it was through explanatory sense perception.⁴² It is entirely appropriate to say, then, that Confucianism in particular and Chinese philosophy in general are profoundly phenomenological discourses. Thus, the relationship between human values and the unchanging changeability of the natural world presents an intricate problem for comprehending finitude and separateness precisely because they are grounded in presuppositions of wholeness and change. Ames and Rosemont offer an interesting distinction:

In our view, early Chinese thinkers, unlike their Western counterparts ancient and contemporary, were not concerned with seeking the essence of things—that which remained constant throughout the changes manifest to our senses.... The reality/appearance dualism that is so close to the heart of Western philosophizing is closely linked to the permanence/change and form/matter distinctions, and consequently we should not be surprised to find no discussions of underlying reality versus changing appearances in early Chinese texts: reality and appearance are one and the same, and the reality is that everything changes, in nature, in society, and at the personal level.⁴³

Relationality is intrinsic and constitutive of Confucianism because of how human relationships are established through interaction and growth. In the same way nature exhibits patterns or cycles of interaction, so too do humans express their personhood through creative interactions, rather than through a means of individualism.⁴⁴ While Confucianism can be read as phenomenological in that it forms knowledge on the basis of the body's movement through the

⁴¹ See Timothy Brooks, "Rethinking Syncretism: The Unity of the Three Teachings and their Joint Worship in Late-Imperial China," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 21, no. 1 (1993): pp. 13-44.

⁴² "They did not, in other words, have any good reason or thinking that there might be an explanation of why the world is as it is, and thereby had no reason for seeking a *transcendental* answer to the question of why we are in this world." See Ames and Hall, *The Analects of Confucius*, pp. 32-33.

⁴³ Ames and Rosemont, *The Analects of Confucius*, p. 23.

⁴⁴ Ames and Rosemont, *The Analects of Confucius*, p. 27.

world, it is not rooted in an individuated subjectivity characteristic of a Western tradition founded on Cartesian principles. Perhaps some Chinese philosophers rooted in our traditions view Descartes as a naval gazer confounded by existence rather than able to explain or experience it. Such a modality of existence is indicative of Confucius' teachings "for Chinese teachers do not seem to have been so much concerned with describing and thereby conveying knowledge about the world as they were to have their students learn *how to get on* in the world."⁴⁵ Learning how to go about in the world as a person with relationships to other humans and nature was, therefore, an ethics and intuition.

With approximately two thousand years dedicated to studying, clarifying, and specializing the teachings of the Sage by the elite literati of China, the metaphysical principles of change in finitude and relatedness of Confucianism underwent drastic transformation and necessary adaptation as Chinese people left and non-Chinese entered China. Confucianism as it relates to the Asian Canadian experience, then, is valuable here not simply for its analytical structures, but because having an understanding of Chinese metaphysics opens contemporary readers to the world that was most familiar and dear to early East Asian arrivants. While the labourers of the time belonged to the humble class of agrarian peasantry (with few belonging to the ostentatious class of merchants), they perhaps felt a deep connection (or loss of connection) with their Confucian world as they worked and settled in isolation in Canada. This separation from homeland remains felt today in their descendants.

The conceptual content of Chinese philosophy is an evidently different approach to grasping the changes that take place in the world and in human life. In Western metaphysics,

⁴⁵ Ames and Rosemont, *The Analects of Confucius*, p. 33.

comparatively speaking, independent ontological formation and identification is constitutive to comprehending forms. The foundational concept of individualism, individuation, and individuality (all of which involve categorization, classification, systemization) is implicit in/to Western consciousness of freedom. The study of metaphysics during and after Aristotle's *Metaphysics* focussed on three broad topics about reality: the nature of being, the first causes of things, and things that do not change. In *Metaphysics*, Aristotle is concerned, "among other things, with the nature and variety of causation, the nature of substance and property, the existence of an unmoved-mover, and the nature of possibility and actuality,"⁴⁶ according to scholar Jeremy Kirby. Thus, a primary difference in a Confucian view of the world and a Christian view of the world is the absence of a prime mover and certain creation myth in the former; further, Confucian philosophy tends not to engage in anything reminiscent of the consideration of abstract Platonic 'higher' forms as it produces knowledges within an experience of nature and the world, rather than the abstract realms of things not experienced; and while property remains a matter of inheritance in the patriarchal familial structures of many Western societies, the gendered politics of familial piety, inheritance, prosperity, and domestic space are considerably different in Chinese and Confucian worlds—so much so that they scarcely share similarities beyond male-centeredness. Thus, the nature of what is actual or possible, both metaphysically but also in terms of human social organization, is radically different across a Confucian/Christian divide.

Human beings have developed a keen interest in organizing objects of the physical world into comprehensible "natural" categories or classes. It stands to reason that if objects can be

⁴⁶ See Jeremy Kirby, "Aristotle on Composition and the Puzzle of Unity" in *Aristotle's Metaphysics: Form, Matter and Identity* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2008), pp. 67-100.

categorized into their “natural” classification, they can be declassified or reclassified depending upon how and if alteration or change affects their constitution (or essence) in accordance to their relationship with the patterns and cyclical interactions of nature. This would be the case if one were to examine the reality of the object as a Confucian metaphysician. Yet, in the West the metaphysician scrutinizes the reality of the object of study, questioning its realness, and distinguishing between its essence and existence.⁴⁷ Again, according to Ames and Rosemont, the question of essence versus existence poses a composite problem given the reality/appearance dichotomy that Western philosophizing follows. Positing an essence or higher form for an object suggests that beneath its appearance lies an essence that remains constant even as the appearance of the object changes and our sense perceptions of that object change. The meaning of essence in Western metaphysics is not like that of *dao* (as the originary cosmological force of vitality and growth that connects everything); in the former, the soul or underlying reality of the thing being observed is understood as having an individuated but connected existence, extrinsic to its materiality. The idea that an essence remains constant and unchanging beneath its material existence is unambiguous within the foundational orders of Western thought. With the belief that things in the world contain internal unchanging essences, reality and appearance are individuated from one another. In this sense, the principle of things that do not change and the interest in classifications reveals the fact that the dominant mode of learning in the West has been one of knowledge acquisition about the world. In Ames and Rosemont’s comparative analysis, they contend:

The pervasiveness of this originally religious orientation to the world...is evidenced, we believe, by the fact that the dominant mode of learning in the West, throughout its history, has been to acquire

⁴⁷ Josiah Royce, “Part I: The ‘Social Approach’ to Metaphysics,” in *Metaphysics* eds., William Ernest Hocking, Richard Hocking, Frank Oppenheim (Albany: State University of New York, 1998), p. 11.

knowledge *about* the world, to learn the way the world *is*; and to describe that world in grammatical sentences, expressing complete thoughts, sentences which are true or false.⁴⁸

Of course, these features of the West's metaphysical order have not gone wholly uncriticised by those within the intellectual tradition. For example, Martin Heidegger's argument that metaphysics, as it was studied in the early to mid-twentieth century, succeeded in covering Being by conflating Being with all other beings, carries weight here. In *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger writes of how metaphysics has narrowed its study to the physical (literally, physics); that is, if metaphysicians only concern themselves with physical objects, the question of Being—the transcendental element of consciousness from which human beings (Heidegger's *Dasein*) are “thrown” into—is merely reduced to the mechanical repetition of the way physical objects are investigated with already-acquired knowledges and presuppositions.⁴⁹ If Western metaphysics can no longer distinguish between essence and material existence given that the former cannot proceed the latter (that is, one cannot experience ideal forms in a Cartesian body), then the structures of classification used for organizing the physical world are oversimplified and oversimplifying—reductive and reeking of uninspired materialism. When *a priori* notions are used to trivially compensate for the “meta” elements of metaphysics, its investigatory force omits deeper structures of human experience, such as the central foci of Being that haunts Heidegger's early works.

Such an inability to experience the ideal or associate the material with higher forms leads to the problem of essentialism in Western thought that are central to questions occupying Critical Race Theory. Though the misalignment between reality and the ideal was not a problem for

⁴⁸ Ames and Rosemont, *The Analects of Confucius*, p. 32.

⁴⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (London: Yale University Press, 2000): p. 19.

Confucian metaphysicians who understood the world inherently through the means of explanatory sense perception, the problem for Western philosophy of how one conceives of reality without its most real *essential* components discloses a methodological drawback in Western metaphysics. Heidegger writes that “this misconstrual thrusts itself upon us above all because the essential provenance of the question about beings as such, and with the essence of metaphysics, lies in obscurity.”⁵⁰ Obscurity, hybridity, ambivalence: these are all terms articulated and evoked to name the curious and evasive stores of hidden power, spirit and truth so sought after (but so destroyed) by Western history and philosophy. Thus, while Chinese arrivants and their white settler counterparts both found themselves on Indigenous lands currently called ‘Canada’, they saw the world in foundationally different ways poorly captured by the conventional and celebratory stories of Canadian state-formation. Focusing here on the distinction between white settlers and Asian arrivants, we must now elaborate upon the nature of this difference and how it relates analytically to Asians in Canada, *The Asianadian*, and my voice as the writer of this dissertation.

Settlers, Natives, Arrivants: Theorizing the Settler Colonial Triad

In their foundational article, “Decolonization is not a Metaphor,” Asian and Indigenous scholars K. Wayne Yang and Eve Tuck offer a triadic model for understanding the power relations vis-à-vis the identity formations of settler colonial subjects. Within this framework (used by Critical Race Theory, Indigenous Studies, and other disciplines), settler colonialism is constituted by the relationship that emerges between Indigenous peoples, white settlers of European descent, and racialized migrants who typically perform foundational modes of nation-

⁵⁰ Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 20.

making labour that establish settler colonies and their economies. The most commonly cited example here is the use of Black slavery to provide the United States of American with a labour force that allowed it to enter markets of global capital and rise as a competitor and eventual leader in an international capitalist economy forged in the violence of the Atlantic slave trade and Westward expansion. Relevant to this study, however, is the way in which Chinese labour was central to the creation of a transcontinental economy via railroad labour, which will be discussed following a thorough unpacking of the settler colonial triad.

Also central to theorizing *The Asianadian* and the history of Asian Canadians is Mahmood Mamdani's critique in "Beyond Settler and Native as Political Identities" and the discussion of the 'arrivant'—a term I have utilized above and throughout this dissertation to triangulate racialized peoples within the settler colonial triad.⁵¹ Moreover, the term has been given critical nuance by Jodi Byrd, who notes in *The Transit of Empire* that racialized non-Indigenous peoples experience aspects of colonialism and racial oppression, and how as arrivants, people of colour have unique responsibilities to Indigenous peoples and decolonization.⁵² The arrivant is a critical placeholder that works to tease out processes of racialization (such as xenophobic immigration policies) from colonization (such as the continued theft of Indigenous lands and resources) by mapping out a third space between the settler and native. Beyond being a temporal and corporeal marker within the settler colonial triad, arrivants become the historical designators for re-tracing culture. Edward Kamau Brathwaite's poetic trilogy, *The Arrivants: A New World Trilogy* engages with poetry as reconstructive work on the subjectivities and identities that are produced through exile, thus speaking to Byrd's conception

⁵¹ See Mahmood Mamdani, "Beyond Settler and Native as Political Identities: Overcoming the Political Legacy of Colonialism," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* vol. 43, no. 4 (2001): pp. 651-664.

⁵² See Jodi Byrd, *Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

for the ways in which Indigeneity (signs and spectres) transit through culture. The arrivant subject arises out of the transit between homeland and the New World where cross-cultural exchanges, trauma, loneliness, and loss occur. In the same way Brathwaite's poetry speaks for all exiled African people, *The Asianadian* created a platform for all Asian Canadians to speak. The voices of Brathwaite's poems shift in the same way the voice of each issue of the magazine changed. The eclectic voices of Brathwaite's and *The Asianadian*'s diasporic representation reveal that various subject positions, though perhaps common in some collective history, experience arrivant subjectivity differently under settler colonial configurations of land, politics, and language, thereby centralizing the value of each arrivant's unique process of becoming, their relationship with one another and with others. Both Brathwaite and *The Asianadian* negotiate overwhelming histories in their search for identity through poetry, art, and literature. The arrivant is a meaningful subject position both theoretically and historically. In addition, the arrivant is not only a racial designation in terms of being non-Indigenous and non-white, but also analytically distinct in terms of labour. As Sartre has noted, in classical colonial societies Native labour is organized by an imperial power to extract Indigenous resources and enter them into world market circulation, thereby subordinating them to a colonial logic that Sartre identifies as genocidal:

Colonial, in effect, is a system: the colony sells raw materials and foodstuffs at a favourable price to the colonial power, which then sells industrial goods back to them at world market prices. This peculiar method of exchange can only be established when native labor is made to work for starvation wages. It naturally follows, then, that the colonized lose their national personality, their culture, their customs, sometimes even their language, and live in misery like shadows constantly reminded of their own sub-humanity.⁵³

⁵³ Jean-Paul Sartre, "On Genocide," *New Left Review* 1, no. 48 (1968): pp. 11-21.

Settler colonialism differs from this classical colonial system in that Native labour is replaced by imported racialized labour, or, to borrow the words of settler colonial theorist Patrick Wolfe, “settlers bring their labour with them.”⁵⁴

Viewing the settler/native/arrivant situation through metaphysics is particularly useful for an analysis of the mistreatment of Asians by the white Canadian state as a relationship that challenges the authority of Western metaphysical principles of sustained normativity, while also reinforcing a foundational resistance that becomes a container of power to draw upon by *The Asianadian* collective. To sufficiently synthesize metaphysics with settler colonialism, I turn to once again to Wolfe and his foundational conceptualization of the settler complex:

We deserve what we have—or, more pointedly: We have a right to this land.... *Land is settler colonialism’s irreducible essence* that goes well beyond real estate. Its seizure is not merely a change of ownership but a genesis, the onset of a whole new way of being—for both parties. Settlers are not born. They are made in the dispossessing, a ceaseless obligation that has to be maintained across the generations if the Natives are not to come back. Along with the land, then, come identity, selfhood, family, belonging, all the qualities that make us fight.⁵⁵

Land as the irreducible essence of settler colonialism’s claim to legitimacy also constitutes its claims of private property, freedom, and productivity. The metaphysical principles that inform this essence are manifested in a myriad of beliefs and practices that Wolfe understands as “a range of suppressive and divisive strategies that are typically framed in the idiom of race.”⁵⁶ Entitlement to the land, including what happens to it and who gets it, is a

⁵⁴ See Patrick Wolfe, “The Settler Complex: An Introduction” in *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, 37, no. 2, (2013): pp. 1-22.

⁵⁵ Patrick Wolfe, “The Settler Complex: An Introduction” in *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, 37, no. 2, (2013): p. 1.

⁵⁶ See Patrick Wolfe, “Land, Labor, and Difference: Elementary Structures of Race” in *American Historical Review*, 106, no. 3, (2000): pp. 866-905.

gendered and racialized principle of normativity that concretizes Canadian settler colonialism. In *Mohawk Interruptus*, Audra Simpson notes how white settler claims to the land are marked by attempts to restrain the contesting and dynamic differences that make up the land, which white settlers assumed could be “contained into neat, ethnically defined territorial spaces that now needed to be made sense of, ordered, ranked, governed, and possessed.”⁵⁷ This essence that qualifies settler colonial metaphysics is informed by the rationality that the British had divine rights to the land, that Natives do not know how to cultivate the land productively according to Western standards, and that the whites who conquered and settled the land worked hard for their conquest. White nativist claims to the land erase Indigeneity and were “fused with racism to form the tough crust of attitudes which moulded the pattern of race relations that prevailed in British Columbia...” to form what Peter Ward understands as the “dark underside of ethnocentrism.”⁵⁸ From this perspective, then, white nativist claims to the land by and through performances of entitlement based on historical labour, erase Indigenous stewardship of the land as well as the foundational forms of state-formation labour performed by Asian arrivants.

Settler colonial phenomenon, according to Lorenzo Veracini, “possess a mimetic character, and that a recurrent need to disavow produces a circumstance where the actual operation of settler colonial practices is concealed behind other occurrences.”⁵⁹ Using different “logics” of settler colonialism, white settlers can arm themselves with ideological cushioning that, Day writes, “operates as a barrier within national culture to protect and reinforce settlers’ social and political control.”⁶⁰ In both concealing and revealing these metaphysical structures of

⁵⁷ Audra Simpson, “Ethnographic Refusal: Anthropological Need” in *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011) p. 97.

⁵⁸ See Peter Ward, “Preface to the Third Edition” in *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Towards Orientals in British Columbia*, 3rd ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), p. ix.

⁵⁹ Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 14.

⁶⁰ Day, *Alien Capital*, p. 25.

thought, the culmination of these practices and structures of feeling are embedded into the consciousness of the white settler and inform how he thinks he should live his reality, move through the world, and interact with those around him. Thus, anti-immigration, practices of cutting up the land, including the formation of borders, drawing up legislation to exclude one group over another—these are the “above forms” that settler colonialism draws upon in order to define and legitimate itself. Generally unaccounted for, though, is the recognition that the Asian arrivant enters the settler colony having already established his/her own metaphysical and ontological orientations to the world. Settler colonialism disrupts those orientations. With the introduction of the Asian arrivant to complicate the settler/native relation, white settler claims to the land became materially and metaphysically entangled, further underscoring the need to re-examine the histories of invisibility that are indicative of the so-called dark chapters in Canadian history.

Moving forward from the settler colonial triad and broader discussions of settler colonial configurations of labour and social belonging, I will discuss for the remainder of the chapter histories of Chinese, South Asian, and Japanese exclusion in Canada. These histories take place in the twentieth century in the province currently called British Columbia. These Western Canadian histories are important to return to because they form the contours of exclusion that shaped the landscape of resistance from which *The Asianadian* emerged and continuously returned to as a source of redefining self-determination. Importantly, they are also moments of struggle that actively disavowed the Yellow Peril fallacy that was directed at Asian people in Canada. As I review these histories, I do not want to create a hierarchy of historical victimhood or neutralize the difference between variegated sites of historical marginalization: the Chinese, Japanese, East Indians and Indigenous peoples have very different histories in Canada and I want

to make it clear that my point of departure is thinking about the historical configurations of the racialization of Asian Canadians. All early Asian arrivants and sojourners experienced in some way or another the wrath of white Canada's racist policies, and the Chinese were among the first to face racist administrative, political, and social barriers. To be clear, while this anti-immigration sentiment and anti-Asian discourse was indeed *racist*, it was also perniciously colonial in the sense that white settlers ought not to define who does and who does not belong on land stolen or treated. This active process of revisiting and reclaiming Chinese, East Indian, and Japanese histories aids in the ever-pressing need to transvaluate Asian being-in-the-world and being-with-others. These returns examine the social psychology behind dramatic racial encounters that led to the arrangement of a series of anti-Asian laws grounded in two iterations of white supremacy that make up settler colonial metaphysical practices and structures of feeling: the extensive force of British imperialism and white Canadian cultural identity. Inherent to this examination is the consideration of social policy, economic tensions, settler colonial legality, and public opinion. In a political-ethical sense, paying homage to these histories by returning to analyze their processes of becoming hopefully encourages perspectival changes with those "slow to acknowledge their nativist past."⁶¹

Chinese Arrivants in Inhospitable Spaces

Chinese Canadian history does not begin with one person and cannot be situated in a singular event or moment. Consistent with a Confucian ethic that resists totalization, it is formed out of a growing collective that continues to change as it is studied, experienced, and contested. Yet, it arises inextricably from a series of symbolically violent legal and institutional impositions

⁶¹ Ward, *White Canada Forever*, p. x.

enforced by the state to exert control over Chinese arrivants. It was initially understood by many Southern Chinese that their work contracts on the *gum san* (or the ‘Gold Mountain’ [our word for North America]) were temporary. They would work for unjust wages—nearly half of what white labourers received—to pay off the debt incurred from their travels, send money home to families in need, and save enough to eventually return to China to retire in the land of their ancestors.

Though several thousand of them had already worked on completing the First Transcontinental Railway in the United States in 1869, many came directly from China by way of Hong Kong or Macao as a result of frail political and economic conditions in the homeland brought about by external imperial forces and reformist divisions. As Peter Li notes: “between 1838 and 1900 Britain, France, Germany, Austria, Japan, the United States, Italy, and Russia engaged in a series of wars with China in her territories and succeeded in securing trading and other rights from the Chinese government.”⁶² Their lands were stripped of its essence, wracked by famine, internal warfare, and imperial anxiety, signalling a paradigmatic shift in thinking about life from a Confucian worldview of interconnected relations to an individualistic European dialectic of progress and freedom.⁶³ The legacies of loss are felt today: for example, at a symposium on Chinese Canadian literature and media, I made the comment that China was never fully colonized by an external imperial power; Dr. Li-ping Geng of Beijing Foreign Studies University tactfully and collegially commented that while I was perhaps correct on a technical level, he believes that the uncertainty and anxiety wrought by European imperial encroachment was felt by *all* Chinese to the extent that my somewhat celebratory comment of China’s non-colonization was seen as slightly removed from the lived experiences of Chinese culture given that I was born

⁶² Peter S. Li, *The Chinese in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 13.

⁶³ “The Confucian maxim, to respect agriculture and despise trade, was cast aside when trade brought great profit to the empire...” see Anthony B. Chan, *Gold Mountain: The Chinese in the New World* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1983); p. 23.

and live in Canada.⁶⁴ It is, therefore, appropriate to theorize those who left China as a matter of coerced migration as ‘arrivants,’ distinguished from white settlers not only by their racial identities, but also in the conditions under which they travelled to *gum san* and the labour they performed while here. They were hired to help complete the British Columbia portion of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) and they fulfilled their duties with considerable diligence and efficiency, completing that final segment of the railway five years ahead of schedule. Significantly, the recruitment of cheap Chinese labour saved the government three to five million dollars.⁶⁵

Such financial prosperity, unfortunately, was never shared or celebrated with the Chinese labourers who built what was considered the most dangerous part of the CPR. In terms of their ideational function, Day notes that “although railroads were symbols of consolidation for the white nation, they were lines to exclusion for the Chinese labourers who helped build them.”⁶⁶ Importantly, Day’s writing contains intonations of a triple-world, wherein the existence of railways signifies to settler’s progress, to Chinese exclusion, and to Indigenous peoples something entirely different. The settler colonial situation is reminiscent of Fanon’s compartmentalized colonial world riven in two; however, the settler’s space and the Native’s space come into being through a relationship with racialized bodies and spaces. In this sense, Day suggests that the immutable function of Chinese men as “cheap labour” (low costing, abundant, dispensable) goes beyond economic contribution: that their exclusion via death in often invisibilized forms of labour is more indicative of white Canada’s desire to expel the impenetrable Yellow Peril from the newly forged nation. For instance, according to Lien Chao’s

⁶⁴ Li-ping Geng, (chair, *Retrospect and Prospect: International Symposium of Chinese Canadian Literature and Media*, Toronto, ON, July 20, 2017).

⁶⁵ Lien Chao, *Beyond Silence: Chinese Canadian Literature in English* (Toronto, TSAR Publications, 1997), p. 7.

⁶⁶ Day, *Alien Capital*, p. 42.

records, 4000 Chinese workers died (26 deaths every mile) within the five-year period it took to complete the CPR between 1880 and July 9, 1885.⁶⁷ Under this divisive socialization, these sentiments were unabashedly evoked and readily expressed at various town hall meetings organized to address the problem of “Orientals” in the decades following the completion of the CPR. Thus, the history of the Chinese in Canada does not begin with one individual; it cannot begin from a singular moment or singular event, since an entire network of defensive and offensive mechanisms was developed by the state to specifically target the movements, activities, and livelihoods of Chinese people, thereby making it explicitly known who was included and who was excluded. As Sara Ahmed writes:

Most important, the making of ‘the Orient’ is an exercise of power: the Orient is made oriental as a submission to the authority of the Occident. To become oriental is both to be given an orientation and to be shaped by the orientation of that gift.⁶⁸

Orientalism as it is used vis-à-vis Canadian settler colonialism orients white settlers towards the labour of Asian people in ways that bolster the larger economic project of Canada as an imperial venture. To look at the history of Chinese people in Canada, then, involves an understanding that anti-Chinese state ideology marked a reality of divisive race relations, wherein Chinese alterity became manageable only through modalities of social, psychological, and juridical regulation that co-existed with a burgeoning Indian policy that organized structural violence against Indigenous peoples. The metaphysical structures underlying these mechanisms of control are classification and individuation: for example, the settler state issues particular

⁶⁷ A grim discrepancy compared to American engineer Andrew Onderdonk’s statement to the 1885 Royal Commission in which he made the conservative and inaccurate estimate of 600 deaths within those same five years. See Chao, *Beyond Silence*, p. 6.

⁶⁸ Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientation, Objects, Others*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 114.

‘status cards’, numbers, or identity disks to those it recognizes as Status Indians, whereas early Chinese arrivants were managed under head tax certificates and Chinese Immigration 9 forms. In both cases, the atomization and classification of Indigenous and racialized bodies is concretized on paper via Western bureaucratic means of control and surveillance. Among the first steps in actualizing these divisive relations was to deny the presence of the Chinese in the historical celebration of the CPR. As Chao observes:

But no Chinese workers were invited to the ceremony, nor were they mentioned in the history of the CPR. Not only were the Chinese railway workers refused the pledged return tickets to China, having helped realize the first Canadian national dream of coast-to-coast unification, they were also immediately abandoned and targeted by racism.⁶⁹

Despite the amount of Chinese blood spilled on Canadian soil, the government under John A. Macdonald unanimously prohibited the Chinese from Canadian citizenship and belonging by passing its first and most prominent anti-Chinese law, the *Chinese Immigration Act* of 1885. This act introduced a \$50 head tax on all people of Chinese origin who wished to enter Canada. Notably, head tax levies were a significant source of financial gain for the government. Although the first head tax in 1885 was \$50, a second amendment increased the tax to \$100 in 1900, and a final amendment in 1903 increased the tax to \$500. It would be reasonable to acknowledge, as well, that this substantial sum of money was considerably difficult to acquire in the late nineteenth century. It was nevertheless imposed upon every person of Chinese ancestry, which resulted in the production of more than \$13.8 million in head tax monies (between 1905 and 1914 alone) for the Canadian state.⁷⁰ The implementation of the *Chinese Immigration Act* added insult to injury. It symbolized a disregard for the lives of thousands of Chinese workers

⁶⁹ Chao, *Beyond Silence*, p. 7.

⁷⁰ Li, *The Chinese in Canada*, p. 38.

who died while working on the CPR and preserved the servile working conditions of those who could not afford to return home afterwards. As Chow notes, “they could not afford to go home because they had not saved enough from their wages (20 cents per day instead of the agreed \$2.00).”⁷¹ The enforcement of their socio-economic conditions as lowly, impoverished, foreign workers are an example of a Western metaphysical principle of moral, social, and racial classification that entrapped many Chinese men and women into specific inhospitable social locations and would not change until after the Second World War. And despite the fact that many were successful in navigating a foreign legal system, the Chinese were ultimately left to take care of themselves. For instance, after the completion of the CPR, Paul Yee writes that volunteers of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association of Victoria “retrieved more than three hundred unidentified corpses along the Fraser and Thompson rivers and sent them to China for a proper burial.”⁷² The retrieval of the bodies of lost countrymen and the small ceremony that prepared corpses to be returned to families in the homeland for proper burial with the ancestors presents a Confucian morality of honouring of the dead by returning them to their proper families. Such care for the dead signals the real material practice of Confucian ethics in a proto-Canadian setting, thereby demonstrating that the settler-native binary is insufficient for understanding Western Canadian history. Although in unfamiliar lands, the ethic of filial respect or filial piety were practiced collectively and grounded by the virtue of ritual, which “entails a process of making the culture one’s own by appropriating meaning from the communal memory and conducting oneself appropriately.”⁷³ Thus, without aid from Canada and little guidance from

⁷¹ Lily Chow, *Sojourners in the North*. (Prince George: Caitlin Press, 1996), p. 21.

⁷² Paul Yee, *Saltwater City: An Illustrated History of the Chinese in Vancouver* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1988), p. 17.

⁷³ Ames and Rosemont, *The Analects of Confucius*, p. 59.

China, early Chinese arrivants held onto their ethics and their relationships to countrymen and homeland, while resourcefully adapting to strenuous and uncertain situations on *gum san*.

Enforcing settler colonial laws over non-citizens on stolen land ensures that the dividing lines between those who are included and those who are excluded from nation-making are conserved. This is contingent upon the law of the nation using a seamless integration of violence and reason, according to Sunera Thobani, who writes: “the reason of conquest required violence, such that the violence of conquest became reasonable.”⁷⁴ At the turn of the century, destruction of Indigenous peoples and suppression of Chinese immigration were the necessary conditions of Canadian sovereignty, so much so that adopting genocidal policies against Native people and exclusion acts against the Chinese were deemed perfectly reasonable and so necessary, because “Europe was lawful, Indians were not.”⁷⁵ The *Chinese Immigration Act* and head tax further ensured that neither the Chinese nor Indigenous peoples could establish large and longstanding social relations with one another. The *Chinese Immigration Act* of 1885 and the head tax levies were functional of a colonial racial classification that considered the Chinese as uncivilized and servile, thereby embedding hostile settler colonial behaviors and attitudes as acceptable. Beyond the head tax levies, early Chinese arrivants, mostly in British Columbia and Saskatchewan, were subjected to a number of laws established to thwart immigration.

Alongside low wages, servile work, and taxation, the upward social mobility of the Chinese was further disrupted by Canadian law. The following are examples from Li’s *The Chinese in Canada* of the types of bills and stipulations engaged to this end:

⁷⁴ Sunera Thobani, *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), p. 35.

⁷⁵ Thobani, *Exalted Subjects*, p. 39.

- 1884: The Chinese were prohibited from owning Crown lands and diverting water from natural channel.
- 1890: The Coal Mines Regulation Amendment Act excluded the Chinese from working underground, and an amendment from 1903 prevented them from performing skilled jobs.
- 1893: The Provincial Home Act of 1893 barred Chinese from admission to the provincially established home for the aged and inform.
- 1899: The Liquor License Act of 1899 stipulated that they were not entitled to hold a liquor license.
- 1903: Since their names were excluded from the provincial voter's list, Chinese were also automatically barred from obtaining a hand-loggers license.
- 1917: Civil Services Act of 1917 stipulate that no one could work in the civil service who was not a British subject.
- 1920: Provincial Elections Act reaffirmed that all Chinese disqualified from voting.
- 1922: The Factors Act of 1922 forbade night employment in laundries and restricted the hours of operation from 7am to 7pm, excluding Sundays and holidays.
- 1923: Women and Girl's Protection Act specified that no one should employ a white of Indian women or girl in any place where morals might be in question. It was left up to the provincial or municipal police to prevent such employment in Chinese businesses.
- 1937: Because the provincial voter's list was used as a qualification, Chinese were also excluded from nomination for municipal office, service as school trustees, jury duty, and election to provincial legislature.
- 1937: The Chinese also barred from professions of law and pharmacy.⁷⁶

These laws prevented the Chinese from making a living in most areas of economy, consequently holding them to lower, easily disrupted, and non-stable service work, which forced many to fall into habits of *da gung* or “floating from job to job.” As such opportunities in education and other areas of commerce were truncated. For instance, Lily Chow writes, “those who came to study had to help with businesses and often dropped out of school for work in order to pay back the \$500 head tax.”⁷⁷ Furthermore, white supremacist labour unions were often vocal about their dislike towards Chinese labourers in public. An example of this can be found in Yee's *Saltwater City: An Illustrated History of the Chinese in Vancouver* with references to the prominent

⁷⁶ Li, *The Chinese in Canada*, pp. 32-33.

⁷⁷ Chow, *Sojourners of the North*, p. 135.

nineteenth century white supremacist labour union, The Knights of Labour, who made the following statement:

Chinese labor is of a low degraded and servile type, the result of whose employment in competition with free white labor is to lower and degrade the latter. Their standard of living is reduced to the lowest possible point, and being without family ties, they are enabled to not only live but to grow rich on wages far below the lowest minimum at which we can possibly exist.⁷⁸

Paradoxically, the reliance upon an exogenous labour force to fulfill the settler colony's vision of a 'white Canada forever' reveals the racial classificatory mechanism used to manipulate the social mobility of Chinese men and women. As Wolfe has noted: "considering the emphasis that settlers place on individual diligence, the extent to which they rely on the efforts of others is striking."⁷⁹ White employers often hired Chinese labourers because they were willing to work for wages far lower than white labourers; Chinese workers were used as scabs to break strikes; and when small businesses such as laundries were opened by the Chinese, the white community tolerated them because their work maintained their subservience.⁸⁰ Although it was not always the case, an influx of Chinese labourers into Vancouver and Victoria's service industry was especially appealing for rich middle class employers who could afford to hire the Chinese as house servants. These were signs of a changing white Pacific coast society who, although evidently not interested in the ethical treatment of Chinese workers, actively chose to maintain lines of division and discrimination against the Chinese in order to tolerate them.

Anti-Chinese attitudes were not limited to personal opinion and private discussion. At moments when there were a noticeable increase of Chinese entering places such as Vancouver,

⁷⁸ Yee, *Saltwater City*, p. 17.

⁷⁹ Wolfe, "The Settler Complex: An Introduction," p. 1.

⁸⁰ Li, *The Chinese in Canada*, p. 46.

hysteria manifested in the form of protests and riots directed at the Chinese.⁸¹ Although the visibility of Chinese people caused upset in the public, much of their agitation stemmed from anger with provincial and federal levels of government who were slow to act on the enforcement of laws that would totally and completely exclude the Chinese. Tensions between white residents and their government were a result of differences in opinion and proximity to the Chinese, which, for white residents on the Pacific coast, was much too close. As Ward has notes in *White Canada Forever*, two commissioners of the 1884 *Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration* contested the complete exclusion of the Chinese and opted for “moderate restrictions,” citing that, in other words, “there was no evidence...to indicate that Chinese immigration now endangered the country, and therefore none to suggest any need for immediate or stringent legislation.”⁸² These were not the recommendations that most white British Columbians wanted to hear. The incursion of Chinese into rich cities intimidated white residents of every social class, sparking indignation at the federal and provincial government’s incapacity to permanently stop Chinese immigration. Between 1884 and 1923, white residents and white supremacist labour unions actively protested against Chinese immigration and settlement, including the use of laundries and other businesses operated by Chinese, and even rioted against Chinese children for attending all-white schools. Thousands of British Columbians participated in such protests and riots, appeals and petitions were made to Parliament, and eventually, they found success in convincing the federal government to amend the *Chinese Immigration Act*.

In 1923, the head tax was removed and replaced by a *de facto* ban on all Chinese immigrants. In this year, *An Act Respecting Chinese Immigration* was passed by Parliament,

⁸¹ See Peter Ward, “The Vancouver Riot” in *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in British Columbia*, 2nd ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990), pp. 53-78.

⁸² Ward, *White Canada Forever*, p. 39.

outlining the “prohibited classes” of Chinese who were banned from entering Canada. The amendment legally ensured that the disproportionate amount of men living in Chinese bachelor societies would make it difficult to return home, effectively enforcing another act of gendered violence that once again forced many Chinese to reorient their lives, primarily because the act explicitly excluded Chinese women and girls from coming to Canada unless they were prostitutes or wives of merchants. Accordingly, between 1923 and 1947 Chinese immigration came to a dramatic halt. Thousands of Canadian families that might have been Chinese never were. Any relations that might have developed between Chinese women and non-Chinese men were, from that point forward, illicit in nature.

The amendment also outlined new restrictions for entry and landing in Canada, confined to the following classes: members of diplomatic corps or other government representatives; children born in Canada to parents of Chinese origin, who have left Canada for educational or other purposes; merchants and; students coming to Canada to attend university or college. Beginning in Spring of 1923, no other class of Chinese people were authorized to enter Canada. People with illnesses, tuberculosis or leprosy, criminal convictions, the illiterate, vagrants, and persons previously deported from Canada or the United States were among those listed under the prohibited classes. Thus, in addition to gender, a wide array of exclusive logics was applied systematically to Chinese people consistent with the governmentality of the white settler state (as well as its people). It is nevertheless necessary to unpack the gendered politics of Canadian state and social formation.

The total exclusion of Chinese women from early Chinese communities in Canada uncovers the hyper-masculine elements of settler hegemony, wherein regulations of Chinese women and girl’s bodies laid the foundation for the model minority myth that normalized the

stereotype of the docile Chinese female. The docile Chinese female character is a creation of the Orientalist imago in the sense that her coerced existence comes into being not through her own agential making, but through metaphysical presuppositions of submissiveness and over-sexualization. Such “double colonization,” as Robert Young terms it, constrained Chinese women to particular social roles and expectations in the domestic and public spheres, both of which functioned to foreclose understandings of their moral social roles as complex human beings, mothers, daughters, nurses, advocates of peace, ‘Daughters of Empire,’ and all of the other things white women got to be.⁸³ Importantly, the language used to describe Chinese women and girls in the original archived amendment implied their moral dubiousness as being always-already associated with hyper-femininity and prostitution. That such classification was socially and ideologically installed to undermine the responsibilities and impact that Chinese women had on their families and communities underscores the logic of misogynist settler colonial expansion, being both the moral purveyor and regulator of Chinese women’s bodies (labour, reproductive and otherwise) at the same time. Banning Chinese women and girls from Canada involved converging ideological and structural violence, wherein Chinese women and girls—without even being physically present in Canada—were subordinated to hyper-masculine control. Some families did maintain contact through sending remittances, however, years of separation (sometimes up to 50 years, according to Li) made each family’s eventual reunification difficult as most reunions seemed more like strangers meeting for the first time than a family reunion. Consequently, these hyper-masculine qualities of control over and against Chinese men and women constitute the gendered and racialized power configuration of the settler colonial state.

⁸³ “Such women were subject to what is today often called a ‘double colonization’ – that is, in the first instance in the domestic sphere, the patriarchy of men, and then, in the public sphere, the patriarchy of the colonial power.” See Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity, Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 162.

The social reality of Chinese women during the era of Chinese exclusion is situated as non-existent in the sense that the constructed essence of her docility and hyper-sexuality precludes her existence as anything else. That is, our stereotypes as Chinese Canadian women existed before we did. It seems it did not matter to colonial administration that Chinese women played prominent roles in their society back home as independent, hardworking caretakers of the land, family, and community. Affirming this hyper-masculine insecurity was the way in which white settlers appeared to be convinced that Asians yearned so badly to assimilate into white Canada that they were willing to employ behaviors of submissiveness in order to be accepted. Lisa Rose Mar notes, however, that the paranoia of white society was what oppressed most Chinese arrivants into acting a certain way so that they could stay.⁸⁴ The lasting effects of the gendered *Chinese Exclusion Act* developed the distinct social principle that gender and whiteness was/is the standard unifying concept grounding Canadian settler society, causing Chinese men and women to distinguish themselves invisibly while carefully traversing white social spaces. Importantly, Indigenous feminist scholars such as Lee Maracle, Kim Anderson, Paula Gunn Allen, and Andrea Smith have argued that “patriarchal gender violence the process by which colonizers inscribe hierarchy and domination on the bodies of the colonized.”⁸⁵ Thus, in distinguishing the present-absence of Chinese women during the exclusion era we see the ideological tentacles of settler colonial expansion stretching across the land to impose its will on Native and arrivant alike.

But if the *Chinese Immigration Act* was the juridical form used to encapsulate anti-Chinese passions and appease white British Columbians, it certainly fell short as a tool for crisis

⁸⁴ Lisa Rose Mar, *Brokering Belonging: Chinese in Canada's Exclusion Era, 1885-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 8.

⁸⁵ See Andrea Smith, “Sexual Violence as a Tool of Genocide,” in *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2005), pp. 7-33.

management given the fact that Chinese families, Chinatowns, Chinese cultural associations,⁸⁶ and cross-cultural encounters with Indigenous people were already established by 1923. More specifically, as work in the gold mines and railway came to an end and as the government abandoned the Chinese to be targeted by white supremacy, some Chinese moved to the interior of British Columbia to form relations with Indigenous communities. Unrecorded stories of Chinese, Coast Salish, and Stó:lō peoples in the interior of British Columbia mark moments of ethnographic refusal in which such relations resist being anthropologically managed under “categorization, ethnological comparison, linguistic translation, and ethnography.”⁸⁷ Such stories contain the secrets of Chinese and Indigenous interactions and are evocative of the fact that alternative ways of relating to the world, nature, and other people exist and perhaps co-exist more serenely away from the Western paradigm of metaphysical classification and hierarchy. Therefore, while it has been important to discuss the history of Chinese people in relation to implanting settler colonial regimes of governance for the making of Canada, it is equally invaluable to end with the fact that community and political responsibilities were established regardless of settler colonial scrutiny.⁸⁸ As a defensive mechanism to protect the settler state’s historical injustices, refusing to acknowledge Chinese and Indigenous relations across official state archives signifies the continued importance of recovering truths of experience unaccounted for in the colonial archives. The very existence and historical possibility of Chinese and Indigenous relations challenges settler colonial metaphysical conceptions of classification and individuation that serve as status quo principles to justify cutting up the land and forming

⁸⁶ See David Chuenyan Lai, *Chinese Community Leadership: Case Study of Victoria in Canada* (Singapore: World Scientific, 2012); Wei Djao, *Being Chinese: Voices from the Diaspora* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2003).

⁸⁷ Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*, pp. 95.

⁸⁸ See Renisa Mawani, “National Formations and Racial Selves: Chinese Traffickers and Aboriginal Victims in British Columbia’s Illicit Liquor Trade” in *Colonial Proximities: Crossracial Encounters and Juridical Truths in British Columbia, 1871-1921* (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 2009), pp. 122-162.

borders, reinforcing social hierarchy, and establishing racial classificatory schemas that truncate cross-cultural solidarities. Despite the resilience and industriousness of early Chinese arrivants, their racial encounters with white settlers were uncomfortably drawn out across the late nineteenth and much of the twentieth century as major cities such as Vancouver and Victoria scrambled to manage their Yellow Peril problem. The complete and total exclusion of the Chinese would not be repealed until 1947 after China's defeat of Japanese imperial forces in Asia. The embarrassment of the continued exclusion of the Chinese following their war-time contributions and in addition to the fact that China was an Allied power gave Prime Minister Mackenzie King and Parliament no choice but to repeal the *Chinese Immigration Act* and introduce measures for family reunification.

Rejecting the *Komagata Maru*

In the Spring of 1914, a self-taught trilingual businessman named Gurdit Singh Sirali chartered the Japanese steam ship the *SS Komagata Maru* across the Pacific Ocean. Its destination was Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. The passengers onboard included a majority of Sikh, Muslim, and Hindu men, some of whom were returning to Canada for a second or third time. When the *Komagata Maru* arrived in Burrard Inlet outside of Vancouver, however, the passengers were denied entry and the ship was forced to remain in the Inlet for two months under the scrutiny of immigrant agents on land. In what follows, I elaborate on the events leading up to and during the *Komgata Maru* incident in Vancouver to analyze the ways in which an intricate global network of imperialism operates concurrently at various geo-political locales to engender colonial violence in the guise of rules of law that structurally produce "entire categories

of citizens who for some reason cannot be integrated into the political system”⁸⁹ within the Canadian settler colony. Chinese arrivants were deposited and classified into this category by the *Chinese Immigration Act*. So too were South Asian arrivants in accordance with the larger logics of the Dominion.

East Indians in British Columbia only marginally interacted with white settlers. Their ethics towards work were rooted in a strong metaphysical sense of community and sojourner mentality as part of Punjabi life. The earliest East Indian settlers were comprised mostly of Sikh men from the Hoshiarpur and Jullundar districts in the North Eastern part of the Punjab.⁹⁰ According to Ward, “they commonly represented a landowning family group, one which could spare a labourer and which often mortgaged its holding to send the emigrant abroad... Because it produced additional income, migration thus benefitted the family.”⁹¹ It was therefore commonly understood that travel abroad for temporary and seasonal work was reasonable if only because it helped the family financially, as was the thinking of other Asian migrants and labourers. In many ways, then, East Indians had little motive to assimilate into hostile white Canadian society: they had sufficient financial support and their temporary work on sawmills, lumber camps, railways, and farms usually ended with a return trip home to the Punjab, but the survival of their families and communities still depended upon the exploitation of their bodies and spirits by colonial hegemony. This did not mean they were not targets of violent racism, symbolic and otherwise. Issues of sporadic and unstable employment, public health fears, and the overall anti-Asian atmosphere of Canada at that time heightened their racial awareness, understanding that the deep

⁸⁹ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Raozen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 2

⁹⁰ See Peter Ward, “The Komagata Maru Incident,” in *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Towards Orientals in British Columbia*, 2nd ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990), pp. 79-93.

⁹¹ Ward, *White Canada Forever*, p. 80.

resentment that white British Columbians felt for the Chinese also contaminated the ways South Asians were viewed, and so their movements in the margins of white society were carefully mapped out. In this way, their communities were segregated from the host society to clearly distinguish social, economic, political, and religious differences. White British Columbians nevertheless constructed distinct images of East Indians as undesirable for a white Canadian way of life. Indeed, as Ward notes elsewhere: “some well-established Oriental stereotypes were also applied to East Indians. Like all Asians they often were seen as unclean, diseased, and a threat to public health.”⁹² As historical treatment of the ship’s passengers demonstrates, Canadian logics of inclusion were subordinated to racist stereotypes of cleanliness, domesticity, and public health panics.

Scholars have suggested that Singh chartered the *Komagata Maru* to test the boundaries of inclusion for legal regimes of British imperial belonging through Canada’s immigration policies. That is, if the British subject was one who belonged to the British empire in ideology, custom, and political proclivities, then Singh and his passengers met such requirements as imperial subjects of British India. The history of the *Komagata Maru* thus begs the questions: “What kind of an Empire was it that did not allow free movement of its subject people?”⁹³ The connotations for being a British subject in India, however, were superficially constructed along racial and economic taxonomies, privileging those complicit in British imperialism and ostracizing those who challenged the authority of empire. Evading this veneer of British subjecthood, East Indians were increasingly defined by their racial non-belonging, which informed how they were managed from a global, national, and local network of colonial

⁹² Ward, *White Canada Forever*, p. 83.

⁹³ Hugh Johnston, *The Voyage of the Komagata Maru: The Sikh Challenge to Canada’s Color Bar* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1998), p. 4.

administration attempting to disrupt the movements of those who were bold enough to confront them. In essence, Singh's challenges to Canada's racist immigration policy through the charter of the *Komagata Maru* was an act of self-determination.

The story of the *Komagata Maru* begins across the Pacific. As a British subject, Singh believed he had the lawful right to visit other parts of the British colony. Singh rented the *Komagata Maru* from the Japanese steamship company Y. Sato & Co. and both parties agreed that the rental fee for the ship would be paid for in installments in Hong Kong and Vancouver; company agents were in both locations to accept payment upon Singh's arrival. Inspired by the legal victory of the *Panama Maru*⁹⁴ a year prior, in which 38 Sikhs were granted entry into Canada despite non-compliance with the Continuous Journey Regulation, Singh envisioned that the *Komagata Maru* could land on similar grounds. The Continuous Journey Regulation under P.C. 1914-23 was introduced under the Laurier government in 1908 as a debilitating travel regulation used to pressure steamship companies not to provide Canada to India service; this also included stopping ticket sales at Indian ports.⁹⁵ The Regulation charged that any immigrant travelling to Canada must do so under the provision that they travel on a continuous journey from their country of citizenship with one ticket purchased in the home country or pre-purchased in Canada. But without any direct ships travelling from India to Canada, travelers had to first travel from Kolkata to Hong Kong by way of merchant ships. The Continuous Journey Regulation therefore represents the underlying tensions of Empire's attempt to control its increasing number of non-subjects. An addition, P.C. 1914-24 stipulated that Asian migrants

⁹⁴ "Though immigration officials rejected thirty-nine of the ship's fifty-six South Asian passengers for failing to meet the continuous journey provisions of P.C. 920, the BC Supreme Court found a technical inconsistency in the wording of the order-in-council and allowed all but five of the passengers rejected for standard medical reasons (likely trachoma) to land." See Isabel Wallace, "*Komgata Maru* Revisited: 'Hindus,' Hookworm, and the Guise of Public Health Protection" in *BC Studies*, 178 (Summer 2013), pp. 33-50.

⁹⁵ Johnston, *The Voyage of the Komagata Maru*, p. 5.

must carry two hundred dollars in their possession upon arrival, with the exception of Chinese and Japanese migrants who were governed by other legislation. By that time, it was estimated that travel from Kolkata to Hong Kong by merchant ship took approximately twelve days, followed by an eighteen-day trip from Hong Kong to Vancouver. Singh plotted out his journey along the Bay of Bengal through to the South China Sea; he stopped in Hong Kong, Shanghai, and finally Moji to pick up passengers who had pre-purchased their Canada-bound tickets in Kolkata.⁹⁶ Troubles began in Hong Kong when British agents took notice of Singh's ship in the port. Rumor had spread throughout the empire that a self-taught businessman had desires to challenge Canadian immigration laws. Reacting to such suspicions, British agents in Hong Kong sent telegraphs to both London and Ottawa to inform immigration authority that the ship did not travel directly from Kolkata as the Continuous Journey Regulation had outlined. In Hong Kong, agents attempted to detain the *Komagata Maru* on the grounds that it did not meet proper health and safety inspections, but Singh had arranged for the ship to be brought up to proper health and safety requirements prior to departing Kolkata. Further, consultation with lawyers in Hong Kong confirmed that Singh met all proper health and safety requirements for a journey across the Pacific and without any response from with London or Ottawa, British agents had no choice but to let Singh and his passengers continue on their journey. Silence from the colonial metropole, however, was not a simple oversight. Renisa Mawani notes that the imperial government wanted to avoid conflict. Mawani writes: "sympathetic to their dominions, yet fearing possible resistance, officials in London did not fully endorse the outright exclusion of British Indians."⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Gurcharn S. Basran and Singh Bolaria, *The Sikhs in Canada: Migration, Race, Class, and Gender* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 96.

⁹⁷ See Renisa Mawani, "Law and Migration Across the Pacific: Narrating the *Komagata Maru* Outside and Beyond the Nation" in *Within and Without the Nation: Canadian History as a Transnational History*, eds. Karen Dubinsky, Adele Perry, Henry Yu (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), pp. 253-275.

A lack of reply thus indicated the imperium's ever-watchful eye and unspoken confidence that its settler colonial authorities would uphold law against its colonized subjects. That British agents in Hong Kong believed they had the authority to detain Singh and his passengers is furthermore an indication of how the British identity of East Indian subjects was null and void in the racial encounters between colonial authorities and those fixed under their gaze and control. Singh's belief that he should be allowed to move freely through the imperium's colonies was therefore *ex nihilo* in the face of the Dominions racist ideologies. But, while agents in London and Ottawa gave no response to agents in Hong Kong, immigration authorities in British Columbia had developed a dossier of public health problems associated with South Asians in anticipation of the arrival of the *Komagata Maru*.

When the *Komagata Maru* arrived in Burrard Inlet, Vancouver, an agent of Y. Sato and Co. was waiting to collect the final payment of \$15,000, which was due on June 11, 1914.⁹⁸ The passengers, however, were denied landing on the basis of racial tensions and public health paranoia. The ship remained immobile in the Inlet for two months. Paying off the ship, however, was only one of Singh's problems upon arrival. The immigration agent who oversaw the arrival of the *Komagata Maru* was Malcom Reid, a man who Johnston describes as doing "...everything he could to make sure the charter money was not paid and then to drag his feet and wait for June 11. When he told his superiors in Ottawa what he was doing, no contrary instructions came back."⁹⁹ Importantly, immigration authorities felt little concern for the ethical and humane treatment of non-white sojourners at the time. Control of immigration was important and concessions to the sovereign law of the settler state required a deeply colonial hermeneutic of the

⁹⁸ Johnston, *The Voyage of the Komagata Maru*, p. 46.

⁹⁹ Johnston, *The Voyage of the Komagata Maru*, p. 32.

law, health, and public opinion. We must remember that the job of an immigration agent was ideologically bolstered by white supremacist beliefs that the sovereign essence of Canada belonged to “men of first class, A1 stock.”¹⁰⁰ These beliefs were held by the general public as much as they were executed by immigration agents. As such, Reid seemed convinced that if the East Indian passengers were allowed on land, their presence would provoke white riots, pose economic competition for white labourers, and increase public health fears. All passengers were therefore required to remain on the ship for the duration of its stay in the Inlet with the exception of rigid medical examinations conducted on shore (while only Singh was allowed on land to be questioned by immigration authorities). When it was suggested by lawyer Edward Bird that a shed could be built to accommodate the newly-arrived passengers as they underwent medical examinations, Reid had claimed that the cost to build and guard a shed for immigrants was not worth the trouble, according to Johnston’s account.¹⁰¹ Further, Reid was apparently aware that the second installment for the ship was due in June and doctors “sought every excuse for delay.”¹⁰² As a result of such manipulation, intentionally prolonged medical examinations were drawn out through the rest of May.

More specifically, South Asians faced greater medical scrutiny, including longer time spent in quarantine than European immigrants for the reason that immigration agents in both the United States and Canada believed that South Asians were ‘dirtier’ and more susceptible to disease given that they lived in and migrated from tropical areas. Significantly, however, no archival records or state resources exist detailing the medical examinations of the men onboard the *Komagata Maru*. Drawing on an Orientalist repertoire, immigration officials often associated

¹⁰⁰ Ward, *White Canada Forever*, p. 84.

¹⁰¹ Johnston, *The Voyage of the Komagata Maru*, p. 77.

¹⁰² Johnston, *The Voyage of the Komagata Maru*, p. 39.

race and disease as the measure of undesirability to justify exclusion. Mixed with overall dislike and the frustration that South Asians posed economic competition for white labourers, these unwieldy assumptions informed the scientific management of South Asian bodies and broader metaphysical ideals about health and immigration. It was estimated that a medical examination could be completed in ten minutes or less and up to four to five hundred men could be processed within one hour,¹⁰³ but in the case of the *Komagata Maru*, doctors were told to deny those with even the slightest signs of health problems. Testing for trachoma, tuberculosis, and hookworm was standard medical procedure. These tests were “biopolitical techniques” that, according to Nyan Shah, helped to “determine the fitness of the body over subjective calculation marshaled by purportedly objective knowledge of the future of the body, as worker, as citizen, and as dependent of the state’s resources and public charity.”¹⁰⁴ Upon arrival, then, East Asian men were stopped and seized, their movements restricted; next, a juridico-medical gaze and state apparatus classified and examined these men’s bodies consistent with the settler paranoia regarding their fitness as Canadian subjects. Underlying but integral to these biopolitical techniques was the fact that Singh and the passengers of the *Komagata Maru* had not come as an ideal race from an ideal place. (The “perfect immigrant,” of course, came from Britain). Thus, the argument to deny the South Asian passengers landing on the basis of protection of public health was merely an excuse to conceal the racist views of immigration authorities. Furthermore, Isabel Wallace’s close examination of the public health façade surrounding the *Komagata Maru* incident in particular and South Asian medical scrutiny more broadly notes:

There is no record of medical examinations or of the detention of the *Komagata Maru* passengers in Vancouver as only the ship’s physician

¹⁰³ Johnston, *The Voyage of the Komagata Maru*, p. 77.

¹⁰⁴ Nyan Shah, *Stranger Intimacy: Constructing Race, Sexuality, and the Law in the North American West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), p. 200. Also see Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco’s Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

and his family and twenty returning immigrants were allowed to disembark. Without such documents it is difficult to ascertain the health of the passengers when they first arrived in BC.... In the end, and despite the fact that [medical examiner] Munro's staff may have found that some of the men aboard the *Komagata Maru* had trachoma, disease was not a determining factor in the rejection of any passengers.¹⁰⁵

Wallace's archival investigation into the lack of medical records for passengers of the *Komagata Maru* shows that the public health protection discourse used by Reid was not evidenced by any medical or scientific findings according to standard medical procedures. Situating these South Asians under what Morton Beiser terms the "sick immigrant paradigm" was a "convenient smoke screen" that allowed science and scientific discourse to be complicit with politicians interested in maintaining the whiteness of the nation both biologically and culturally.¹⁰⁶ The scientific bodily management of the South Asian men onboard the *Komagata Maru* yielded no actual scientific evidence, data, or knowledge; it was instead an exercise purely of racial power. Immigration authorities justified their rejection on the basis that Singh did not follow the Continuous Journey Regulation of P.C. 1914-23. Only twenty passengers were given permission to land because they were returning residents. On July 23, 1914, the *Komagata Maru* was ushered by the *HMCS Rainbow* from Canada and 355 South Asian passengers returned to India. Once again, bureaucratic logics of empire prevented the becoming of Asian Canadian families.

The rejection of the *Komagata Maru* further discloses the ways in which the triadic force of British imperialism conspired with the biopolitical techniques of British Columbian immigration agents to manipulate social opinions about health, migration, and race. In the case

¹⁰⁵ Isabel Wallace, "Komgata Maru Revisited: 'Hindus,' Hookworm, and the Guise of Public Health Protection," *BC Studies*, 178 (Summer 2013), p. 47.

¹⁰⁶ Morton Beiser, "The Health of Immigrant and Refugees in Canada," *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 96, no. 2 (May 2005), pp. 30-44.

of Chinese labourers and the emergence of a transcontinental Canadian economy, Canadian settler colonial formations tend to inscribe their own undoing at the very same site of their constitution. In other words, the settler state needs arrivants to accomplish the material projects associated with nation formation; yet, at the same time, the reliance on those bodies, the proximities produced by immigration and diaspora, and the public health paranoia that results from such imperial intimacies reflects the foundational need that settlers have for arrivants. We may go so far as to say that Indigenous land and arrivant labour are indispensable and *irreducible* elements of settler colonial formations.

The settler state's categorical requirement for cheap agrarian, domestic, and industrial labour opposes its racist exclusionary policies from working effectively. The contrary nature of such a mode of being is indicative of the complications of settler colonial power and violence, as well as the crisis tendencies of settler colonial societies and their paranoia over non-white, non-Native Others. Because immigration agents such as Reid found little evidence for the exclusion of the South Asian passengers on the basis of public health caution, the distortion of South Asian embodiment became the irrational rationale for immigration agents to argue that Singh broke the rule of the Continuous Journey Regulation and therefore did not belong properly to British orders of inclusion. Scientific management of health and the South Asian body, however, was introduced into public discourse as a reason for their rejection. The perceived threat of South Asians throughout the British Empire and the conspiring of agents in Hong Kong, London, and Ottawa aided Canada's settler colonial authorities to re-interpret established colonial understandings of British subjectivity and produce quasi scientific truths about race and disease.

As we see in the contexts of both East and South Asian histories of exclusion, a number of overlapping tactics were deployed by the Canadian settler state that function to create orders

of exclusion for non-white peoples in Canada. Recalling the ways in which Indigenous feminists have theorized gender as a central logic of colonialism, such histories of Asian exclusion point to similar strategies of control and techniques of governance, given that Chinese and Sikh, Hindu, and Muslim men were prevented from bringing their families with them to *gum san*. The story of the *Komagata Maru* and the plight of Singh's passengers similarly points to the ways in which health scares and discourses of non-white wretchedness contour elements of Canadian belonging and peoplehood in profound ways that exclude both Indigenous and Asian peoples (and particularly, their families). In what follows, we shall see the ways in which the politics of property and landlessness similarly enter into the history of Asian exclusion in Canada via the history of Japanese Canadian internment.

Japanese Canadian Internment

From 1942 to 1947, 22,000 Japanese Canadians were forcefully relocated from their homes in British Columbia across six provinces and interned on farms, road work camps, prisoner of war camps, and internment camps. In reaction to the bombing of Pearl Harbor by the Japanese Imperial army in the United States of America on December 7, 1941, the Canadian military sanctioned a series of protective measures to safeguard white Canada from Japanese imperial invasion and sabotage. Nowhere were tensions felt more strongly than in Western Canada with its foundational history of anti-Asian racism. Heightened militarism against Japanese Canadians under claims of national security, however, gave way to waves of hostile treatment against Japanese Canadians, their bodies, livelihood, and spirits. Internment remains a depressing reminder that regardless of how long their ancestors had been in Canada and developed long-standing social networks since the late nineteenth century, Japanese Canadians continued to be characterized as enemy aliens by the strong public opinion that influenced the

political decision to intern all Japanese men, women, children, and elders. Whereas public health paranoia informed the exclusion of South Asian men in the early twentieth century, paranoia concerning the invasion of the Western seaboard informed the exclusion of Japanese Canadians by way of internment. In its nascent stages, internment did not follow the strictly gendered logics of settler statecraft addressed in the above given that Japanese women and children were interned along with men. Once interned, however, families were separated according to gendered logics whereby men were often sent to perform arduous labour on road work camps while women and children were interned in camps and subject to different forms of control and surveillance. They were all considered ‘enemy aliens.’

The term “enemy alien” encompassed anyone of Japanese ancestry during this time. Prior to their forced relocation in 1942, the Department of National Defence had considered interning Japanese Canadians as early as 1938—one year prior to Canada’s siding with the British against Axis powers in September of 1939. Alongside news of the Pearl Harbor bombing, the rise of xenophobia against those with Japanese ancestry served as a convenient basis for the Canadian government to use the *War Measures Act* and force a state of exception that authorized the aggressive dispossession of Japanese Canadians, their material possessions, social networks and display an effective performance of the state’s power.

The use of the *War Measures Act* represents the Canadian settler state’s attempt deposit Japanese Canadians into the same spaces of non-belonging occupied by other Asian arrivants. Again, while the different political groups within the state did not always agree to act in concert, public opinion was the influential factor demanding hostile surveillance and violent treatment against Japanese Canadians. This appears to be a pattern in Canadian history, wherein public policy enacted against arrivants is responsive to white hysteria and paranoias that stems directly

and predictably from the settler colonial proximities produced by the societies in which they live.

As Ann Gomer Sunahara notes in *The Politics of Racism: The Uprooting of Japanese Canadians During the Second World War*:

...almost every measure taken against Japanese Canadians was strongly opposed by the most senior officers of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the military, and by the entire Far Eastern Division of the Department of External Affairs. In the confrontation between the educated and factually based opinions of Canada's experts and the prejudiced and politically based opinions of B.C.'s politicians, however, the cabinet invariably sided with the politicians.¹⁰⁷

The *War Measures Act*, which formed the legal basis for internment, exceeded legal and constitution systems that led to the expansion of a space for Asian non-belonging in Canada. The *Act*, first introduced in 1914, was considered a legal-binding, non-negotiable statute used during declarations of war or invasion to provide authorities with guidance on how to respond to the emergencies that threatened freedom, defense, and national security, including information on how to detain, exclude, and deport any individuals and groups who were considered a threat.¹⁰⁸

As the 1914 archive states, the Governor in Council (what Carl Schmitt simply called the “sovereign”) had “special powers” to enforce censorship and control over mass communications (publications, writings, photographs, etc.), the “territorial waters of Canada,” transportation, trade, and the property of those deemed enemy aliens. The *Act* was used in a number of ways: all people born of Japanese ancestry were moved inland and banned from accessing the West coast within 100-mile radius; it encouraged the Governor in Council to increase the number of Royal Northwest Mounted Police, who were given the responsibility of providing the 24-hour notice to

¹⁰⁷ Ann Gomer Sunahara, *The Politics of Racism: The Uprooting of Japanese Canadians During the Second World War* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1981), p. 31.

¹⁰⁸ Roy Miki, *Redress: Inside the Japanese Canadian Call for Justice* (Vancouver: Raincoast Books, 2004) pp. 88-89.

families of their inevitable internment; control over the territorial waters of Canada and sea transportation gave authorities in British Columbia the power to seize all Japanese fishing vessels, even while preliminary discussions only suggested confiscating vessels, rather than their liquidation to fuel the settler colony's participation in the war.

The confiscation of personal property also fell under the regulations of the *Act*, although it was not the first of its mandate. In the hours following the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Canada declared war on Japan. The Royal Canadian Navy took immediate action by impounding Japanese fishing boats the following day. Approximately 1,200 Japanese fishing vessels were impounded and sold without the consent of their owners under state suspicion that Japanese Canadian fishermen were spies or saboteurs. Discussions were underway to determine how Japanese Canadians were to be interned. The Major General, R.O. Alexander, overlooking the procedures of internment suggested that only Japanese men of military age should be interned as a means to avoid inter-racial conflict.¹⁰⁹ Yet, on January 8, 1942, British Columbia's delegation and the RCMP nevertheless came to the unanimous decision that "they did not trust persons of Japanese racial origin and that they considered the continuing presence of Japanese Canadians in B.C. a menace to public safety."¹¹⁰ By March, the RCMP began notifying families of plans for internment as a matter of national security with a 24-hour notice of their expulsion.

In Mona Oikawa's *Cartographies of Violence*, the author offers an analysis of twenty-one women, including daughters, and granddaughters' experiences with internment. Oikawa's research explores the ways in which state sanctioned dispossession, confiscation, expulsion, and surveillance formed haunting memories and instilled long-term traumas that resist over-

¹⁰⁹ Sunahara, *The Politics of Racism*, p. 31.

¹¹⁰ Sunahara, *The Politics of Racism*, p. 33.

simplified classification of generalized language used to describe the “effects of war.”

Importantly, Oikawa recruits Foucauldian theory to conceptualize the camps as ‘carceral spaces’ into which bodies are placed for the purposes of state discipline, surveillance, and punishment. For instance, Sunahara’s work describes how all internees, regardless of age, gender, and ability had to register with and report to the RCMP bi-weekly so that authorities could keep track of all internees.¹¹¹ And while I take Oikawa’s work as foundational in this regard, it is also necessary to underscore the punitive and disciplinary practices of policies directed at Japanese Canadians during the Second World War beyond these spaces of incarceration. Specifically, I am thinking here of loss p Writing on the notion of loss in a dual sense, Oikawa notes: “a study conducted by Price Waterhouse of Vancouver published in 1986 estimated the total loss for the community at \$48 million 1948 dollars, or \$443 million in 1986 dollars.”¹¹² This loss of economic power that coincided with internment did not end with the defeat of the Japanese Imperial Army, as economic hardship for landless and jobless Japanese Canadians became a post-war reality for many families lucky enough to be reunited.

In a manner of speaking, then, Japanese Canadians in the mid-twentieth century had their lands seized as their families were placed into internment camps, prisoner of war camps, road work camps, and farms. Given that these victims were on Turtle Island and not on their own Indigenous territories, what happened to Japanese Canadians is not immediately comparable to the treatment of Indigenous peoples by the settler state and society. However, what one may observe from in the pattern of Asian exclusion in Canadian history is the existence and exercise

¹¹¹ Sunahara, *The Politics of Racism*, p. 52.

¹¹² Mona Oikawa, *Cartographies of Violence: Japanese Canadian Women, Memory, and Subjects of the Internment*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), p. 108.

of a wide array of violent tactics of control used to target both Natives and arrivants in a system of settler colonial governance established to privilege and protect white settler futurity.

Conclusion: Histories of Invisibility

As it appears, the need for private property (land) and citizenship control shaped much of the early metaphysical normativity of Canada's state-formation. Similarly, public health paranoia and the construction of undesirable bodies as dirty and likely to infect the white settler population also shaped the state's policies on immigration (as well as Indian policy). The foreclosure of non-white families through the very gendered control of the movement of bodies and the policing of proximities produced the politico-ontological grounds on which Canadian citizenship was founded. The histories of Chinese exclusion, the *Komagata Maru*, and Japanese Canadian internment are central to any understanding of Asian Canadian experiences (especially overtly political experiences) as they form the soil in which Canadian race relations have been cultivated. Thus, while it is analytically inaccurate to essentialize Asian Canadians and treat them as a homogenous group, our histories reveal shared stories of struggle, surveillance, and marginalization that play out along similar lines of force. That is, such are the histories of violence one should know if attempting to understand the origins of *The Asianadian*.

Exclusion, rejection, and internment are all histories of victimhood. It is in this chapter, however, that I leave behind a focus on colonial processes, racist mentalities, white fragilities, and Canadian hysteria related to Asian bodies and their presencing on *gum san*. My purpose in moving beyond the settler nexus of the settler colonial triad, is to focus on arrivants and (when possible) their lateral relation to Indigenous peoples. As the above has shown, the techniques of control and violence central to Asian Canadian histories have their counterparts in Indigenous histories of genocide, forced relocation, landlessness, disease, and political processes that

focused on Indigenous men to the exclusion of Indigenous women and the making of Native families and Indigenous futurities. At the same time, Asian Canadians occupy a particular site of the settler colonial triad from which we must speak if we are to evoke honestly the histories and relationships that brought us to and keep us on these lands.

To conclude, then, it was important for me to share these stories of Asian exclusion so that readers unfamiliar with them might understand the context of our histories, our agitations for social justice, and our visions of resistance and Asian futurity. *The Asianadian*, as we shall see in the chapter that follows, was able to turn ‘the discursive conditions of dominance into the grounds of intervention’ that formed a legacy of radical resistance through social justice cultural productions. By celebrating our histories and embarrassing the settler state and its white society, *The Asianadian* developed its own understanding of freedom, agency, and self-determination free from the trappings of official, state-sponsored narratives of Canadian inclusion. *The Asianadian* offered readers a story of Canada they had not yet heard.

Chapter Two: The Existential Community of The Asianadian: “from the inside out—with guts!”

*The concept of the Asianadian person is a new one in much the same way as the Asianadian culture. It transcends specific ethnic affiliations such as “being Chinese” or “being East Indian.” It also transcends Asian racism, class lines—and the Asian traditions of sexism, militarism, and regionalism... To find new meaning in being Asian in Canada through becoming an Asianadian, however, must come from 1.) recognizing our historical and cultural roots in Asia and Canada, and 2.) bridging the gap between Asians of different cultures. Recent immigrants must learn the Western side from those already here. Those already here must learn the Asian side from those recently arrived. Personalism must be overcome. Unity is the only recourse to survival.*¹¹³

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*Before we can expect to raise the consciousness level of other Canadians vis-à-vis Asianadian women, we must first heighten our own awareness of our selves and erase any traces of the geisha girl mentality.*¹¹⁴

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Introduction: The Hybridity of Freedom and the Freedom of Hybridity

The Asianadian, by way of its hybrid production, succeeded in introducing a plethora of new conversations about Indigenous peoples, gender, new Asian voices, and mental wellness to Asian Canadian communities from a radical “Third Space of enunciation”¹¹⁵ within the hostile space of the Canadian settler state. The hybridity of the magazine’s cultural production further reveals an intriguing and new sense of freedom that does not merely amalgamate elements of

¹¹³ “Editorial,” *The Asianadian* vol. 4 no. 1, 1982, pp. 1-2.

¹¹⁴ “Experience of Asian Canadian Women,” *The Asianadian* vol. 1 no. 3, 1978, p. 3

¹¹⁵ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 54.

Western and Eastern notions of liberation. Rather, by calling upon Asian Canadians to learn from the ‘Asian side’ of recent immigrants and for newly arrived immigrants to learn about the West from Asians already here, such unity reflects the idea that the arrivant’s diasporic experiences are, according to Bhabha, “not a part of the ‘progressivist’ division between past and present, or the archaic and the modern; nor is it a ‘newness’ that can be contained in the mimesis of ‘original and copy.’”¹¹⁶ How this newness emerges is a matter of how the editorial collective engages with their hybrid sense of freedom, agency, and self-determination. In this reorientation towards free-being, the editorial collective attempted to resist what twentieth century existentialists, Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir call “facticity”—the concrete social, political, biological contingencies for which human beings exist and are limited. Resisting the factual reduction to social and biological stereotyping, *The Asianadian* formed a hybrid notion of freedom to emphasize the core of collective and individual agency and as an awareness of oppression so as to reclaim and expand identity, including history, self-image, and potential that had previously been branded by white Canada as socially peculiar, ontologically inassimilable, and politically incommensurable. Thus, while Sartre and Beauvoir contend that freedom is contingent upon destroying facticity, this chapter will look at specific editorials within the magazine to argue for the ways in which the editorial collective built a radically hybrid space within the confines of the Canadian settler state. In what follows, I explicate on the magazine’s powerful articulation of freedom as existence to resist and/or nihilate facticity by and through hybrid articulations of purpose, life, and belonging as present in the editorials and features of the magazine.

Freedom as an essential human dilemma is an important belief in the both the East and the West. From Plato’s *Symposium*, wherein Socrates believed freedom was a mastery of bodily

¹¹⁶ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 325.

desires to Laozi's *Daodejing* characterizing freedom as sagely action according non-coercion to Dogen's Zen Buddhism where Nirvana comes by overcoming suffering to Kant's conception of freedom as intellectual enlightenment through the use of public and private reason in his important essay "Answering the Question: What is Enlightenment?"—freedom as belief, action, and an end in itself is fundamental to the human situation. The expansion of European imperialism in the early modern and modern age modified sensibilities of freedom in paradigmatic ways, bringing to light new conversations as to who and what constitutes freedom. For instance, Sartre presented the following philosophical maxim on freedom: "freedom is nothing but the *existence* of our will or of our passions in so far as this existence is the nihilation of facticity."¹¹⁷ Here, freedom contains a sense of actualizing some kind of responsibility to nihilate facticity. Sartre also notes: "and in wanting freedom, we discover that it depends entirely on the freedom of others, and that the freedom of others depends on ours."¹¹⁸ Adding nuance to this goal of nihilating facticity, de Beauvoir argues that such responsibility manifests through ethical relations with others as "the triumph of freedom over facticity."¹¹⁹ Sartre and de Beauvoir's broad understandings of freedom (as existence that resists or tries to annihilates being reduced to a fact) are found throughout several editorials of *The Asianadian*.

While *The Asianadian* celebrated the literary and artistic works of everyday Asians trying to discover their potential, the editorial staff did not shy away from critical objective examinations of how harmful stereotypes and hostile social interactions limited access to alternative readings and experiences of historical identity. For instance, Terry Watada comments

¹¹⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1943), p. 573.

¹¹⁸ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, trans. Philip Mairet, (London: Methuen, 1948), p. 51.

¹¹⁹ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, trans. Bernard Frechtman, (New Jersey: Citadel Press, 1976), p. 45.

on how many Japanese Canadians of older generations in the 1970s continued to call themselves “Orientals”—a problematic and outdated term of identification with its roots founded in colonialism to produce an internalized inferiority that was further compounded by the events of the internment. Watada says: “I know that at about that time Americans were calling themselves ‘Asian American’ but Canadians were calling themselves ‘Oriental.’ It was a real hurdle to get over.”¹²⁰ Watada’s comments reveal one of the many ways in which Asians in Canada continued to live with the haunting effects of early twentieth century exclusion and expulsion, despite their eventual inclusion into Canadian orders of social belonging. Such a perniciously colonial interpellation succeeds in reifying rigid markers of identity that engender factual reduction of the body and lived experience. Thus, I find it useful to also draw upon Frantz Fanon’s experience as a Black man in the white world, for much of what he has to say about his Blackness translates through a phenomenological analysis that illuminates the assemblages of mind-body experiences into the realm of lived experience for many non-English speaking Asians, including the elderly and newly arrived immigrants. By informing readers of the ways in which these invisible and normalized acts of alienation curtailed Asian Canadian participation in Canadian politics and culture, the editorial collective produced its own hybrid notions of personal agency linked to a reorientation towards collective freedom and community responsibility. On this basis, *The Asianadian* began the invaluable and creative process of uplifting and dignifying Asian communities traumatized by the racist exclusion of nineteenth and twentieth century white Canada.

Situating Methodological Lines of Thought

¹²⁰ Terry Watada (poet, musician, novelist, *The Asianadian* contributor) in discussion with author, November 13, 2017.

Methodologically, I explore the nature of freedom, responsibility, and self-determination considered in the editorials of *The Asianadian*, I approach *The Asianadian*'s articulation of freedom through a philosophical hermeneutic substantiated by twentieth century existential and phenomenological notions of freedom. Because philosophy in general, and existentialism and phenomenology in particular, present integrated views of existence grounded in the theme of freedom and unfreedom, I engage with these philosophies for their theoretical accessibility to ideas of survival, agency, and will (as related concepts to freedom) that constitute the hybrid essence of *The Asianadian*'s desire to socially and politically galvanize the Asian Canadian community. As such, the existentialists believe that "freedom [is] the foundation of all values."¹²¹ Such a relation to freedom is manifest in human action and the independent will to change one's conditions of unfreedom. These ideas are pertinent to the discovery of a hybrid humanism that allows for alternative ways of relating to other people and the world, and one that transcends the limited condition of Western liberal individualism.¹²² For instance, the philosophical depth and contextual breadth of Sartre's *Existentialism is a Humanism* discloses the ways in which human freedom is a productive yet provocative problem that involves an attunement to the power structures and social expectations that confine human freedom. In part, these power structures and social expectations reify facticity just as those who share such beliefs succeed in reproducing them through language and social interaction. Sartre was also criticized for assuming in *Existentialism is a Humanism* that total freedom correlated to total responsibility. Though ethics were not forefront to Sartre's conception of existential freedom, I do note that within *The Asianadian*, freedom and responsibility correlate with one another and emerge as a

¹²¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, trans. Carol Macomber (London: Yale University Press), 2007, p. 48.

¹²² See Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Politics in the Age of Identity and Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

cultivated practice that gave rise the community ethics of the editorial collective who demanded freedom in representation. *Existentialism is a Humanism*, therefore, is an important introductory text that will help connect the primary ideas of existential freedom with *The Asianadian*.

Moreover, in my attempts to establish comparative analysis between existentialism and the modes of expression present in the magazine, it is my hope that the following exploration of *The Asianadian*'s latent philosophical themes encourages a more productive use of philosophy in critical ethnographic work and contemporary cultural analysis. To produce an existentialist and phenomenological hermeneutic of an Asian Canadian archive is to develop integrated scholarship that has yet to be seen in both Asian Canadian studies and continental philosophy. In this way, I will argue that *The Asianadian* demonstrated a hybridized understanding of freedom. My philosophical hermeneutic of *The Asianadian* draws out three interconnected themes related to the magazine. The first is composed of the ways in which *The Asianadian* established a dwelling of inclusion for Asian Canadians confronted with historical and cultural homelessness. Here, I examine the ways that the magazine functioned as a dwelling, habitation, or home that invited Asian Canadians to share familial stories and personal testimonies of truth-telling and self-discovery. Second, is the magazine's commitment to publishing and sharing work created by vulnerable or lesser known Asian Canadian voices, which I argue is an altruistic recognition of universal freedom formed through discourse that affirms the editorial collective's responsibility to uplifting community. The final theme involves analyzing the ways in which *The Asianadian* was a site of phenomenological investigation by examining the topics discussed by and expressed through the magazine itself.

By redirecting the orientation of the Western continental tradition to read the first Asian Canadian social justice magazine, I not only reveal hidden philosophical structures underlying

the magazine, but also take on a position of ethical refusal to be assimilated into colonial categorical structures that disassociate philosophy from lived experience and social justice discourse. While much of the convoluted, jargon-laden philosophy of twentieth century is absent in the magazine, contributors and editorial staff alike articulated their philosophical and cultural conundrums with existence, purpose, and belonging in accordance to their own socio-economic and political positionality, thereby developing contextually fluid bridges between lived experience and the philosophies of freedom underscoring the magazine. Using philosophical and theoretical language, of course, is not a prerequisite for developing one's own understanding of freedom. Instead, *The Asianadian* gives concreteness to existential and phenomenological theories by philosophically unifying with Asian Canadian worldviews and experience. Such contextually-based perspectives follow a particularly non-coercive way of traversing unfamiliar territory inside and outside of consciousness, as well as with unfamiliar or intimidating theoretical waters. Further, an opening of the epistemological structures of existentialism and phenomenology to accommodate historical and contemporary readings of Asian Canadian social justice cultural production contributes to the expansion of Asian Canadian scholarship. Although invaluable literary and visual cultural analysis has been conducted on the magazine in relation to larger social justice movements at the time¹²³, there has yet to be any rigorous philosophical interrogation that considers the ways in which the anti-Asian political climate of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries contoured the grassroots movement of Asians in Canada. On this basis, existing literary and visual cultural analysis can be expanded, sharpened, and appreciated with the introduction of philosophical thought. Thus, my position for using

¹²³ See Larissa Lai, *Slanting I, Imagining We: Asian Canadian Literary Production of the 1980s and 1990s* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2014); Xiaoping Li, *Voices Rising: Asian Canadian Cultural Activism* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007).

philosophical hermeneutics to read *The Asianadian* stems from realizing that the magazine represented itself as an integrative process of transformation and becoming, while also asking Asian Canadians to consider their own lives as undergoing constant change. Encouraged by the co-founders' and editors' profound humility and desire to give back to the community invokes a political-ethical responsibility on my part as a junior scholar and community activist to develop rigorous scholarly relations between different and differing modes of intellectualism and action.

Twentieth Century Existential and Phenomenological Roots

Categorized under two streams thought (religious and secular, or anti-religious), existentialism is a philosophical method used to interrogate the processes of how an individual becomes a free and responsible agent, according to their individual will and actions. Sartre declared that existentialism was the “revolt against over-systematization” in philosophical thought and method—a problem related to the over-reliance on metaphysical classification, rather than philosophical inquiry. Translator Philip Mariet writes of how Sartre saw that most philosophy was not wisdom gained after an event (or experience) occurred, but that wisdom had little to do with any event at all.¹²⁴ Sartre’s problem with the mechanization of philosophy, therefore, prompted him to think about how this mechanization altered consciousness and individual free will. Although Sartre and other existentialists of the twentieth century considered themselves to be a part of the non-religious branch of existentialism, this opposition to the ossification of philosophy arises from the earlier skepticisms of Soren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche, who, philosophizing in the mid- to late-nineteenth century, noticed and critiqued the rigidification of Christian dogmatism in Europe.

¹²⁴ Philip Mairet, “Introduction” in *Existentialism and Humanism*, (London: Methuen, 1948), p. 5.

Noticing the ways in which Christianity failed to appropriately resolve conflicts in the soul, Kierkegaard philosophized life and death on the basis that everyone lived in a paradox of human dilemmas. Mairet reads Kierkegaard's nineteenth century consideration of clashes within the soul as "anxieties, agonies, and perilous adventures of faith into an unknown territory"¹²⁵ that compel one to be more self-contemplative of one's life. Resolution of these dilemmas comes from letting conflicts of the soul unravel; to stifle them or otherwise ignore them is a condition of unfreedom. The popularization of Christianity in the early modern era diluted its authority with the masses so that it could no longer adequately keep up with the developing anxieties and passions of the modern individual. Interested in how and why these emotions formed under God's guidance, Kierkegaard's philosophy discusses of a form of anxiety that could only exist if one's soul was in deep conflict with itself. Drawing from the Biblical story of Abraham's resignation to burn his son Isaac as an offering to God, Kierkegaard attempted to retrieve and evoke a sense of anxiety and passion particular to the story of Abraham and his encounter with God, who demands Abraham kill his only son, Isaac, in the land of Moriah. Abraham's resignation to listen to God elevates him "higher than the universal" because it is in accordance to Abraham's choice that he surrenders to the ultimate wisdom of God. Kierkegaard writes:

Infinite resignation is the last stage before faith, so anyone who has not made this movement does not have faith, for only in infinite resignation does an individual become conscious of his eternal validity, and only then can one speak of grasping existence by virtue of faith.¹²⁶

Kierkegaard interprets Abraham's angst/resignation to God's wisdom as a choice that would lead him to be conscious of his eternal faith and then act accordingly to that faith. This particularly

¹²⁵ Mairet, "Introduction" in *Existentialism and Humanism*, p. 6.

¹²⁶ Soren Kierkegaard, *Fearing and Trembling*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1983), p. 46.

religious notion of faith is dominant in religious existential thinking but was eventually be transformed and reconceptualized as “resoluteness” (determinedness) by figures such as Martin Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. The pivotal move in Kierkegaard’s philosophy is to posit that freedom and responsibility are found through an ineffability of individual choice: “whether the single individual actually is undergoing a spiritual trial or is a knight of faith, only the single individual himself can decide.”¹²⁷ Thus, the re-articulation of notions of individuality and freedom discussed in *Fear and Trembling* are transformative themes in the modification of twentieth century existential thought.

Alongside Kierkegaard’s personal faith-based resignation to God, another way of thinking about one’s existence in relation to freedom and non-freedom percolated with the radical and uncompromising works of Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche is an important philosopher and writer whose philosophical method attempted to balance anti-religiosity and anti-humanism in his critiques of Christianity as a corrupted moral system. Whereas Kierkegaard attempted to revitalize faith with God through personal conscious consent, Nietzsche addressed the crisis of nihilism and the increasing lack of faith in any higher value system with the growing urgency towards productivity and efficiency that was beginning to form in late nineteenth century European modernity. His critiques of morality caused many to reflect on traditional understandings of faith-based knowledge. Nietzsche, however, did not resolve to return to the Christian faith as Kierkegaard had. Recognizing that the fundamental ideas behind humanism perpetuated vapid individualism, indistinct progress, and over-generalized freedom, Nietzsche argues that modern morals are contaminated by the moral deprivation of Christianity. Nietzsche identifies the ailing support for Christian institutions, much to the same degree as Kierkegaard

¹²⁷ Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, p. 79.

had before him. A secular morality, Nietzsche argued, would be unable to support itself for long because Christendom no longer held widespread authority and without a foundation of values, Western civilization would likely undergo a lengthy and tumultuous reconstitution of society. While Kierkegaard noted in his own works that human beings' separation from God produced unnamable dread and angst (fear and trembling), Nietzsche's aphorism 125 from *The Gay Science* shows that the slow but continuous disbelief in God was due to human-instituted abuse of his wisdom, hence the infamous declaration that "God is dead."¹²⁸ If moral guidance is built on top of an already morally-fraught Christian foundation, compounded by the increasing recognition of its histories of corruption, any universal basis of a good moral life is difficult to attain. Such instability, Nietzsche urged, should be a serious concern for humanity. Reflecting on the changing moral consciousness of his time, Nietzsche argued that an adequate response to this loss of moral stability should first be to mourn this collective loss, followed by a lengthy project of restoring moral values. In many ways, then, Nietzsche's identification of the sickness of modernity reaffirms the importance of developing, retrieving, and reevaluating already-established values in a seemingly value-less world.

The second stream of existential thought that appeared in the twentieth century and is recognized as the atheistic, anti-religious, or non-religious stream of existentialism. Atheistic existentialism is infamously captured by the work *Being and Nothingness* published by Sartre in 1943 as a response to Martin Heidegger's 1927 *Being and Time*. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre writes that when a person lives under the objectifying gaze of another, the person being examined becomes acutely aware of themselves, because they are conscious of the gaze of the one who objectifies. The unwavering gaze is cause for caution because it obfuscates the

¹²⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kauffman (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), pp. 181-2.

constitution of one's existence. The gaze of the other must be addressed since, "the Other's look touches me across the world and is not only a transformation of myself but a total metamorphosis of the *world*."¹²⁹ In being rendered an object, subjectivity and subjective consciousness is displaced, thereby engendering "a total metamorphosis of the world." Under this objectifying gaze, the fabrication of a false sense of self emerges to replace the self that existed prior to the objectifying encounter; consciousness exists in bad faith. Bad faith forms a notorious conflict within the self (reminiscent of Kierkegaard's fear and trembling), which generates self-denial, self-hate, despair, and guilt substantiated by non-belonging. Sartre observes that it is "through bad faith a person seeks to escape the responsible freedom of Being-for-itself. Bad faith rests on a vacillation between transcendence and facticity which refuses to recognize either one for what it really is or to synthesize them."¹³⁰ An appropriate response to the objectifying gaze, then, according to Sartre, is to exercise a degree of free will that allows one to assert themselves as free and conscious of the forces that objectify. A sense of existing for the self, rather than for another, can begin to form when one resists the objectifying gaze. As a being-for-itself, to use Sartrean terminology, I have the freedom to intuit the world through whatever means I may choose. Value exists as a result of the act of choosing. The process of this coming into a being-for-itself often calls for self-reflexivity and self-determination towards nihilating facticity.¹³¹ A return to the self in an attempt to recover an intuition of freedom follows Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. Unlike Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, however, Sartre considers how an objectifying gaze constructs a dimension of self that one has no control over. Becoming as a being-in-itself, like that of an inanimate object, therefore ruptures once-stable identity formations and changes

¹²⁹ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 360.

¹³⁰ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 800.

¹³¹ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 622.

the constitution of the political subject as constantly unstable and conflicted. In other words, I must wrench free from the one who objectifies, recognize that I am not reducible to an essential construct, and regain my subjectivity. Sartre writes in *Existentialism is a Humanism*:

...man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world—and defines himself afterwards. If man as the existentialist sees him as not definable, it is because to begin with he is nothing. He will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes of himself. Thus, there is no human nature, because there is no God to have a conception of it. Man simply is.¹³²

Sartre grounds human existence secularly to distance his formulation of existentialism from Christian religious and moral foundations, implicitly adopting a framework of multicultural inclusiveness that transcend the geopolitical specificity of European modernity. The inclusiveness with which Sartre configures his model of existentialism is theoretically provocative for our reading of *The Asianadian*, which houses a similar source of skepticism or resistance against models of Eurocentric religiosity and hegemony. But to account for these ideational commensurabilities and contradictions, we must also consider the relationship between philosophy, art, and the body.

To find value beyond religious and social institutions that can no longer adequately account for human angst, Sartre argues for a mode of self-awareness that is accessible through interactions with philosophy and art. Such connections with philosophy and art clarify the existential idea that existence precedes essence; that is, in order to create an essence, one must first recognize that one exists and can exist beyond the confines of objectification. Philosophizing and art are examples of free conscious activity that give way to epiphany, revelation, or the realization of one's oppressive condition. Writing, for instance, can be

¹³² Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, p. 28.

cathartic. An existential engagement with philosophy and art functions as the mechanism of return to dormant parts of consciousness that help to posit the idea that one has the capacity to alter their lives. Psychological adjustments, however, do not exist in isolation from the body. The effects of being reduced to an object impacts how one's body moves through hostile spaces. As such, much of existential thought, as an internal examination of subjective life, is a philosophical approach that derives insight from phenomenology.

Phenomenology is the study of how worldly phenomena affects our bodily perception and consciousness¹³³ as they are experienced from a first-person or subjective perspective. It is the study of how one orients oneself in the world according to lived experience, by meaningfully investigating the ways in which one experiences the appearance, bodily feeling, and perception of things that produce meaning. As such, the central structure of phenomenology is intentionality. A person's intentionality is based on how they orient themselves, their body, and mind towards something. That is, having an intention towards something is to be conscious of it. Rooted in the human experience of the lived body, phenomenology is a branch of philosophy related to ontology, ethics, epistemology, and existentialism. It is a field of study that attempts to disclose the world as grounded by essences that make our perception, consciousness, and common sense possible. Phenomenologist Max van Manen notes that "a good phenomenological description is collected by lived experience and recollects lived experience—is validated by lived experience and it validates lived experience..."¹³⁴ Importantly, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's work *Phenomenology of Perception* is an invaluable twentieth century phenomenological text that requires some unpacking if we are to understand the Fanon's phenomenological

¹³³ Colin Smith, "Preface" in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Colin Smith, (London: Routledge, 1958), pp. vii.

¹³⁴ Max van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Sciences for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy* (London, ON: Althouse Press, 1997), p. 27.

reconceptualization of Merleau-Ponty's apolitical schema in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Often described as an existential phenomenologist, Merleau-Ponty took up the task of theorizing how various phenomena influence the existence of the body and its ability to perceive as consciousness itself. As translator Donald Landes notes on Merleau-Ponty:

He writes about politics and history, but always returns to the experience of perception in order to reopen their definition. He shows us that the social and historical field and the world that our eyes are open to are, for the same reason, inexhaustible; he shows us that perception and action are, for the same reason, never certain; and he shows us that, for the same reason, we can neither give up the notion of an historical truth nor abandon our faith in the visible.¹³⁵

Phenomenology of Perception contains Merleau-Ponty's reflections on freedom and offers insight into possibilities that bring us into direct contact with essences in the world through intersubjective relation and intentional consciousness. To undermine the Cartesian mind and body dualism, Merleau-Ponty situates the body as the focal point for our distinguishing our ambiguous existence as both subjects and objects. Problematically, however, *Phenomenology of Perception* conceives of the body as generally flattened in a unified world, presumably already free and thereby forecloses any understandings of bodily perception under intense racialization. That is, how does Merleau-Ponty account for how and why certain bodies are denied freedom? Fanon recognized this discrepancy that Merleau-Ponty did not account for the experience non-white bodies in the white world. His response to the suffocation from being denied an ontological existence and history is universally relatable to the situation of many Asian immigrants in Canada, insofar as the white world misinterprets and misrepresents the existence and history of Asian men and women. That is, Fanon's Black body moving through Paris is the

¹³⁵ Claude Lefort, "Maurice Merleau-Ponty" in *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. xix.

analogy I use for making historical knowledges about Asian bodies moving through Canadian settler colonial space.

Fanon had made a number of phenomenological contributions to critical race theory. He theorizes the double consciousness that Black people have because of the mask (or ‘veil’ reminiscent from Du Bois’ *The Souls of Black Folk*) they must wear in a white social world. As such, Fanon is an invaluable philosopher for thinking through the ways in which impressions upon the lived body shapes the broader structures of one’s consciousness. As an important contributor to phenomenological thought, Fanon offers a detailed phenomenological analysis of how Black men and women undergo changes in bodily movement and consciousness when they encounter the traumatic situation of being categorized as an inessential Other (a problem that Sartre also discusses in *Being and Nothingness*). Fanon delivers a rigorous critique of the violence brought on by European colonialism, one that “not only aims at keeping these enslaved men at a respectful distance, it also seeks to dehumanize them.”¹³⁶ Colonial violence is to be met with revolutionary violence, according to Fanon, as a necessity in taking back and reconstructing the self in the move towards liberation. Indeed, revolutionary violence manifests itself in various ways. Fanon’s sense of freedom, clarified by his phenomenological investigation of alienation, calls for a liberation of all colonized peoples—reminiscent of Marx and Sartre, but entirely different in method—including holding to account the apathetic European masses who continue to feign colonial amnesia.

The colossal task, which consists of reintroducing man into the world, man in his totality, will be achieved with the crucial help of the European masses who would do well to confess that they have often rallied behind the position of our common masters on colonial issues.

¹³⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, “Preface” in *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: New Grove Press, 1963), p. 1.

In order to do this, the European masses must first of all decide to wake up, put on their thinking caps and stop playing the irresponsible game of Sleeping Beauty.¹³⁷

Fanon's call for European masses to shake off colonial lethargy is also the spirit within which *The Asianadian* positions its social justice work by drawing from situational dimensions of lived experience with racism. That is, phenomenology can be useful for our study of *The Asianadian* because of the magazine's centralizing of Asian and Canadian lived experiences with racism and sexism to express negotiations and changes in consciousness. The intellectual genealogy that formed the grounding for Sartrean notions of freedom and existence alongside Fanon's brilliant reconceptualization of bodily habitation that seeks to widen Merleau-Ponty's exclusive phenomenology are the guiding philosophical principles for this chapter's engagement in a philosophical hermeneutic of *The Asianadian*.

Mapping Out New Sensibilities and a Dwelling of Belonging

The Asianadian's engagement with art and literature helped to reconstruct the image of Asian Canadians in the 1970s and 1980s and inspired new sensibilities about being Asian Canadian. These included the establishment of networks of resistance and security against the destructive and untruthful reproductions of anti-Asian imagery and stereotypes that transited and transformed as the geopolitical configurations of Canada settled. Because this was among the first attempts at conducting a major overhaul of anti-Asian racism (imagery, language, cultural assumptions) by a grassroots collective, the magazine designed a radical and unapologetic Asianadian social justice agenda that centralized safe artistic space for Asian Canadians, and in doing so, catapulted Asian Canadian consciousness towards modalities of freedom and agency

¹³⁷ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: New Grove Press, 1963), p. 62.

that they had been historically denied. Finding themselves ambiguously cast forth into the world, the absence of a (welcoming) cultural and historical habitation cut off access to an interiority, intimacy, and therefore familiarity with the world. The metaphysical legality and sociality imposed on Asian arrivants by the settler state are constitutive of this ambiguity and absence. Thus, the work of *The Asianadian* necessarily required the involvement of an entire collective. The outcomes of its reorientation of intentionality and social responsibility have produced long-term effects on subjective experience. Essays, poetry, book reviews, personal memoir, photography, and even community forums compiled in each issue show the continuous development of this reorientation towards free-being and agency. In this dwelling of inclusion, Asian Canadians came together to share their thoughts and feelings about Canadian history, the state, their ancestors and parents, and broader structures of identity in the meaning of being Asian Canadian. The security of this dwelling guarantees that *The Asianadian* collective is given a home or expressive habitation that becomes a fortress against the anonymity of external social expectations. By securing a space of inclusion, *The Asianadian* asked complex philosophical questions: Who are we as Asians in Canada? What is our purpose here? How did we get here? Where do we belong? Employing these questions to enlighten Asian Canadians about Canadian ideology in the past and present, each issue problematized the state's structural and institutional inequities, while also focusing on the ways in which Asian Canadians could revitalize their sense of being both Asian and Canadian. In attempts to clarify cultural ambiguity, *The Asianadian* presented an existential and phenomenological explication of the community's multi-vocal interpretations of what it meant to be Asian Canadian. Ambiguity, Lewis Gordon writes, is "an expression of the human being as a meaningful, multifaceted way of being that may involve contradictory interpretations, or at least equivocal ones.... The phenomenological task at hand is

thus to draw out a hermeneutic of this ambiguity.”¹³⁸ These ambiguities in the soul created as a result from existing under coercive state-formation sediment in consciousness to form the foundations that motivate Asian Canadian social justice. The enunciations of these ambiguities make way for alternative orientations towards something other than state sponsored assimilation or exclusion.¹³⁹ Refuting the binarism of assimilation or exclusion is indicative of a people coming into consciousness of their coerced being; the results of this transformation only needed to be rediscovered, nurtured, and cultivated. It is from this resolve for personal and collective transformation that *The Asianadian* formed a dwelling of inclusion that promoted the notion of free conscious activity for all. The activity of thinking itself elides erasure and anonymity, thereby forming the grassroots dwelling as a privileged space in the Levinasian sense: “the privileged role of the home does not consist in being the end of human activity but in begin its condition, and in this sense its commencement.”¹⁴⁰ With a culminated skepticism towards the structures and impediments that prevented enlightenment in the past to inform the existential and phenomenological inquiries into the meaning of being Asian Canadian, the editorial collective began mapping out new sensibilities and new modes of being that set aside white Canadian classifications.

“A New Asian Canadian Sensibility” was the first *Asianadian* issue published in 1978. It established the tone of the magazine as uncompromisingly committed to “speaking out against those factors (whether conditions or person) perpetuating racism in Canada.”¹⁴¹ From its

¹³⁸ Lewis R. Gordon, “Existential Dynamics of Theorizing Black Invisibility” in *Existence in Black: An Anthology of Black Existential Philosophy*, ed. Lewis R. Gordon (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 69-80.

¹³⁹ These logics of settler colonial capital are what Iyko Day defines as “The governing logic of white supremacy embedded in the settler colonial mode of production [which] relies on and reproduces the exploitability, disposability, and symbolic extraterritoriality of a surplus alien labor force.” See *Alien Capital*, p. 24.

¹⁴⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), p. 154.

¹⁴¹ “A New Asian Canadian Sensibility,” *The Asianadian* vol. 1 no. 1, 1978, p. 3.

inception, the magazine promised to build a space of inclusion for those historically denied dwelling. Bhabha explains that with the creation of such a dwelling, “these ‘in between’ spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood,” and thereby “initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself.”¹⁴² Presenting the magazine as a dwelling of belonging for new Asian Canadian sensibilities signals the editorial collectives readiness to confront hostile situations, memories, and structures of thought as a commitment to personal and collective discovery. On this basis, *The Asianadian*’s Aims were a significant source of encouragement because they called upon Asian Canadians to discover their own sense of belonging through intersubjective lateral relations both with other Asians and marginalized communities. Moreover, the aims refute the historical classifications that racially, economically, and politically Asians as too socially peculiar to belong in Canadian culture. To ensure that these aims could be fully cultivated, the magazine opened their publications to include “submissions of critical essays, community articles, poetry, art work, short stories and reviews concerning the Asian experience in Canada....”¹⁴³ By forming a broad network for artistic expression stationed around a central thesis of Asian Canadian experience, its counter-hegemonic social justice standards encouraged Asian Canadians to think beyond white Canada’s injustice. Art and philosophizing merge here as a way to transvaluate the past and present so as to create future possibilities. By starting with a big picture understanding of Asian Canadian consciousness at that time through story sharing and other experimental forms of knowledge production, the editorial collective produced a sense of freedom that was initiated with reconstructing history and the external and internal images historically used to marginalize Asian Canadian communities and individuals. Contributors,

¹⁴² Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 2.

¹⁴³ “Work,” *The Asianadian* vol. 1 no. 4, 1979, p. 1.

therefore, submitted works that archived a general consensus of the problematic social expectations that mistake internalized inferiority, guilt, and despair for Asians being inscrutably docile. Asian Canadian contributors understood quite well the ways that historical and continued systemic and institutional racism, sexism, and homophobia impacted Asian Canadian lives on a foundation level, but the *Asianadian* Aims solidified the magazine as a dwelling of artistic and intellectual mobilization for testimonials of the “indefatigable Asian Canadian’s will and fighting spirit” by actively working towards opening and introducing new discourses between Asian Canadians. Centering the complex social experiences of Asian Canadians, the editorial further explains:

It will stand up against the distortions of our history in Canada, stereotypes, economic exploitation, and the general tendency towards injustice and inequality practiced on “visible minorities.” But more importantly, we will present an outlet for the talented Asian Canadian artists, writers, and musicians. We will strive to promote unity in the Asian Canadian communities and to bridge the gap between Asians with 19th century roots in Canada and recent Asian immigrants.¹⁴⁴

Exploring moments in a collective history engages with hidden parts of consciousness and function invaluable as memory work that reminds the community of how and why Asians came to these lands. The magazine reinforced the value of Asian Canadian history by converging nineteenth century roots with contemporary sensibilities about identity. Because Asian Canadian history (labour, language, politics, culture) is constituted in Canadian history, such a proximity to the past functions as an access to life that Nietzsche writes as living itself: “for this significant life, this certain significance of nature and history which I am, does not limit my access to the world, but on the contrary is my means to entering into communication with it.”¹⁴⁵ Taking

¹⁴⁴ “A New Asian Canadian Sensibility,” *The Asianadian* vol. 1 no. 1, 1978, p. 3.

¹⁴⁵ Maurice Merleau-Ponty “Freedom” in *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 529.

seriously the opportunity to recommunicate these histories, reconciling with troubled pasts is reinforced in nearly every issue and reveals the ways in which history and historical recovery recuperates a sense of belonging and pride that had been silenced by state power and violence during much of the twentieth century.

A column called ‘Heritage Reruns’ between ran briefly 1978 and 1980 and served as a compelling approach to recovering history. Welcoming the life stories of families, Asian-owned businesses, and important Asian Canadian historical sites, this column featured Asian and Asian Canadian history exclusively. Significantly, it also preceded the infamous Canadian “Heritage Minutes” mini-movie series, which were first introduced in 1991 by CBC and CTV. The “Work” issue of Winter 1978 printed the first “Heritage Reruns.” The editorial team writes:

We are proud to introduce *Heritage Reruns*—a new department relating the lives and memoirs of ordinary Asian Canadians across Canada. They are stories of determination, despair, hard work and courage. The experiences of these people irrevocably shaped their hopes, attitudes, and aspirations—and, consequently, have subtly directed the values and lifestyles of their children. Do you have an interesting story of your family? We welcome submissions to this department.¹⁴⁶

Several stories shared in the “Heritage Reruns” can only be described as epics. One writer recalls her harrowing journey to refugee camps while cramped on an over-crowded boat¹⁴⁷; another focuses on how Asian entrepreneurs and restaurateurs successfully navigated predominantly white spaces during economic precarity in the 1930s.¹⁴⁸ And another, features the history of the prison-like quarantine immigration buildings that housed Asian arrivants with haunting images of poetry etched onto the concrete walls of their holding cells.¹⁴⁹ A noticeable theme among

¹⁴⁶ “Work,” *The Asianadian* vol.1 no.4, 1979, p. 8.

¹⁴⁷ Lieu Thuan Nyuyen, “Heritage Reruns,” *The Asianadian* vol. 2 no. 1, 1979, p. 30.

¹⁴⁸ Chen Shan Cheung, “50¢ Special at the Panama,” *The Asianadian* vol. 1 no. 4, 1980, pp. 5-8.

¹⁴⁹ Chuen-Yan David Lai, “A ‘Prison’ for Chinese Immigrants,” *The Asianadian* vol. 2 no.4, 1980, pp. 16-19.

these three “Heritage Reruns” is the unconditional gratitude that refugees and immigrants felt for their new-found life in Canada. To these people, Canada represented newness, freedom, and opportunity;¹⁵⁰ Canada was home. Take for instance the following three passages from three different “Heritage Reruns” columns:

Chen Shan Cheung: But like many others, Chan Dun was willing to suffer the adversities, remain in Canada, and raise a family. His story is not simply a description of a successful café owner, but a stark and relevant commentary of a Chinese in Canadian history.¹⁵¹

...

Lieu Thuan Nyuyen: I know I am very lucky to be here. Canada is so large and beautiful. I am happy to be here. I can walk the streets and go wherever I wish. Those who are still in Vietnam are not living—they are just waiting for death.¹⁵²

...

Chuen-Yan David Lai: The Chinese writings on the walls of the Immigration Building reveal how the imprisoned Chinese felt, how they were treated and why they had emigrated to Canada. Although they may have not been physically abused, they must have been shaken psychologically by the incarceration experience. Along with the Chinese, Fillipinos, Japanese and other Asian people who passed through the building doors also left their thoughts on the walls of the cells.¹⁵³

The “Heritage Reruns” column uncovers access to marginalized histories as essential and necessary for dismantling cultural and historical homelessness and encapsulates what Nietzsche calls the “force of growing in a different way out of oneself, of reshaping and incorporating the

¹⁵⁰ It is important to recognize that despite experiencing Canada’s racist exclusionary policies, some Asian immigrants, refugees, and arrivants held firmly to the belief that life in Canada was safer and better than life in their homeland, where social and economic stability was lesser compared to living in Canada, and though critical race scholars may be skeptical and critical of these representations, consideration of these lived experience enhances, rather than diminishes, our analysis of these representations. These ideas are discussed broadly in *Jin Guo: Voices of Chinese Canadian Women* (Toronto: Women’s Press, 1992).

¹⁵¹ Cheung, “50C Special at the Panama,” *The Asianadian* vol. 1 no. 4, 1980, p. 8.

¹⁵² Nyuyen, “Heritage Reruns,” *The Asianadian* vol. 2 no. 1, 1979, pp. 30-31.

¹⁵³ Lai, “A ‘Prison’ for Chinese Immigrants,” *The Asianadian* vol. 2 no. 4, 1980, p. 19.

past and the foreign, of healing wounds, compensating for what has been lost, rebuilding shattered forms out of one's self."¹⁵⁴ The healing of a fragmented historical consciousness through personal testimony and archival research initiates new signs of self-discovery that structure identity formations. In this way, *The Asianadian* adhered to its standard to stand up against the distortions of Asian history in Canada. Recovery of Asian histories in columns such as the "Heritage Reruns" replaces gaps in history unaccounted for in the colonial archives, and importantly, legitimates the hybrid ontologies of Asian peoples in Canada.

To expand on the historical, economic, and cultural contributions of Asian peoples in Canada, contributor and co-founder Anthony Chan published an opinion and teaching resource piece titled "The Chinese Community in Canada: Background and Teaching Resources" in the first issue. Chan's analysis and compilation of teaching resources is among the first of its kind and affirms the urgency of identifying the exploitative nature of Asian racialization in Canada. The article de-bunks the national myth that Canada was built solely by the English and French, by condemning the failures of adopting multicultural rhetoric and attitudes, which merely further embedded a classificatory lens on Asians as tokens of multicultural performance. Careful selection of Asian representation guaranteed that elements such as Chinese food, Chinese New Year festivals, and Chinatowns obfuscated the state's continued negation of Chinese contributions to history, art, music, and literature in Canada.¹⁵⁵ Official multiculturalism and its inability to sufficiently and accurately represent Asian Canadian communities is symptomatic of Canada's inability to fulfill mature democracy.¹⁵⁶ Along with the awareness of the false

¹⁵⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, trans. Peter Preuss (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1980), p. 4.

¹⁵⁵ Anthony B. Chan, "The Chinese Community in Canada: Background and Teaching Resources," in *The Asianadian* vol. 1 no. 4, 1978, pp. 13-16.

¹⁵⁶ "Editorial," *The Asianadian* vol. 1 no. 4, 1978, p. 3.

reproduction made by official multiculturalism, concerns about Chinese representation in the intellectual realms of Canadian history, literature, and media (often written by non-Chinese at the time) were contentious issues that resonated with other peripherally-situated groups who struggled to find or understand their own historical belonging. In alleviating these frustrations, Chan commits to an intellectual labour that masters the objectification of the white world through discourse. Chan's political critique of the "arrogant and obscene negation of the primary rights of Native Canadians who inhabited and owned these lands before the white settler came as explorer, trader, and exploiter."¹⁵⁷ Chan's consciousness of the struggle of others also establishes an acute ethical sense that Asian Canadian belonging is reliant upon responsible efforts towards Indigenous peoples and their inclusion in cultural and political production. A unified discussion of Chinese Canadian history, the distortions of multiculturalism, and a cognizance of the struggles of Indigenous peoples uncovers an attunement to freedom as being-with-others that also demarcates how "...nothing can be better for us unless it is better for all.... Our responsibility is thus much greater than we had supposed, for it concerns mankind as a whole."¹⁵⁸ Responsibility for the Asian Canadian community, according to Chan, means care for the Indigenous descendants who supported our early Asian ancestors. While the specificity of Chan's review of the Chinese in Canada is not considered a personal testimony, it does offer concrete evidence of the ways in which Chinese and Indigenous people have experienced erasure in an effort to disrupt the metaphysically fabricated truths of state benevolence and hospitality that were so readily appropriated at the time. The truth of these experiences continued to emerge as *The Asianadian* collective grew. Chan's piece was one of the first featured articles in "A New

¹⁵⁷ Chan, "The Chinese Community in Canada: Background and Teaching Resources," *The Asianadian* vol. 1 no. 4, 1978, p. 13.

¹⁵⁸ Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, p. 30.

Asian Canadian Sensibility,” demonstrating *The Asianadian*’s promise in advancing the innovative ethos of the magazine as a dwelling of collective agential making whose goal is freedom.

The first issue displayed the editorial collective’s ambitious attempts to situate recognition within the Asian Canadian community by offering a new sensibilities and ways of communicating existential discomfort. The dwelling gave access to the world and to life itself by allowing for the elaboration of what Bhabha terms, “strategies of selfhood.” On this basis, the evolving consciousness of Asian Canadians releases glimpses of formerly unrevealed subjectivities that disrupt irrational pre-determined notions of being and generate modes of recognition associated with historical solidarity, care, and compassion that challenge liberal gestures of multiculturalism and vertically integrate racialized and historically excluded communities into new discursive ways of relating to the settler state. Aware of the conditions of other marginalized peoples, *The Asianadian* offered an artistic space to evaluate the treatment of unwelcomed and excluded subjects through historical recovery, personal testimony, and political critique conducive to the re-signification of lateral relationality that perfectly captures the maxim “all of us or none of us.”¹⁵⁹ These are elements that form an existential community finding ways to reorient itself away from the destructive processes of Canadian settler colonial principles of reality.

Restructuring Community History, Knowledge, and Energy

¹⁵⁹ This slogan has become synonymous with the Black Lives Matter movement in Toronto. For a historical investigation of Black experiences in Canadian history in a context similar to that pursued in this chapter, see Robyn Maynard, *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present* (Winnipeg: Fernwood Press, 2017).

Chan's feature in the first *Asianadian* publication cast a wide net of inclusion and set the ethos of *The Asianadian* as an explicitly anti-racist, anti-sexist, radical grassroots movement. While the Canadian government had yet to formally recognize its primary role in executing injustice and inequality against Asians in Canada, the editorial collective extended invitations for artistic expression to those who had yet to speak in the Asian Canadian community, including Filipino, Vietnamese, Korean, and Bangladeshi migrant voices. Reflecting on his own participation with the magazine as a Chinese Canadian and co-founder, Kwan speaks of the magazine's intention to deviate from predominantly Japanese Canadian and Chinese Canadian voices to better illuminate the pan-Asian community. Concerned by the lack of Southeast Asian and South Asian representation in Canadian history, *The Asianadian* made considerable efforts to ensure that the pan-Asian quality of the magazine was maintained. Yet, by 1982, the inclusion of South Asian poetry and other writings had vividly increased.¹⁶⁰ Giving space to these silent and silenced voices configures grassroots cultural production as generative of new dimensions of experience. Accordingly, Merleau-Ponty notes that in this newly forged sense, "the operation of expression... stays with the reader and the writer; its signification exists as a thing at the very heart of the text...like a new sense organ. This opens up a new field or dimension of experience."¹⁶¹ As such, these practices of attentiveness to absences were struggles to alleviate structures of bad faith that concretized overtime under the objectifying gaze of white Canada—an element that many Asian Canadians continued to experience. Giving space to account for these clashes in the soul allowed *The Asianadian* collective to restructure understandings of history, reorient knowledges away from colonial modes of knowledge acquisition, and renew a

¹⁶⁰ Cheuk Kwan (*The Asianadian* co-founder) in discussion with author, September 29, 2017.

¹⁶¹ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 188.

hidden source of Asian Canadian pride and energy. In this way, *The Asianadian* affirmed an ethics of being-with-others as invaluable to uplifting community.

Kwan notes that the magazine acted as a political platform for people to speak their truth and rather than white-wash even the most traumatic parts of Asian Canadian history, the intention was always to let writers and artists speak for themselves.¹⁶² Rather than identifying a singular hermeneutic for Asian Canadians to work within, the magazine opted to maintain radically open channels of interpretation. This was evident in the second issue of *The Asianadian* titled “Our History,” which compiled featured works by Japanese and Vietnamese writers who spoke “from the inside out—with guts. An Asian gut history written either by people who lived through it or those who are living it today.”¹⁶³ Speaking through gut history validates an exercise in freedom to choose and realize one’s agency and resists the metaphysical flattening of history into one linear narrative of progress. In the arena of *The Asianadian*, readers and contributors could think and work towards becoming agential beings. Continuing to emphasize the importance of history and historical recovery, I would like to examine how the “Our History” issue mediated that work.

The second issue of *The Asianadian* entitled, “Our History” is as powerful as the first issue and generates another opportunity to examination collective action against historical inaccuracy and misrepresentation. Proposing to “fill in gaps in our understanding of our collective and individual past” and “encourage more people to get involved in writing their own history in order to further our own creativity and thus contribute to our unique perspectives to Canadian society,”¹⁶⁴ the editorial collective featured some remarkable stories. A piece titled

¹⁶² Cheuk Kwan (*The Asianadian* co-founder) in discussion with author, September 29, 2017.

¹⁶³ “Our History,” *The Asianadian* vol. 1 no. 2, 1978, p. 2.

¹⁶⁴ “Our History,” *The Asianadian* vol. 1 no. 2, 1978, p. 2.

“The Vietnamese: An Overlooked Minority” is about the transnational connection between the Vietnamese in their homeland and newly arrived refugees and migrants in Canada escaping the Vietnam War. Here, author Ph. Le reveals the network of social interactions amongst the Vietnamese in Canada, the commitment to family reunification, and discomforts with forced migration. Le writes: “the Vietnamese refugees in Canada were not only drawn together through homesickness and problems of cultural adjustment, but also through their common bitterness towards the new socialist regime at home.”¹⁶⁵ Grasping the thematic of loss and resentment uncovers a phenomenological structure of corporeality (changes to embodiment) that prompt existential consideration of how forced relocation and adaptation, and loss of home, community, and language affects one’s ability to exist comfortably. Having been thrown into the white world of Canada, Le explains: “old people, for example, suffered considerable difficulty in the area of employment as they were not only the victims of age discrimination but also of their inability to grasp the English language.”¹⁶⁶ That *The Asianadian* included Vietnamese voices affected by war is evidence of their commitment to building a multi-dimensional, multi-vocal existential community attuned to structures of experience not commonly expressed in the Canadian historical landscape. These important cultural and intellectual linkages produce a perspective that comes “from the inside out—with guts,” and from the critical recognition that most people who experience violent exclusion and expulsion under conditions of war lack the resources to simply exist freely. Moreover, “The Vietnamese: An Overlooked Minority” captures the idea of “gut history” quite well because Le discloses to readers, through his words, the ineffable elements of human life ruptured by colonial warfare. Experiencing the stories of those who were ontologically silenced informs new capabilities and capacities to think through the identity

¹⁶⁵ Ph. Le, “The Vietnamese: An Overlooked Minority,” *The Asianadian*, vol. 1 no. 2, 1978, p. 8.

¹⁶⁶ Le, “The Vietnamese: An Overlooked Minority,” *The Asianadian*, vol. 1 no. 2, 1978, p. 9.

formations of Asians in Canada. On the level of independent individual experience, “no matter how I love of evaluate my past I can only do so in the light of a project of myself towards the future.”¹⁶⁷ Thus, in introducing silenced voices from other parts of the global Asian community, *The Asianadian* expanded their ethicality to secure a space of belonging for those still debilitated by the violence of Western imperialism, while also nurturing Asian Canadian sensibilities and sensitivities towards these histories. The article’s transnational emphasis further allows readers to relate to the past as subjects, rather than as an objectively removed spectator. Through writing, Le, the Vietnamese, and their recent history opens paths for one to reconcile with personal trauma, despair, and angst, and encourages more judicious understandings of how the self is in the present. The utterance of personal history is a task of existence and as Peter Preuss writes: “History is the record of this self-production; it is the activity of a historical being recovering the past into a present which anticipates a future.”¹⁶⁸ Such generative self-production can give one a sense of wholeness, according to Xiaoping Li, who writes that “the self seems to become more complete, or at least more adequately situated in the present, when one revisits the past.”¹⁶⁹ The reconciliation with history through personal and collective story sharing is constitutive of an existential community grappling with questions of existence, including life, death, freedom, and time. This struggle is the production of new possibilities and therefore new choices because a new-found sense of being and belonging has contributed to knowledge about the self as a result of the existential relationships that make up the existential community. The affirmation of this existential community makes confronting the past less intimidating since one no longer confronts it alone.

¹⁶⁷ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 641.

¹⁶⁸ Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, p. 1.

¹⁶⁹ Xiaoping Li, *Voices Rising: Asian Canadian Cultural Activism* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007), p. 40.

The urgency to establish an Asian Canadian history from the perspectives of Asian Canadians anchors the editorial team's responsibility to strengthening Asian Canadian consciousness about freedom and agency. Such strategy eschews the writing of grand metanarratives of history that tend to celebrate the state, erase episodes of founding violence, and celebrate the rise of Canada as an inclusive nation founded on principles of peace, order, and good government rather than genocide, slavery, and French and English squabbles over church and state. Such history-making echoes Nietzsche's thoughts on history and agency: "we require history for life and action, not for the smug avoiding of life and action."¹⁷⁰ To shake the tranquilizing lethargy of the herd (those who simply accept linear histories as truth), Nietzsche here implores us to write and understand history from a place that does challenge the adoption of trivial and popular opinions as canon. The historical audit always illuminates what is false, inhuman, violent, etc. and by doing so the diligent reader or writer transforms this history from its illusory grounding; this is because "the urgency of the past comes from the future."¹⁷¹ What *The Asianadian* archive has generated in relation to Nietzsche's conception of history as action and life is a way of relating to history that requires and advances "...a great artistic capacity and creative overview."¹⁷² It is from this position of artistic reflexivity that *The Asianadian* was able to configure cultural production to address substantial subjects related to transitions in time and history, such as the writings and reflections of Muslims in Canada in issue four of volume 4; gay and lesbian Asians in Toronto in issue 4 of volume 5; elderly communities suffering from undiagnosed mental health problems in issue one of volume 6; two important issues on children and two issues on youth in the last volume of its run. Commitment to restructuring these histories

¹⁷⁰ Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, p. 7.

¹⁷¹ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 640.

¹⁷² Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, pp. 34; 37.

with the intention to clear a path for future possibilities, relations, and knowledges is to move beyond a form of recognition that requires the assimilation of difference into sameness.

Expanding Asian Canadian representation through cultural production is an agential way of being that elaborates on the value of choice, and “since freedom is choice, it is change”¹⁷³ as well. Though the past contains certain unchangeable elements, the variable of interpretation allows for an altogether different hermeneutic that resists assimilation back into the dominant historical consensus, which Kelly Oliver cautions as reducing oppressed people back into a paradigm where “they are reduced to an egoless, passive body that is at the same time in need of control and discipline.”¹⁷⁴ The phenomenological structure of corporeal confinement to a temporal past harmfully reproduces the power structures of historical memory that privilege the historical interpretations of the privileged class as truth. Redirecting intentionality away from the normalized violence of Anglo-Canadian history towards a recognition from and within an existential community is an active process self-creation—an essential process to fight oppression and overcome the damaging effects of colonialism.¹⁷⁵ In response to the bad faith complexes that plague Asian Canadian self-perception and recognition, *The Asianadian* retaliated by publishing two non-conventional and non-conforming issues on Asian Canadian women.

The Women of *The Asianadian*: Introducing Our Voices to the Movement

The events of the Anglo-Second-wave feminist movement reverberated into the 1970s and 1980s, wherein women of colour feminist scholars began mobilizing against the lacks, absences, and misrepresentations of their Anglo feminist counterparts. In between these transitions, *The Asianadian* featured two inaugural Asian women’s issues (the first in 1978 and

¹⁷³ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 638.

¹⁷⁴ Kelly Oliver, *Witnessing Beyond Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2001), p. 9.

¹⁷⁵ Oliver, *Witnessing Beyond Recognition*, p. 29.

second in 1985) that focused exclusively on Asian Canadian women, their place in Asian and Canadian society, and their processes of self-discovery and “becoming success stories.” Both issues consider the situation of Asian women and how they negotiate degrees of agency in a predominantly masculine world. The 1978 editorial entitled “Experience of Asian Canadian Women” posed a question of intersectional and philosophical importance: “Faced with the complex relationships between sex, socio-economic class and race, how do we as Asian Canadian women fit into the North American feminist movement?”¹⁷⁶ The subject posed by the editorial collective is reflective of the ways in which Asian women have historically been reduced to stereotypical facticity. Though this question is directed inwardly to the situation of Asian Canadian women, it is indicative of the fact that Asian women, alongside Black, brown, and Indigenous women were denied participation in the larger Anglo Second Wave Movement, where the excuse that these women were not feminine enough, too docile, or incommensurable with the ideals of white women were generally regurgitated to maintain the exclusiveness and whiteness of the movement. Mimicking the structures of facticity used against Asian women in the past reproduces a bad faith complex that, according to de Beauvoir and Sartre, blurs the subjective constitution of a human with an externally fabricated objective fact. The distortion of subjective experience with objective fact confuses consciousness as an ambiguous being. We are always negotiating our freedom in relation to the social, political, and cultural laws and limitations that constitute existence. In *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, de Beauvoir writes that we are all subjects insofar as we have a level of freedom to make choices in any given situation; yet, we can also be treated as objects for others, constrained by mortal limits, social influences, and political power—the limitations to our freedom are factual.¹⁷⁷ Thus, the question of Asian women’s place

¹⁷⁶ “Experience of Asian Canadian Women,” *The Asian Canadian* vol. 1 no. 3, 1978, p. 2.

¹⁷⁷ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, trans. Bernard Fretchman (New York: Citadel Press, 1976), p. 31.

in the larger Second-wave feminist movement bares relation to concerns of living in bad faith as an ambiguous being. It is relevant here, therefore, to closely examine how Asian Canadian women in *The Asianadian* confronted the gaze of objectification. In what follows, I have prepared a lengthy consideration of the ways in which the two all-women's issues presented their resourceful and dynamic negotiations with freedom and facticity.

Both women's issues feature the works of Asian Canadian women who were intent to eradicate the systemic racism and sexism that prohibited them from actively participating in the making of their own identity and understanding of the world. The first all-women's issue of 1978 proposed some evaluative analysis of the current condition of Asian Canadian women. Momoye Sugiman, who had worked closely with the co-founders as a major contributing editor for the entire duration of *The Asianadian*, considers some of the reasons behind why a women's liberation is a human liberation. Situating Asian women as human beings disavows the masculinist notion that women are inessential Others made up of the mythical reproductions that dictate Asian women as feminine, exotic, virginal, and domestic. These conceptions are inadequately used to limit women's potential and understandings of women that inflate social expectation with lived experience. Echoing choice as the capacity distinguish the ambiguous relation between expectation and experience, Sartre writes: "Everything would be very simple if I belonged to a world whose meanings were revealed simply in the light of my own ends."¹⁷⁸ Encouraging a move away from the assemblages that form ambiguities in subjectivity, the editors of each women's issue consciously focus on "the struggles and hopes of women who are not yet success stories,"¹⁷⁹ and, in doing so, are able to clear paths that move away from alienating cultural assumptions towards a nurturing community of sisterhood reminiscent of the

¹⁷⁸ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 654.

¹⁷⁹ "The Strength of Asian Women Editorial," *The Asianadian* vol. 6 no. 2 1985, p. 2.

women's communities in traditional Asian societies. Shaped by her own experiences with feminist discourse, Sugiman clarifies the need to divest from rigid social expectation. Sugiman writes:

We have to begin to challenge the sexist division of labor, the political distribution of personality traits—and our 'place' in this male-centered society. We have to examine the various ways in which the rigid cultural traditions of our ancestors continue to stultify and subjugate us.¹⁸⁰

Sugiman endorses a turn to the structures of internalized inferiority accrued in women's consciousness. An internal reexamination of the ways Asian Canadian women feel and experience devaluation produces a multiplicity of feminisms and feminist considerations irreducible to a singular theme of experience. This includes strategizing acculturation and taking on responsibilities that ensure this human liberation. Adversity against the hegemonic forces of patriarchy requires a degree of mobilization that Sugiman notes must challenge the anguish of always being dictated by competitiveness. Sugiman cautions that "as long as women continue to distrust each other, viewing each other as potential rivals in the pursuit of ideal, physical beauty and attention from males, true sisterhood will never be achieved."¹⁸¹ The definition of competitiveness outlined by Sugiman feeds the duplicity of consciousness and the adoption of false values that disavow intrinsic connections to a sense of freedom through sisterhood. To alleviate these conditions, demystification of these false values must occur. Because the essential goal here is freedom, however, the steps leading to this sense of freedom require an absolute choice and the fundamental recognition "I shall carry this entire responsibility."¹⁸² Using her own critical feminist ontology to inform the first *Asian Canadian* all-women's issue, Sugiman's 1978

¹⁸⁰ "Experience of Asian Canadian Women," *The Asian Canadian* vol. 1 no. 3, 1978, p. 3.

¹⁸¹ "Experience of Asian Canadian Women," *The Asian Canadian* vol. 1 no. 3, 1978, p. 3.

¹⁸² Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 708.

editorial is a breath of fresh air for feminist discourse, Asian Canadian consciousness, and political-philosophical thought because she encourages Asian Canadian women to examine the accrued experiences that make up their subjectivity rather than strip them away. In nurturing these moves towards freedom, Sugiman concludes the editorial with the following:

...we are beginning the essential process of demystifying ourselves, not only by questioning our mythical media images and hidden herstories, but also by giving expression to our creative talents and voicing common concerns, aspirations, and frustrations—the thoughts and feelings which have remained silent for too long.¹⁸³

Following the first all-women's issue in the inaugural volume of *The Asianadian*, Sugiman returns with editor Meena Dhar in the second and final all-women's issue in 1985, the last year of *The Asianadian*'s run. In the "Strength of Asian Women," Dhar and Sugiman recognize an important metamorphosis: "Many exciting things have happened in the past decade. Although the issues are by and large the same, we feel that a new collective consciousness and sharing of common aspirations is growing among Asian women."¹⁸⁴ The collective ambiguity identified in the first issue in 1978 transformed into concrete actions of forming relations with other women. "A coalition of visible minority women has been formed in Toronto. Chinese, Filipino, East Indian, Korean, Latin American and Black Women have joined in these organizations to share, work together and build bridges between our diverse communities."¹⁸⁵ Working in coalition with other women is an understanding that "the other is indispensable to my existence, and equally so to any knowledge I can have of myself."¹⁸⁶ Sartre's belief in intersubjective relationships manifests as concrete action by and through discourse and community organizing discussed by Dhar and Sugiman, who were inspired by the "non-

¹⁸³ "Experience of Asian Canadian Women," *The Asianadian* vol. 1 no. 3, 1978, p. 2.

¹⁸⁴ "The Strength of Asian Women Editorial," *The Asianadian* vol. 6 no. 2, 1985, p. 2.

¹⁸⁵ "The Strength of Asian Women Editorial," *The Asianadian* vol. 6 no. 2, 1985, p. 2.

¹⁸⁶ Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, p. 45.

competitive and empathetic milieu in which women share, discuss and enjoy each other's company."¹⁸⁷ The interrelatedness of Asian women and other racialized women's lived experiences is a tension that "can either be viewed as a positive force or a destructive one," but one that ultimately invites racialized women to challenge the predicament of sexism and offer new resources and resolutions to the broader community of women in Toronto.¹⁸⁸ The multiplicities of this work, however, are not always translatable into beliefs and ideas that everyone agrees with—a concern Dhar and Sugiman were willing to address. For instance, the editors point out that within the Asian Canadian community, the women who achieve professional and financial success are not entirely removed from the tensions "between their aspirations and the traditional cultural values,"¹⁸⁹ thereby acknowledging that the commitment to Asian women's representation as liberation was ultimately a personal and political choice, but one that nevertheless produces an existential anguish because of the nature of having to choose between career and tradition. This does not mean Asian women have to give up any part of themselves. Again, the lived experiences that make up subjectivity cannot be erased since they are the elements constituting the subject who chooses. Instead, in true existentialist fashion, Sugiman and Dhar acknowledge a collective strength amongst Asian women that must be nurtured: "This collective, cooperative consciousness among us Asian women is our strength. We find it easier to work collective as well as to cooperate with and understand our men."¹⁹⁰ Thus, the concerns from the 1978 issue remains central to Asian Canadian women seven years later, however, the resource capacity to confront problems of racism and sexism for Asian women had evidently increased. Understanding the particularities of these knowledges, "we will

¹⁸⁷ "The Strength of Asian Women Editorial," *The Asianadian* vol. 6 no. 2, 1985, p. 2.

¹⁸⁸ "The Strength of Asian Women Editorial," *The Asianadian* vol. 6 no. 2, 1985, p. 2.

¹⁸⁹ "The Strength of Asian Women Editorial," *The Asianadian* vol. 6 no. 2, 1985, p. 2.

¹⁹⁰ "The Strength of Asian Women Editorial," *The Asianadian* vol. 6 no. 2, 1985, p. 2.

freedom for freedom's sake, and in and through particular circumstances. And in thus willing freedom, we discover that it depends entirely upon the freedom of others and that the freedom of others depends upon our own."¹⁹¹ The Asian Canadian feminist consciousness of *The Asianadian* offers a rearticulation of Asian women's social positions and identity formations. Centering the "struggles and hopes of women who are not yet success stories"¹⁹² is an ethico-political position taken up by Sugiman and Dhar that affirms a responsibility to being-with-others.

That *The Asianadian* hosted two issues written by and dedicated to Asian women validates the magazine's progressive social justice agenda to involve the life experiences and lived realities of those less recognized by the larger Canadian society. The editorial collective's support came from simply not interrupting or academically analyzing the featured articles, acknowledging that since there few models existed to follow, the Asian women writers were left to express their individual struggles in totally creative and inspirational ways. Including the voices of Asian women in the discussion of Asian Canadian identity is monumental. As such, Asian Canadian feminist consciousness arguably finds its inceptions in the pages of *The Asianadian*. Indeed, as a community project, *The Asianadian* introduced many 'firsts' to the Asian Canadian community, which has helped to reinstill a sense of belonging and pride in Asian heritage and culture. Reflectively bringing closer an ideal of collective consciousness that seemed obscure, *The Asianadian* continued its responsibility to uplifting community through social justice cultural production:

And they saw as their primary vehicle a quarterly magazine which would give Asian Canadians a chance to speak for themselves. For the first time in Canadian history, individuals with ancestral roots in China, India, Bangladesh, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Pakistan, Kampuchea, Korea, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Indonesia,

¹⁹¹ Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, p. 52.

¹⁹² "The Strength of Asian Women Editorial," *The Asianadian* vol. 6 no. 2, 1985, p. 2.

Thailand, and the Philippines were invited to share their thoughts and feelings in a free forum devoted exclusively to them.¹⁹³

The introduction and inclusion of these voices in *The Asianadian* posits the magazine as what Bhabha terms “an *initiatory* interstices” that contains “an empowering condition of hybridity” for an “emergence that turns ‘return’ into reinscription or redescription.”¹⁹⁴ The making of *The Asianadian*’s space of enunciation, therefore, gave rise to a collective ethics of hospitality within the broader structural and social confines of the Canadian settler state. In doing so, the editorial collective demonstrated a devotion to community organizing and representation.

The abundance of radical grassroots art and literature published by *The Asianadian* in its seven-year run is a remarkable example of how resolute thinking and being informs social change. Inspired by personal and collective experiences that span across several generations and geographies, *The Asianadian* collective reinforced personal liberation as “the source from which all signification and all values spring. It is the original condition of all justification for existence.”¹⁹⁵ Directing intentionality towards an Asian Canadian consciousness of freedom and agency, I would lastly like to consider the ways in which *The Asianadian* conducts phenomenological analysis in its investigation of how Asian Canadians experience the world, given their experiences/lived realities under the coercive forces of Canadian settler colonial hegemony. To do this, I draw out the phenomenological theme of the lived body.

Asianadian Phenomenology

Asian people in Canada experience bodily perception in dramatically different ways compared to their white counterparts. Yellow skin creates a particular dialectic with Canadian social formations unique to our lived experiences and ways of being-in-the-world. Merleau-

¹⁹³ “Editorial,” *The Asianadian* vol. 4 no. 1, 1982, p. 1.

¹⁹⁴ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 324.

¹⁹⁵ De Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, p. 24.

Ponty's phenomenological model contends that the lived body experiences various phenomena in the world, which can then be relayed to another subjectivity through apperception; and because we always have impressed upon us different somatic and corporeal phenomena, the lived body organizes this information into a comprehensible subjective dialogue with the world. This perception through the body is what Merleau-Ponty calls the mind-body-world system, wherein "the union of soul and body is not an amalgamation between two mutually external terms, subject and object, brought about by arbitrary degree. It is enacted at every instant in the movement of existence."¹⁹⁶ The distinctions between subjectivity and objectification are thus negotiated according to what the lived body has undergone. Consider, for instance, alterations to the lived body and consciousness when a person experiences mental depression, anxiety, and in some extreme cases, schizophrenia, as a result of racist, sexist, and homophobic social exclusion. *The Asianadian* introduces Asian Canadian mental illness as a serious topic for the first time in the first issue of volume six in 1984. Editors Teri Chan and Peter Chang invite professionals and patients to submit writing and art that reflect their realities with mental health challenges and also acknowledges the difficulty that some have in talking about mental health problems; "rather, anyone who had a family history of mental illness denied any knowledge of the situation, because to admit to it would mean 'losing face' in the community."¹⁹⁷ Communal denial of mental illness in traditional Asian cultures affects the diagnostic and healing process of patients who consciously and unconsciously camouflage real symptoms, cutting off the lived body from a realm of healing; instead, "emotional scars remain deeply hidden,"¹⁹⁸ and as such, continue to feed into adverse mental and physical discomfort. In this way, *The Asianadian* offers several

¹⁹⁶ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Body as Object and Mechanistic Physiology" in *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 1962), p. 77.

¹⁹⁷ "Editorial," *The Asianadian* vol. 6 no. 1, 1984, p. 2.

¹⁹⁸ "Editorial," *The Asianadian* vol. 6 no. 1, 1984, p. 2.

unique perspectives from the Asian Canadian community on how to address mental health. Implicit to this conversation are the ways in which isolation and colonially-arbitrated demarcations of race, gender, class, and ability influence mental health, as well as accepting that traditional Asian medicines address mental illness differently from Western psychology. Chan and Chang, therefore, broach the topic of mental illness as an opportunity for Asian Canadians to open up about experiences with mental health and wellness.

In an enlightening article titled “Mental Illness Among Asian Canadians,” contributor Ted Lo and editor Chang use the example of Mrs. Wong to understand how latent mental health traumas are masked by physical aches and pains:

Mrs. Wong...had developed a hard sensation at her chest. She consulted many doctors including specialists, but to no avail. There were no other symptoms reported. But when her story unfolded, it became evident that she has suffered many losses in her life, some of these were associated with her recent immigration and her resulting social isolation. Actually, her eyes were glistening with tears at the interview, even though she did not acknowledge a feeling of depression.¹⁹⁹

The use of physical language to express psychological distress is acknowledged by Lo and Chang as being particular to Chinese medicine since health is understood from that worldview as one of balance brought on by the constant flow of energy through the body. In another article in the same issue, titled, “Mental Illness and Traditional Chinese Medicine,” Lo makes the distinction that “the psyche is very much considered as part and parcel of the holism of the person. The Cartesian mind-body dualism is not seen as in the West.”²⁰⁰ Mrs. Wong’s articulation of physical pain thus already implies a relation to her psychological distress and is an example of how the lived body loses balance under conditions of intense change (such as saying

¹⁹⁹ Ted Lo and Peter Chang, “Mental Illness Among Asian Canadians,” *The Asianadian* vol. 6 no. 1, 1984, p. 20.

²⁰⁰ Ted Lo, “Mental Illness and Traditional Chinese Medicine,” *The Asianadian* vol. 6 no. 1, 1984, p. 7.

goodbye to an old way of life) and ontological silence (language or emotional barriers), hence the difficulty of diagnosis and linguistic articulacy into a legible Western medical framework. Further, the discrepancy between Chinese medicine and Western psychology exists as a result of ontological difference between white scientization and racialized patients, with the procedures of Chinese medical diagnosis being based in a system of thought seemingly incommensurable with Western psychology and the medicalization of mental health. This difference is not merely linked culturally, but forms the glaring realization that, as Fanon writes, “their metaphysics, or less pretentiously, their customs and the agencies to which they refer, were abolished because they were in contradiction with a new civilization that imposed its own.”²⁰¹ Mrs. Wong experienced her consciousness spliced asunder. Here, Fanon’s synthesis of the ontological, metaphysical, and phenomenological dissimilarity between the racialized/colonized subject and the colonial Other configures into the existential discomfort that Mrs. Wong undergoes. The “data” collected about Mrs. Wong’s condition is scientifically managed by the Other, “the white man, who had woven out of me a thousand details, anecdotes, and stories.”²⁰² Like others, Mrs. Wong became one of the many Chinese immigrants lost in transition when she left her old way of life for the hostile white world of Canada. The environmental changes associated with emigrating to Canada suggest a profound phenomenological reorientation of intentionality.

Compassionately, the authors comment on how

Immigration can be a very stressful experience.... By definition, it is a crisis. The immigrant has to go through a grieving process for what he or she has left behind in the old country, and simultaneously has to absorb a great deal of new information about the new country. Some immigrants have to learn a new language, find a new job, or receive further training.²⁰³

²⁰¹ Frantz Fanon, “The Lived Experience of the Black Man” in *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 1952), pp. 89-119; 90.

²⁰² Fanon, “The Lived Experience of the Black Man,” p. 90.

²⁰³ Lo and Chang, “Mental Illness Among Asian Canadians,” *The Asianadian* vol. 6 no. 1, 1984, p. 21.

Under the intense sensory over-load of racialization brought on by physical displacement, Fanon notes that “in the white world, the man [and woman] of colour encounters difficulties in elaborating his [or her] body schema. The image of one’s body is solely negating.”²⁰⁴ That Mrs. Wong did not realize that she was severely depressed as she recalled all that happened in her life up until that point is a disheartening reminder of the ways in which the pressures of assimilation and normalization mentally and emotionally drain racialized and colonized subjects, how they interact with one another and how they interact with the world. To Fanon, such estrangement is the constant reminder of how the racialized person suffers in their body quite differently from the white man,²⁰⁵ hence the initial difficulty of Mrs. Wong’s diagnosis. A sense of “feeling out of place” demarcates how someone such as Mrs. Wong is situated in the white world of Canada. Indeed, while the central paradigm of “feeling out of place” is related to mental health problem, *The Asianadian* also offered a substantial list of available Asian and Canadian mental health services in Toronto (traditional Asian therapies, spiritual approaches, physical exercise, community agencies). The multi-vocal and multi-layered approach to mental health among Asian Canadians is comprehensively packaged in this 1984 issue of *The Asianadian* and reinforces a phenomenological pedagogy of those interrogating the heart of their existence.

Understanding the materiality of trauma that informs mental illness among Asian Canadians, Lo and Chang are able to conclude that there is a universality of mental illness and therefore the need provide help and understanding to those who are mentally ill. By analyzing the various ways that mental health affects Asian Canadian social mobility, social relations, and self-perception, *The Asianadian*’s body-mind phenomenological analysis illuminates an

²⁰⁴ Fanon, “The Lived Experience of the Black Man,” p. 90.

²⁰⁵ Fanon, “The Lived Experience of the Black Man,” p. 117.

assemblage of mind-body experience that had yet to be openly discussed in the Asian Canadian community. The phenomenology of *The Asianadian* rests in its ability to “transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence.”²⁰⁶ The editorial collective succeeded in validating the lived experiences of Asians in Canada by collecting and recollecting difficult experiences at the heart of the Asian Canadian community. The essence of this recollection is what Manen considers “the opening up, and keeping open of possibilities,”²⁰⁷ as a sustained curiosity and reflection of one’s relation to the world, rather than an epistemological investigation that seeks categorical abstractions of information. *The Asianadian*’s phenomenological textual and artistic praxis houses and responds to knowledges about the lived experiences of Asians in Canada.

Conclusion

In this chapter on *The Asianadian*’s hybrid sensibilities, I sought to introduce a robust analysis of the important topics of early Asian Canadian social justice discourse. The magazine introduced a new conversations, worldviews, and terrains of thought valuable to the collective’s social justice agenda and commitment to community engagement. Once again, the hybridity of *The Asianadian* did not simply come about through the forced amalgamation of elements of Eastern and Western culture, but through the fusion of worldly sensibilities to produce idiosyncratic but cohesive readings of Asian Canadian experience beyond the archives of Canadian history. In mapping out these inaugural sites of discourse and relation, then, the making of an existential dwelling to extend care to Indigenous peoples and communities and encourage resoluteness within Asian Canadian communities was developed through the exchange of histories, artistic visions, and cross-cultural relations. Moreover, the inclusion of

²⁰⁶ Manen, *Researching Lived Experience*, p. 36.

²⁰⁷ Manen, *Researching Lived Experience*, p. 43.

two all-women's issues substantiates the collective's responsibility towards uplifting those within Asian Canadian communities whom had yet to have opportunities to share their stories. In doing so, *The Asianadian* introduced to readers rearticulations of Asian women's social positions and processes of identity formations beyond the confines of traditional as well as stereotypical expectations. Lastly, I examined the features that discussed mental wellness among elderly Asians to emphasize changes in bodily perception under conditions of culture shock and depression, which were compounded by linguistically complicated interactions between elders and Western doctors. Here, the move to a Fanonian phenomenological analysis aided in the understanding that Native and arrivant bodies, through subordinated to similar orders of exclusion, experience encounters in the white world differently. Underlying the formation of these new conversations was the need for historical recovery as a matter of communal and cultural dignity. Through this process of historical and cultural recovery, a hybridized sense of freedom and responsibility introduced new and hybridized ways of being Asian in Canada.

The editorial collective's call for ethical relationality to produce new lines to communication and relation transcends Canadian historical sites of enunciation that root state-formation in the metanarrative of peace, order, and good government. Under such a powerful narrative schematic, scholars such as Kim have contested that "the racialized figure is jettisoned from the now of the nation and becomes part of a past that eludes the national narrative as well as a future that the public does not work very hard to realize."²⁰⁸ That is, in the magazine's articulation of new sensibilities, the interstitial space of *The Asianadian* constituted the emergence of "envisioning nation, anti-nationalist histories of the 'people.'"²⁰⁹ It is with this newness that *The Asianadian* formed its intervention on white-washed histories of Asian peoples

²⁰⁸ Kim, *The Minor Intimacies of Race*, p. 87.

²⁰⁹ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 56.

in Canada and allowed for new strategies of identification and participation to be synthesized. Thus, this chapter's analysis of the ways in which *The Asiandian* fused multiple and overlapping understandings of freedom and responsibility reveals the creative and ethical capacity of the editorial collective to generate new strategies of collective and individual being that contests inaccurate historical and traditional expectations of Asian people in Canada.

Chapter Three: “Yellow history is big”: Reorienting the Power of Language

Speaking, writing, and discoursing are not mere acts of communication; they are above all acts of compulsion.

*Please follow me. Trust me, for deep feeling and understanding require total commitment. In the global village, what concerns me concerns you. The attempt to impose a human reality onto an inexplicably indifferent world is as obvious, as tangible as language can be in its crude being.... And language is one of the most complex forms of subjugation, being at the same time the locus of power and unconscious servility.*²¹⁰

- Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other*

Language, the vehicle of power, is a contaminated site.

*Truth does not reveal itself in the voice of clarity and plenitude—so Asian Canadians and other minority writers, speaking out of the finitude of their subjectivities have to be vigilant not simply to mime the given narrative, genre, and filmic forms through which dominant values are aestheticized.*²¹¹

- Roy Miki, *Broken Entries: Race, Subjectivity, Writing*

Introduction: The Complexities of Language and Identity

The Asianadian spoke to all aspects of Yellow history and was important for those who had never read stories about the struggles for survival of early Chinese and Japanese men, or the trauma of interned Japanese Canadian families, or the façade of the new multicultural Canada seeking to gain international reputation over and against redress and reconciliation. The magazine, therefore, embarrassed Canada for preserving inaccurate narratives of benevolence and righteousness to ground what Bhabha calls a “map of misreading” that opens space for “interpretation and misappropriation that inscribes an ambivalence at the very origins of colonial

²¹⁰ Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Femininity*, p. 52.

²¹¹ Roy Miki, “Asiancy: Making Space for Asian Canadian Writing,” in *Broken Entries: Race, Subjectivity, Writing* (Toronto: Mercury Press, 1998), p. 117.

authority.”²¹² If there was ever an appropriate time to speak up, *The Asianadian* capitalized on it at the end of the 1970s and into the 1980s, leaving a cultural, political, and social justice legacy whose reverberations are felt today as Chinatowns across Canada are threatened with gentrification and commercialization, alongside the emergence of a neo-Yellow Peril discourse that conflates a minority of wealthy Chinese who can afford luxury real estate with the majority of Chinese living in poverty and/or in segregated communities. The significant amount of information provided in each 30-page issue is reflective of an urgency for Asian Canadians of all ages to participate in discussions oriented towards reclaiming a mode of identity that had long been constructed by external settler colonial forces. Some may consider the literary nature of the magazine as one that hovers on the outskirts of the primarily Anglo Canadian literary landscape. Others may see it as an attempt to uplift a politically apathetic generation. Still, others may (dis)miss the essential ideas underlying the magazine’s counter-hegemonic discourse, ignoring the social justice agenda behind *The Asianadian* as anything but an ethical-political manifesto that contains the thoughts of real people sharing, reading, and listening in order to reformulate, restructure, and reorganize ideas of identity and belonging. Some may even be threatened by the tone and style of the magazine. In whichever way one chooses to interpret *The Asianadian*—its problems, style, success, etc.—it is undeniable that the magazine catapulted Asian Canadian ideas, feelings, and worldviews into a realm of discussion that was fundamentally critical of white Canada’s cultural and intellectual fabrications of Asian Canadian men and women.

While the collective flourished in many literary and artistic ways, its ability to wage war on what Audre Lorde termed the “tyrannies of silence”²¹³ may have been its largest contributions

²¹² Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 135.

²¹³ Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Trumansburg, NY: The Crossing Press, 1984), p. 41.

to Asian Canadian social justice. This chapter, therefore, engages with two important recurring columns in *The Asianadian* to discuss the complex dilemma of the ways in which Asian Canadian experience is tied to an oscillating relation that hinges on the mastery of English (or the language of the colonizer) and resisting the traps of that mastery. “The Inscrutable Occidental Dubious Award” or simply, the “Dubious Award,” and “On the Firing Line” were columns that effectively called out and reclaimed racist anti-Asian imagery and vocabulary as a means to destabilize their cultural potency. These two columns helped transform silence and invisibility into voice and community recognition through acts of communication in the language of the colonizer. Utilizing sardonic humor and sarcasm in their political and cultural critique, the two columns problematized the regime of Canadian metanarratives that continued to reproduce obsolete Orientalist stereotypes. Roy Miki’s understanding that racialization is the most formidable opponent of the Asian Canadian writer, artist, activist, and “cultural worker” informs my analysis of reclaiming race and representation in the Dubious Award and On the Firing Line columns. Lorde’s wisdom configures into *The Asianadian*’s critiques of race and gender as a reminder to each of us seeking out responsibility for social justice that “we can learn to read and speak when we are afraid in the same way we have learned to work and speak when we are tired.”²¹⁴ I draw on the woman-centered knowledges of Janice Acoose and Trinh T. Minh-ha to think about the discrepancy between grand cultural metanarratives of state-formation (inclusion and membership) and the contrasting realities of those living in or affected by exclusion. To conclude this chapter, I also relate briefly to Sara Ahmed to think through how ‘reOrientation’ through reclamation bolstered *The Asianadian* collective as they critiqued and altered the power dynamics of Orientalism into a productive tool of transformation. Thus, having identified in the

²¹⁴ Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, p. 44.

previous chapter how *The Asianadian* generated new strategies of identification and relation in the interstitial space of the magazine, I now consider the big picture impacts of what happens when racialized men and women turn silence into voice with the language structures of the colonizer in relation to the ways in which confrontation with negative stereotyping symbolically disrupted the false serenity of Canadian state-formation narratives via speaking, writing, and discoursing. Disrupting these metaphysical views involves finding “in-between grounds,” “cracks,” and “interstices” that act “like gaps of fresh air that keep on being suppressed because they tend to render more visible the failures operating in every system.”²¹⁵ In this way, *The Asianadian* did not reduce itself to the mimetic function of reproducing white historiography. Rather, the editorial collective thwarted their analysis of the inscrutable Asian with humor essays, photography, short stories, and poetry that offered glimpses of everyday life of Asian Canadians to reveal a level of resilient resourcefulness that helped ease overwhelming sentiments of hopelessness, guilt, despair, all while resisting erasure and the tranquil illusion of assimilation.

The 40-year-old magazine began the important work of circulating rearticulations of Asian Canadian history, culture, and experience via writing, art, and photography, which informed a degree of anti-racist cultural criticism to reveal the deprived treatment of Canada’s unwanted members, a striking image of alterity to contrast the emerging popularity of metanarratives of benevolence and democracy that we are all familiar with today. Feelings of inferiority, hopelessness, and guilt remain intact and sometimes lay dormant for long periods of time, even after symbolic gestures of inclusion are made, and can manifest at any moment in the works of the writer, artist, or scholar who commits herself to anti-colonial work. These are the acts of compulsion that Minh-ha discusses in her work about the power of writing, speaking, and

²¹⁵ Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other*, p. 41.

discoursing from the decentered realm of knowledge production. The power imbalance, gender norms, and class hierarchies that critical race scholars and philosophers commit themselves to studying in higher-education were understood by much of the editorial collective and contributors, despite their lack of “professional” training—an important revelation of how systemic anti-Asian exclusion formed and informs alternative ontological and epistemological pathways beyond relating to the state. These intuitions were carefully considered by the editorial collective in a period of intense racialization. In many ways, the fervor of white Canada’s anti-Asian racism had transitioned from being partially overt and blatant—centralizing skin colour, speech, and cultural difference—to being subtle, passive aggressive, and reduced to opinion.²¹⁶ Further, by the late 1970s, many Asians continued to call themselves “Orientals,” having never even considered that they could hyphenate and attach “Canadian” as part of their national-racial identities.²¹⁷ Preserving the title “Oriental” was not necessarily a choice for many Japanese Canadians; rather, it was categorically informed by a combination of lack of resources, opportunities, and the collective fear that making waves (any waves at all) would get them sent back to the horrific confines of internment—a legitimate fear rooted in the trauma of dehumanized treatment. Had Japanese Canadians not been forcibly removed from their normal lives, perhaps earlier considerations of their national-racial identity may have been actualized if not examined more critically and collectively. It was the influence of the Civil Rights Movements in the United States, wherein Asian men and women began adopting the identity “Asian American,” that prompted activists, artists, and writers in the Asian Canadian community

²¹⁶ “This word *opinion* makes us stop and think. It is the word a hostess uses to bring to an end a discussion that threatens to become acrimonious. It suggests that all points of view are equal; it reassures us, for it gives an inoffensive appearance to ideas by reducing them to the level of tastes... but I refuse to characterize as opinion a doctrine that is aimed directly at particular persons and that seeks to suppress their rights or to exterminate them” Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew* (New York: Schocken Books, 1948), pp. 7-8.

²¹⁷ Terry Watada (poet, musician, novelist, *The Asianadian* contributor) in discussion with author, September 29, 2017.

to hyphenate their respective Asian ethno-cultural identities by attaching “Canadian” to it.²¹⁸ Consideration of settler colonial violence against arrivants, including forced relocation, forced assimilation, internalized inferiority, and internalized white supremacy were and are never far from the composite analytics of being a decentralized person of colour in a predominantly white cultural world. In studying *The Asianadian*, then, one must be aware that there are multiple approaches to reading the magazine. To account for these layers, ensembles, and compositions, the grassroots approach to letting stories speak for themselves became suitable and, in turn, cultivated a supportive community that invited revisiting as a personal and collective tactic of resistance and memory to help prepare future generations of Asian Canadians come into consciousness about their own social and historical conditions of existence.

Today, if readers notice the radically unapologetic tone of *The Asianadian*, it is because the magazine was among the few grassroots collectives at the time to engage in national calls for Asian Canadian social justice in forms that were accessible to readers from multiple worldviews.²¹⁹ Its co-founders were unwavering in ensuring that an open social justice platform was available to for Asians in Canada. Its volunteers were dedicated to promoting the magazine because they believed in its ideas and values about endorsing Asian Canadian identity. The collective was committed to doing the foundational work of deconstructing pervasive national cultural constructions by way of radicalizing fringe literature and art to emphasize the resoluteness, beauty, and resilience of being Asian in Canada. In this way, the collective was

²¹⁸ “However, for writers with commitments to social justice, the recognition that the Canadian state is a colonial state actively engaged in the disenfranchisement and oppression of Indigenous peoples would be an excellent reason not to want national belonging.” See Larissa Lai, *Slanting I, Imagining We: Asian Canadian Literary Production in the 1980s and 1990s* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2014), p. 59.

²¹⁹ More specifically, the Japanese Canadian redress campaign was underway. See Roy Miki, *Redress: Inside the Japanese Canadian Call for Justice* (Vancouver, Raincoast Books, 2004); Maryka Omatsu, *Bittersweet Passage: Redress and the Japanese Canadian Experience* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1992); Roy Miki and Cassandra Kobayashi, *Justice in Our Time: the Japanese Canadian Redress Settlement* (Vancouver: Talon Books, 1991).

able to reorient energy and attention towards a process of re-defining self-determination—producing alternatives to conventional knowledge-based epistemologies that stressed rational acquisition of facts and information over the beliefs and values of a people demanding justice via inclusion and recognition of difference. But while *The Asianadian* advocated for the inclusion of Asian Canadians into the Canadian cultural mosaic, it first needed to clarify what the Asian Canadian experience by detaching false cultural assumptions from live reality. In conjunction with drawing out the ways in which white Canada needed to insulate itself with anti-Asian racism, *The Asianadian* was constructing and opening alternative paths of thought to circumvent the culture of white, heteronormative, Christian masculinity. Such foundational work challenged anti-Asian attitudes and actions. More importantly, it became foundational work that demonstrated the power of an emerging autonomy and choice to contest national cultural constructions.

Inspired by the collective's communal approaches to learning, I am reminded that because I am never far removed from power institutions of knowledge production, I understand how philosophy and critical race theory, in combination with my community relations deeply inform my skepticism toward the ways in which epistemological boundaries influence my writing, what I can write, how I can write, as a Chinese woman born in Canada, junior scholar, and community activist. The knowledge I have gained and the knowledge I will produce is inextricably contingent upon those learned critical reading practices that will someday afford me the title of “master” of these knowledges in the English language, which is indicative of a mode of viewing the world that so many before me had never had to rely on. In consideration of these wary attitudes, Trinh T. Minh-ha asserts: “How many, already, have been condemned to premature deaths for having borrowed the master’s tools and thereby played into his hands?... in

every corner of the world, there exist women who, despite the threat of rejection, resolutely work toward the unlearning of institutionalized language...²²⁰ Under such condition, therefore, we must write when we are inspired by those who understand the complexities of being split between multiple worlds. But it is also with this resoluteness, Miki writes, that “[helps] negotiate the tensions between the material nitty-grits of language and form that give a text the singularity of its power to see and the expectations of reception that shape the subjectivity of readers and thereby influence what gets to be seen.”²²¹ In working through these tensions in consciousness, Minh-ha, Miki, and others have given me much to consider in preparing this chapter that attempts to delve more deeply into the “nitty-grits” associated with the language and power of *The Asianadian*. Moreover, in contesting the hegemony of national narratives, Acoose and Minh-ha ground their critiques in the experiences of Native and Third World women effected by settler colonial and colonial regimes to produce counter-narratives that reveal a dramatically different side of life under these regimes. Relatedly, Lien Chao considers how writing Chinese Canadian literature in English becomes a powerful act of reclaiming Chinese Canadian identity that involves decoding silence and retrieving unrecorded historical experience.²²² The force of such mobilization can be seen as moving beyond the politics of recognition that Charles Taylor later came to theorize as a vital human need.²²³ My intention behind theorizing social and political elements of *The Asianadian*, more importantly, is also to show how the strength of the collective was grounded in an inspiration to reformulate how Asian Canadians saw themselves, reflecting a hidden side of Canada that perhaps most white Canadians preferred to neglect. That *The*

²²⁰ Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other*, p. 80.

²²¹ Miki and Kamboureli, “Can Asian Adian? Reading Some Signs of Asian Canadian,” p. 115.

²²² Chao, *Beyond Silence*, p. 90.

²²³ See Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 26. Responding to the Eurocentrism of Taylor’s work, also see Himani Bannerji, *The Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism, and Gender* (Toronto: Canada Scholar’s Press, 2000).

Asianadian collective moved beyond the liberal politics of recognition is an invaluable strategy of agency for situating and developing a collective political consciousness formed by Asian Canadians for Asian Canadians. With the decision to branch away from the Chinese-English bilingual magazine, co-founders, Kwan and Chan parted from the prototype *Crossroads* with their 40 storyboards to create *The Asianadian*. Deciding to publish fully in English was a political task of the magazine to show that Asian Canadians could wield English, wield it well, and use it to present the experiences of Asian parents, grandparents, and youth, and challenge the dominance of external ideological fabrications.

Why English? Reverberations of the Colonizer's Language

Appropriating English as a tool of reform to navigate unfamiliar territories both inside consciousness and outside in the white spaces of Canada implies a keen triangulation of identity formations and social locations of Asian Canadians as “settlers of colour” and as “arrivants” vis-à-vis the power relations of settler colonialism. On appropriating the language of the oppressor, Acoose reminds us that the English language in Canada serves the interests of the ruling powers and to recognize that language means that it can and does shape our experiences.²²⁴ In this way, Acoose advocates for the appropriation of the English language to represent how our experiences as non-white people affect everyday life and life in the future: “using the colonizer’s language is liberating because the process of writing and research encourages re-creation, renaming, empowerment for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.”²²⁵ A social justice struggle that inherently understands the violence of colonial language is vital for those who do not have access to their traditional knowledges and languages due to cultural loss at the expense of

²²⁴ Janice Acoose, *Iskwewak—kah’ ki yaw ni wahkomakanak: Neither Indian Princess nor Easy Squaws* (Toronto: Women’s Press, 1995), pp. 35; 58.

²²⁵ Acoose, *Iskwewak—kah’ ki yaw ni wahkomakanak: Neither Indian Princess nor Easy Squaws*, p. 12.

assimilation. Alongside Acoose's understanding that Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples can and should appropriate English to recreate themselves, Chao writes that there is an "unpredictable impact" that results from transforming silence into voice. The stability of the existing social structure that relies on the docile compliance of the herd is disturbed whenever the marginalized, the poor, women, and the vulnerable see that their silence can be transformed into voice amidst the dominant discourse, and gradually, but inevitably lead to social change.²²⁶ Taken as a discursive strategy, then, using English "as a power paradigm in the historical transitional experience"²²⁷ makes ways for multiple voices, identities, and experiences to be embraced. These were among some of the practical and deeply philosophical considerations that influenced *The Asianadian*'s decision to publish in English.

Understanding the need to publish in English to analyze, debate, and deconstruct Western fabricated stereotypes of Asian peoples is fundamental for the examination of language and power in *The Asianadian* because it forces us to think about how the singularity of colonial language—as something we often take for granted—is an intimidating but ultimately meaningful struggle that contains anti-colonial potency. To write and create in a common language establishes an interpersonal intimacy via sharing, reading about, and listening to one another, which clears a path for revitalizing distinctive tropes, patterns, stories and reoccurring ideas that synthesize heritage and culture with the realities of racial prejudice, familial difference, and identity crises.²²⁸ By agreeing to publish in English, *The Asianadian* developed a communicative network for Asian Canadians and writers, artists, and activists of colour, that put everyone on the

²²⁶ Chao, *Beyond Silence*, p. 22.

²²⁷ Chao, *Beyond Silence*, p. 18.

²²⁸ For instance, in *Beyond Silence*, Chao traces the genealogy of the bone-hunting journey motif in Chinese Canadian literature as an important literary pattern that does memory work to celebrate the history of Chinese laborers working on the Canadian Pacific Railway and to resist institutional forgetting. See "The Transformation from Silence to Voice and other Discursive Strategies" in *Beyond Silence: Chinese Canadian Literature in English*.

same page in terms of language to do collective anti-colonial work but without diffusing difference. Minh-ha suggests that language constitutes the dual relation between the manipulator and the manipulated, noting that “with each sign that gives language its shape lies a stereotype of which I/i am both the manipulator and the manipulated.”²²⁹ Thus, mastering the language of the colonizer is not limited to merely projecting changes to the racist white episteme that demoralizes the racialized Other, but establishes an authority of becoming an autonomous and conscious subject capable of imagining ways of being that truncate negative stereotypes of Asian Canadian speech and imagination. By developing tropes, patterns, and ideas that reflect the realities of Asian Canadians, writers can bridge gaps between truth and untruth and create familiar spaces that return to a world of intelligibility far removed from the strange realm of Orientalism. The power of these trope, patterns, stories and reoccurring ideas have the potential to produce empathic relations that enrich understandings of Asian communities alongside Indigenous peoples and other racialized and vulnerable groups in Canada. Such community intimacy that begins within Asian Canadian communities, elaborated on by these discursive patterns, tells us that we have access to knowledges and ways of being that teach us something new each time we re-evaluate Asian Canadian identity and understandings of belonging.

Eleanor Ty and Chris Verduyn’s introduction to *Asian Canadian Writing Beyond Autobiography* argues that recent works by “ethnic, multicultural, and minority writers in Canada have become more diverse and experimental in form, theme, focus, and technique.”²³⁰ Importantly, Ty and Verduyn recognize that minority writers today have greater opportunities to question and problematize links between ethnic identity and literary production,²³¹ an approach

²²⁹ Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other*, p. 52.

²³⁰ Eleanor Ty and Chris Verduyn, *Asian Canadian Writing Beyond Autobiography* (Waterloo, Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2008), p. 3.

²³¹ Ty and Verduyn, *Asian Canadian Writing Beyond Autobiography*, p. 3.

that *The Asianadian* partially addressed, but did not solely attend to, nor was it a concern for the editorial collective on how to theorize identity and literary production in a strictly academic sense. It was understood at the time by Sugiman and Kwan that the critical theories of academia could not fully account for specificity of Asian Canadian lived experience for the reason that “theory oppresses, when it wills or perpetuates existing power relations, when it presents itself as a means to exert authority—the Voice of Knowledge.”²³² This is not to say that the magazine collective had no interest in synthesizing ethnic identity and literary production (in fact, many contributors made reference to theorists and philosophers that many academics are familiar with today), but as Ty and Verduyn note, earlier Asian Canadian writing worked through issues of “immigration, the moment of arrival, issues of assimilation, and conflicts between the first and second generation”²³³ without relying on any particular theory to articulate their already-developed understandings of structural racism, sexism, and homophobia. I am inclined to agree with Ty and Verduyn: it is true that more expansive theoretical critiques regarding ethnic identity, gender, and agency are available to Asian and non-Asian audiences as more Asian Canadians write and create. The urgency of working through issues of immigration, assimilation, and inter-generational conflict, however, were necessary and fundamental points from which to depart in earlier Asian Canadian writing—departures that were grounded in the decision to communicate a common language. Of course, Asian people have been writing (poetry, short story, epics, etc.) since they arrived in Canada, yet, to now publically share stories of loss, ambivalences about being Asian, and fears of rejection across a wide readership was somewhat of a different matter that involved positioning one’s vulnerability strategically.

²³² Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other*, p. 42.

²³³ Ty and Verduyn, *Asian Canadian Writing Beyond Autobiography*, p. 3.

Being vulnerable, Minh-ha discloses, is when “committed writers are the ones who write both to awaken the consciousness of their guilt and to give their readers a guilty conscience.”²³⁴ Especially in the case of Asian, Indigenous, and Black and Brown women writers, “doubts, lack of confidence, frustrations, despair: these are sentiments born with habits of distraction, distortion, discontinuity, and silence,”²³⁵ and are intensified when interactions of racism, sexism, and homophobia interrupt everyday life. With the creation of a small magazine publication run by Asian Canadians who invite other Asian Canadian writers and artists to submit their work, we see for the first time a flood of multiple fragmented identities and ambivalent realities coalesce in an interstitial space, whose cacophony of expressions disrupt the hegemonic stability of the English language. The most vulnerable users of the colonizer’s language also become the most powerful. Intimate collectives such as *The Asianadian* cleared the ground for more elaborate and hybrid theoretical synthesis for future discussions on Asian Canadian social justice, both inside and outside of academe. What results from this trust are conceptual, theoretical, linguistic, artistic, and ideological tools that Asian Canadians can equip themselves with daily in the continued struggle for personal and collective social justice. While trace notions of immigration, arrival, and inter-generation gaps from earlier writings will always inform how we read Asian Canadian literature today, proliferation of these knowledges and perspectives by early Asian Canadian movements aids in the transition from life writing, memoir, and auto-ethnography to include new, hybrid, cross-cultural synthesis that add nuance to the former. In regard to theory as a dynamic of language, then, *The Asianadian* developed a process of anthologizing memories, short stories, poetry, and art about Asian Canadian history and life as a means to resist the empirical elements of theoretical knowledge acquisition. The tone of the magazine was adjusted

²³⁴ Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other*, p. 10.

²³⁵ Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other*, p. 10.

to account for multiple identities and realities in a way that Kwan describes as coming together like musicians who come and go: “it was something that, hey, let’s get together, do it, and then it’s like a band. You come together, you play the popular songs. You create the songs and then you say, I gotta move on, I have my own career.”²³⁶ The liminality of *The Asianadian* as an interstitial space alongside its acute attention to language and rootedness in Asian Canadian cultural expression helps to situate conceptual foundations and theoretical frameworks that can be constantly rethought to express new and evolving Asian Canadian identity formations. In the shared act of writing in English, these knowledges expand to inform the ways in which damaging stereotypes embody certain ideological power that justify gender and culture imbalance.²³⁷

The Dubious Award

Harmful stereotypes are images, descriptions, and assumptions that essentialize and form over-arching characterizations to reduce a person or people to a particular and externally constructed expectation. Acoose writes that stereotypes are standardized images held by a dominant group that produce odd behaviors and attitudes.²³⁸ Indeed, while today we have a discursive understanding that stereotypes are untrue because they are social constructed, we ought not to underestimate the power of these social constructions. Though they are understood to be social constructions, the weight of “the social” on racialized bodies carries particular significance given the kinds of social, economic, and political pressures racialized people are prescribed and expected to meet. To actively engage in the condemnation of anti-Asian stereotypes and combat these odd behaviors and attitudes both in the Asian Canadian community and the white Canadian community, *The Asianadian* published a quarterly column called “The

²³⁶ Cheuk Kwan (*The Asianadian* co-founder) in discussion with author, September 29, 2017.

²³⁷ Acoose, *Iskwewak—kah’ ki yaw ni wahkomakanak: Neither Indian Princess nor Easy Squaws*, pp. 57.

²³⁸ Acoose, *Iskwewak—kah’ ki yaw ni wahkomakanak: Neither Indian Princess nor Easy Squaws*, pp. 70.

Inscrutable Occidental Award” or the “Dubious Awards” to call out Canadian media outlets and businesses that promoted racist Asian stereotypes. In what follows, I examine how the Dubious Award powerfully reclaimed negative anti-Asian imagery through re-education and critique.

Exhausted by the relentless stereotype of the ‘inscrutable Oriental’ (the unknowable, mysterious, impenetrable Asian), the purpose of the Dubious Award column was to identify and call out any business, media outlet, or journalist in the past or present for perpetuating negative imagery of racialized peoples for advertisement, marketing, and news purposes. Awards were given “to writers, artists, and/or magazines for their outstanding achievements in stereotyped journalism” and could be nominated by any reader who “comes across passages of article of *unusual* brilliance in depicting Asian Canadian stereotypes, or in exploiting many of the myths and false images about Asian Canadians.”²³⁹ Allotted one page per issue, the layout of the Dubious Award usually consisted of an image of the problematic person, advertisement, cartoon, etc. followed by critical and concise “Comments from the Award Jury.” “Comments from the Award Jury” often used dry humour and sarcasm to summarize their findings, including the origins of the derisive stereotype, and critiqued how and why the image, descriptor, or assumption was particularly damaging and harmful. A productive element of calling out racism in media is that the magazine collective learned to exercise a critical articulacy that was will developing in the 1970s and 1980s. The development of a fluid and critical articulacy that commits to the psychological restructuring of how Canadians think of Asians is “a subversion of the colonizer’s ability to represent colonized cultures,” which “can only radically challenge the established power relations when it carries with it a tightly critical relation to the colonizer’s

²³⁹ “Dubious Award,” *The Asianadian* vol. 1 no. 1, 1978, p. 25.

most confident characteristic discourses.”²⁴⁰ Alice Wai Ming Jim considers the striking but humorous quality of each Dubious Award in her analysis of the visual cultural aspects of the magazine and provides a judicious survey of each that contained a Dubious Award.²⁴¹ As a critical column that used humor and sarcasm to productively critique the exhaustive use of problematic anti-Asian imagery, the Dubious Award had nothing short of a wide array of examples to draw from, including: new restaurants that attempted to market their business by using a cartoon cut out of an coolie in pigtails and a rice hat²⁴²; a *Toronto Star* cartoonist for his melodramatic depiction of the Chinaman figure as “hoodlum, dope-peddler and bad guy”²⁴³; radio host Gordon Sinclair and his racist ‘thesis’ on why Vietnamese refugees are culturally ill-suited for life in Canada²⁴⁴; the CBC for airing a B-grade British television program called “Mind Your Language” that bigotedly ridiculed adult immigrant students for their poor English.²⁴⁵ The plenitude of troubling and inaccurate portrayals of Asians preserves the ideological tensions that Chinese and Japanese people are illiterate, physically less appealing than Westerners, and frozen in time by way of their “traditional” dress. The continued production of imagery of the ubiquitous East Asian man with buckteeth, slanted eyes, and jet black hair was a particularly popular choice among white-owned businesses. Indeed, perhaps it is the inscrutable white Canadian who remains entombed in time, unable to move beyond century-old stereotyping despite the assimilation of many Asians, which shows both a lack of creativity and the degree of sedimentation of ridiculous anti-Asian imagery in Canadian consciousness. The comments often noted the irony of the inscrutable white Canadian who failed time and again to

²⁴⁰ Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other*, p. 71.

²⁴¹ See Alice Ming Wai Jim, “Asiancy and Visual Culture: *The Asianadian Magazine*, 1978-1985,” *Journal of Canadian Art History* vol. 36, no.1 (2015): pp. 154- 179.

²⁴² “Dubious Award,” *The Asianadian* vol. 1 no. 2, 1978, p. 25.

²⁴³ “Dubious Award,” *The Asianadian* vol. 1 no. 4, 1978, p. 9.

²⁴⁴ “Dubious Award,” *The Asianadian* vol. 2 no. 2, 1979, p. 26.

²⁴⁵ “Dubious Award,” *The Asianadian* vol. 3 no. 1, 1980, p. 26.

reflect on his reckless use of outdated racist stereotypes. With comments from an anonymous jury to affirm how such portrayals undermined Asian Canadian intellect, culture, and ability, the editorial collective made succinct cultural criticisms that informed readers of how inaccurate stereotypes functioned to erase the history, culture, and hard work of Asians in Canada. The well-documented efforts of the editorial committee reveal that the Dubious Award was judged by a jury of Asian Canadians who unanimously rejected the idea that stereotypical images of buck-tooth, slanted-eyed Asians contained any humor. In several cases, the Dubious Award nominations displayed effective criticism that merged cultural analysis with history to denounce narrow social classification. The following is an explication on a Dubious Award from 1982 that succinctly displays how the editorial collective merged cultural analysis with political critique to name—and in the process of naming—reclaim and dispossess a particular Orientalist linguistic signifier that targeted the way East Asians speak English.

In one of the last Dubious Award from volume 4, the editorial slammed the racist use of pidgin English for a new restaurant in Toronto called *New Chinese Village*. To get a better sense of how *The Asianadian* exercised and developed its fluid critique, it is worth quoting the comments from the Award jury at length:

The caption “Riving well is the best levenge,” conjures up images of none other than the infamous non-person, “Confucius Say.” The stereotypical character which emerges is of an “Oriental” male who spews out words of nonsensical ‘wisdom,’ parades about in Chinese robes with his clammy hands neatly tucked out of sight in baggy sleeves, a black pill-box monkey hat sitting atop a gleaming pig-tailed head equipped with an equally gleaming smile, buck teeth and almond eyes.... This ad serves to confirm the misconception that the lingua-franca between Canadians with Asian features and non-Asian Canadians is pidgin-English. *It further suggests that no matter how*

*long one has been in this country there will always be quant differences between 'us' and 'them'.*²⁴⁶

The comments perfectly capture the stereotype that *New Chinese Village* was attempting to portray. It should be no surprise that *New Chinese Village* received a Dubious Award. Its dubiousness comes from the trivial use of “ancient Chinese wisdoms” to advertise the opening of a white-owned bourgeois fusion restaurant that catered to a so-called cultured upper-class. Its attempts to use pidgin English to display the high-class quality of the restaurant was sharply critiqued. Troubling the *New Chinese Village*’s bastardization of how Chinese and Japanese people speak pidgin English was lesson for readers to consider the importance of language, how it is used, and how, when used in this way, it reproduces one of many misconceptions about Asian people. As the jury committee notes, its market value is founded on the unsophisticated and trivialized use of the ubiquitous Chinamen figure. In this case, not only is the ‘Confucius Say’ oddly irrelevant, but utilizing “Riving well is the best levenge” for high-class fusion cuisine is a bizarre reference reminiscent of Charles Baudelaire’s curious Dandy/Flaneur cosmopolitan figure popular in eighteenth and early nineteenth century Britain (whom would have most likely had a fascination with “the Orient” anyway)—a cultural and literary figure of bourgeois Britain whose trajectory dovetails neatly with the inscrutable white Canadian, who is also fascinated and terrified of Chinamen. The jury, importantly, extends its condemnation to *The Globe and Mail* for “in true style of the press” agreeing to even accept the advertisement for print. Of course, the advertisement and the failure of *The Globe and Mail* in accepting and printing the advertisement further reveals a lack of knowledge associated with the historical function of pidgin language.

²⁴⁶ “Dubious Award,” *The Asianadian* vol. 4 no. 2, 1982, p. 7 (my emphasis).

Robert Young's synthesis of linguistic hybridity in *Colonial Desire* speak to this conditional use of language.

Young maps out an important linguist distinction: "pidgin and creolized language constitute powerful models because they preserve the real historical form of cultural contact."²⁴⁷ It would be an intellectual stretch, however, to argue that *New Chinese Village* was demonstrating its critical consideration of how the Chinese and English languages linguistically fused onto one another via the emerging power relations between European imperial powers and China throughout early contact. Young does note, moreover, that these hybrid languages "were seen to embody threatening forms of perversion and degeneration and became the basis for endless metaphoric extension in the racial discourse of social commentary,"²⁴⁸ further implicating the undesirability of a businesses that relies on the misappropriation of pidgin which as the comments from the Award jury note, perpetuate difference and exoticism. In the contemporary usage of old referents, the power paradigm of language is lost, according to Young, because its two-ness is lost, often reduced to a sameness when one language form is subverted to another.²⁴⁹ That is, when the dominant culture perpetuates comical figures like Confucius Say to speak in amusing pidgin fashion for entertainment, Asians are condensed under a thematization that categorizes their speech as incoherent, to be ridiculed, not to be taken seriously, and less sophisticated than the white English speaker. In the growing field of Chinese Canadian studies, such assumptions surrounding language and learning are eagerly questioned with works such as Timothy J. Stanley's *Contesting White Supremacy: School Segregation, Anti-Racism, and the Making of Chinese Canadians*, which traces the historical success of Chinese

²⁴⁷ Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 5.

²⁴⁸ Young, *Colonial Desire*, pp. 5.

²⁴⁹ Young, *Colonial Desire*, p. 19.

Canadians in Victoria who petitioned against their exclusion from public school in 1922 and 1923. Antagonized by the Victoria school board trustees motion that “all pupils whose limited knowledge of the English Language is causing retardation to themselves as well as interfering with the satisfactory progress of other pupils in the same class,” Stanley contextualizes the imperative success that Chinese Canadians gained in refusing to separate their children from white children in school.²⁵⁰ Stanley’s historical explication of these events emphasize the autonomous self-determination of Chinese Canadians who advocated for their children to receive equal opportunities in education. Such self-determination is found in the anti-colonial spirit of *The Asianadian* and its Dubious Award in the sense that both display particular commitments to restructuring the dubious ways in which people think about Asians in Canada by naming and reclaiming externally constructed assumptions.

As long as *The Asianadian* continued to underscore such “quaint difference between ‘us’ and ‘them,’” readers were assured knowing that the editorial team was fully committed to creating a counter-narrative. Detecting this “difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’” suggests that the fraught foundations from which these linguistically privileged-laden mechanisms of the status quo arise are demarcated as normal and acceptable. The Dubious Award was always meant to be the counter-narrative, according to Kwan.²⁵¹ It mapped out complexities associated with destructive stereotypes and contributed to ideological restructuring work that undermined normative approaches to understanding Asians in Canada, identifying the very power that anti-Asian stereotypes rest on, of how they serve to shamelessly uphold a dominant and outdated understanding that Asians were nothing except for caricatures delineated from the white imago.

²⁵⁰ See, Timothy J. Stanley, *Contesting White Supremacy: School Segregation, Anti-Racism, and the Making of Chinese Canadians* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011).

²⁵¹ Cheuk Kwan (*The Asianadian* co-founder) in discussion with author, September 29, 2017.

It would be narrow-minded to think that the Dubious Award merely acted as a vehicle for Asian Canadians to vent their anger, because as the critical articulacy of the Dubious Award has shown, even as dubious anti-Asian stereotypes continued to infiltrate Canadian consciousness, at the very least *The Asianadian* collective approached these stereotypes on their own terms to dispossess them of their cultural power within their communities. The Dubious Award for *New Chinese Village* is an example that reveals the glaring disconnect between a seemingly harmless business advertisement that trivializes how Chinese and Japanese people speak and the ways in which Asian Canadians have had to carefully navigate exclusionary spaces by learning to adapt an oppressive language so as to communicate and better present their subversion. The Dubious Award column is an important column from *The Asianadian* that helps us to consider how stereotypes are structurally valuable to the state as ideological tools of intimidation and distortion that disillusion the status quo's interactions with language and racialized bodies, further normalizing racist and sexist behaviors and attitudes towards Asian Canadians.

Much like the editorials of the magazine, the critical style of the Dubious Award was grounded in its uncompromising tell-it-as-it-is approach. The 1982 Dubious Award nomination to *New Chinese Village* was one of many instances that denote the collective's robust and advanced critical analysis of how anti-Asian stereotypes, images, and language inform the white settler psyche of the invisible social locations of Asian peoples as stuck in a mystical tradition, uneducated, and perpetually foreign. Such discernments of white Canada's troubling perceptions of Asian peoples situate the magazine's appropriation of the English language as an effective linguistic mechanism that unbounded, invalidated, and compromised anti-Asian thinking that was clearly being taken for granted at the highest levels of society. Although *New Chinese Village* and *The Globe and Mail* never reached out to *The Asianadian*, what becomes more

valuable than recognition is that the collective imparted their knowledges with other Asian and non-Asian Canadians who may have internalized or underestimated the social influences of racist stereotyping. The collective strategically centered its critiques around white entitlement and white privilege and refused complacency amidst popular economies of cultural appropriation that deceptively utilized token imagery of Asian people for profit gain. In consequence of speaking to the grotesque inaccuracies of anti-Asian stereotypes in media and business representations, the editorial collective did the crucial work of helping to alleviate guilt, despair, and discomfort associated with overexposure to negative stereotypes and prescribed social expectations. While intellectually and emotionally labourious, Sugiman mentions in her interview that she quite enjoyed writing comments for the Dubious Award, as with working on all aspects of the magazine because it all came together to show that “we were a true collective,” Sugiman says, “it was transformational. Transformative.”²⁵² Such inspiration is demonstrative of how columns such as the Dubious Award compelled the collective to sustain its rigorous anti-racist work with humour. The eloquent humour of the Dubious Award and the success of the column’s refusal to be complacent with racism signifies a productive engagement with developing a counter-narrative that wasn’t simply an acceptance of the conditions of anti-Asian exclusion, but rather, a coming to consciousness of the power relations that so deeply required reformation. In this way, *The Asianadian* endorsed a form of textual resistance that used the language of the colonizer to dispute distorted assumptions that Asians only knew little or broken English, capturing Minh-ha’s understanding that “knowledge belongs to the one who succeeds in mastering a language.”²⁵³ Mastering English as the first steps towards critically disavowing stereotypes and narrow classifications was and still is a formidable tactic for distinguishing power imbalance.

²⁵² Momoye Sugiman (*The Asianadian* co-editor) in discussion with author, November 25, 2017.

²⁵³ Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other*, p. 56.

Transforming those threatening figures of Otherness into what Minh-ha calls a “definite image-repertoire,”²⁵⁴ reduces their personal and social impact and makes them feel less acceptable. Restructuring language through the resignification of anti-Asian imagery demonstrates the complexity of working with the colonial languages as both the “locus of power and unconscious servility.”²⁵⁵ The magazine’s reformation of anti-Asian imagery and attitudes is further charted out with another important column called On the Firing Line.

On the Firing Line

On the Firing Line appeared in the first issue of *The Asianadian* in 1978 and became a recurring column that featured essays to let readers “air their views on any subject pertaining to the Asian experience in Canada.”²⁵⁶ Further displaying a mastery of the English language in relation to Canadian and global politics, On the Firing Line was an expansive cultural criticism column that discussed the ways in which changing global and domestic affairs affected Asian Canadians. The column served to educate both Asian and non-Asians about xenophobia and racism experienced by non-white immigrants and refugees in Canada. The column presented one critical essay per issue written by an Asian Canadian and focussed the following subjects: complications associated with Canadian multiculturalism; the problem of representation wherein white historians received more recognition for writing about Asian Canadian histories and cultures than actual Asian Canadian historians and cultural workers; the cultural and social lacunae yielded by socio-economically successful Asian Canadians who believe they have ‘made it.’ Given some of the content discussed in this column, we see how its contents reflect a different iteration of social critique as a part of the larger social justice work of *The Asianadian*.

²⁵⁴ Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other*, p. 54.

²⁵⁵ Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other*, p. 52.

²⁵⁶ “A New Asian Canadian Sensibility,” *The Asianadian* vol. 1 no.1, 1978, p. 3.

On the Firing Line contained a depth of analysis that is matched by more contemporary forms of critical race theory, as it combined social commentary to include cultural and historical representation, labour and social mobility, gender inequality, language use, political fallacies committed by all parties of the Canadian government, and the overall demonstration of hypocrisy by white Canada. Exceptional to the editorial team's political consciousness was yet another critically informed decision to account for the ways in which Asian Canadians became complicit in anti-Asian attitudes and behaviors. Such thinking is another instance of how the knowledges of the settler state are subverted to the lived experiences of the marginalized, who, by way of cultural production, draw out the state's most confident and over-relied upon methodologies to deferring responsibility for historical injustice.

Contributors often reflected on how socio-economic class difference produced gaps in the Asian Canadian social justice movement, urging those who have attained greater socio-economic positions to avoid adopting apathy and apolitical attitudes. These appeasements encouraged readers to reconsider the intricacies of simply neatly circumventing institutional racism, sexism, and homophobia, often reminding readers of how the severe mistreatment of Chinese and Japanese Canadians in the recent past were still felt and how the continued mistreatment of South Asians and Native people meant that Asians could never fully be assimilated into white Canada. It was understood by most contributors that state-sanctioned policies, regulations, and implementations were set up to privilege white, heterosexual Europeans over and against racialized and Native people. On the Firing Line became an interesting social and political essay column that centered on the "Asian experience in Canada" and delineated how Asian Canadians were never far removed from changing global and domestic affairs. For example, in one of the first essays featured on, On the Firing Line, author T.T. Mao captures how white Canada uses the

façade of democracy and liberalism to steal “yellow history,” while other apolitical Asian Canadians have learned “how to make a buck in the Canadian ethnic industry and not be called a racist or Uncle Tong.”²⁵⁷ Although the author is speaking directly to the problems of representation in the “Canadian Ethnic industry,” Mao also gives particular attention to the unconscious tendencies of those capitalizing on the “Canadian Ethnic Industry” as directly related to Canada’s inability to fully actualize democracy. To get a sense of *On the Firing Line*’s style, I quote important sections of the first feature at length:

For decades, insensitive whites have been telling Asians in Canada what their history was, what their culture should be, what values they should hold... The *Canadian Ethnic Industry* is big. Multiculturalism has seen to that... Yellow history is big... We were called the “yellow hordes.” We were described as filthy, inscrutable with pig eyes, miscreant, and squat. Nothing could help us.... In the past, whites tried to drive us out with head taxes, concentration camps, and Cash Bonds. But we stayed. Now that multiculturalism is so big, the gold mines are no longer in the Cariboo, but in the histories of the ethnic minorities in Canada.... For many, racism is like a sleeping dog. But Canada has always lived in a fantasy world when the issue of human rights is broached. Never mind Chile, South Africa, South Korea, or Uganda. *The problem exists at home. If the attempt to drive out racism is not forthright then the effect is a mere token...* The political future of Canada is not whether it remains united, but whether it remains democratic.²⁵⁸

The saliency of Mao’s assessment is shown in its structural analysis, which has potential for theoretical application: situating the lack of Asian representation in relation to growing scholarly fascination with ethnic minorities is evidence of economic, intellectual, and emotion robbery that becomes convenient “ethnic chic” when white Canadians are curious about Oriental culture, but a nuisance turned to mere tolerance when, according to the author, “institutional

²⁵⁷ “On the Firing Line,” *The Asianadian* vol. 1 no. 1, 1978, p. 29 (my emphasis).

²⁵⁸ “On the Firing Line,” *The Asianadian* vol. 1 no. 1, 1978, p. 29.

histories of the associations which the Chinese were forced to set up because of racism”²⁵⁹ come up in conversation. The author highlights the discrepancy of “insensitive whites” who enjoy the tokens (food, song, and dance) of Chinese culture but gloss over or refuse to talk about how the Chinese were subject to systemic racism. Mao underscores central technique of settler control: tolerance. Tolerance or tolerating the Other, according to Wendy Brown, “produces and positions subjects, orchestrates meanings and practices of identity, marks bodies, and conditions political subjectivities.”²⁶⁰ Tracing the intellectual trajectory of tolerance movements in the United States, Brown considers a operational peculiarity in the contemporary use of tolerance that merges with Mao’s contribution on how “ethnic chic” becomes a mechanism of popular and population control vis-à-vis Canadian anti-Asian feeling.²⁶¹ This notion of tolerance accentuates Mao’s understanding of how white people make a buck off the Canadian ethnic industry. When Asians are accepted for their food, song, and dance, they are seen as outsider-insider²⁶² members to be tolerated in the moment of trending “ethnic chic,” revealing another way in which the white settler state controls who gets to be included through tolerance, within certain limitations, and who gets to be excluded. Constructively then, Mao’s critique is an example of what can serve as a foundational bridge with Brown’s theoretical analysis of tolerance as a depoliticizing tool of civilizational discourse with the mention of how “Canada has always lived in a fantasy world when the issue of human rights is broached.”²⁶³ It is central to consider that the structural and

²⁵⁹ “On the Firing Line,” *The Asianadian* vol. 1 no. 1, 1978, p. 29.

²⁶⁰ Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Politics in the Age of Identity and Empire* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 4.

²⁶¹ Brown, *Regulating Aversion*, p. 79.

²⁶² See Himani Bannerji, “On the Dark Side of the Nation: Politics of Multiculturalism and the State of ‘Canada’” in *Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism, and Gender* (Toronto: Canadian Scholar’s Press, 2000) pp. 87-124.

²⁶³ “On the Firing Line,” *The Asianadian* vol. 1 no. 1, 1978, p. 29. Also see “Tolerance as a Discourse of Depoliticization” and “Tolerance as Governmentality Faltering Universalism, State Legitimacy, and State Violence” in Brown, *Regulating Aversion*, pp. 1-24; 78-106.

cultural analysis of contributors such as Mao's stand solidly even without any explicit reliance on a theoretical framework of tolerance, however, it is equally important to see that political theory is indeed employable when examining *On the Firing Line*. The political appeal of the *On the Firing Line* column was from its accessibility to language and ideas of political agency.

The column's analysis did not simply end with the acknowledgement of depoliticizing techniques of ideological control: the feature also positioned the ways in which such problems with representation and democracy affected all Asian Canadians, regardless of socio-economic class. Mao's essay adopts a praxis of critical reflexivity by ending the segment with an urgent call to Asian Canadians of higher socio-economic positions to not be complacent with their elevation in Canadian society as long as other racial minorities were subjected to discrimination.²⁶⁴ This is an excellent example of how early Asian Canadian writers reflected on their own complicity in perpetuating anti-Asian ideas, which, in turn, inspired other Asian Canadian readers to consider how some community members benefitted greatly from the settler state's machinations:

Now we come to the Asian Canadian professionals who have "made" it, but are afraid to admit their ties to their cultural heritage. They are always there to take from the Asian community. What they give is a token gesture. Since they have "made" it, they are also afraid of the great "unwashed" who haven't. But, if the War Measures Act is ever activated again, who do you think will get it in the neck?... Minorities always know who the majority people are. We have to, so that we can survive. Do the majority people know who the minorities are?²⁶⁵

Mao's "How to Make a Buck in the Canadian Ethnic Industry" contribution was the first to be printed in *The Asianadian* and is a significant illustration of the rigorous critiques and social

²⁶⁴ "On the Firing Line," *The Asianadian* vol. 1 no. 1, 1978, p. 29.

²⁶⁵ "On the Firing Line," *The Asianadian* vol. 1 no. 1, 1978, p. 29.

commentaries taking place at the grassroots level. The counteractive force of *On the Firing Line* lies in collective's comprehension of how Canadian hegemony outputs narratives of democratic state-formation that reinforced racial division and superiority of white settlers.

The structural political analyses of *On the Firing Line* present a scholarly side of *The Asianadian* that was not centrally cultivated due to a skepticism towards the lofty intellectual elitism associated with academia. Such skepticism is informed by the fact that *The Asianadian* was a grassroots collective and correlates with Minh-ha's informed skepticism that "theory oppresses" when it becomes the dominant and only form of understanding oppression. This reinforces the collective's intuited recognition that academic scholarship was a product of and produced by Eurocentric conventions of knowledge acquisition, which stood in contrast to the collective's grassroots objectives to dignify all Asian Canadians. By that time, Asian Canadians were still exposed to the remnant aggressions of early twentieth century anti-Asian hostility; therefore, the intellectual militancy of *The Asianadian* relied on presenting truths of survival and lived experience, rather than theoretical models to rationalize those lived experiences. These intricacies of survival cannot be reformulated into an academic skill, as Audre Lorde writes: "for the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change."²⁶⁶ Any theory at all needed to be accessible. Yet, theoretical discussion on and theories related to representations of race, gender, class and culture can be read in a number of ways, not limited to referencing European philosophers and cultural theorists. On this basis, Minh-ha contends that "...theory no longer is theoretical when it loses sight of its own conditional nature, takes no risk

²⁶⁶ Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, p. 113.

in speculation, and circulates as a form of administrative inquisition.”²⁶⁷ As I have articulated above, *On the Firing Line* has great potential to merge social critique with political and cultural theories. In defying theoretical subsumption, *On the Firing Line* produced its own hybrid theoretical formulations about Asian experiences in Canada which were inherently more appealing and accessible to Asian Canadian readers. While some writers opted to reference Noam Chomsky, others opted for blunt questioning, such as, “so where does this image of the Asian female come from?”²⁶⁸ Thus, in thinking through the complex potential of the emerging relationship between Asian Canadian grassroots social justice and theoretical praxis, “it is equally common to observe that theory threatens, for it can upset rooted ideologies by exposing the mechanics of their workings. It shakes established canons and questions every norm validated as ‘natural’ or ‘human.’”²⁶⁹ *On the Firing Line* gives us a glimpse into the critical potential of the magazine, displaying multifaceted thinking that involved the social and political realities of Asian Canadians—an eclectic amalgamation of perspectives that when read today advance our understandings of cultural and political issues discussed by early Asian Canadian cultural workers.

Transforming Old Networks of Thought into New ReOrientations

Together, the Dubious Award and *On the Firing Line* are rare findings that critically and creatively interrogated Canadian historiography and political tactics of control in the era following the implementation of official multiculturalism from the stand point of Asian Canadian lived experience. These columns are indications of how non-theoretical textual resistance rooted in traditional knowledges, lived experience, and a developing political consciousness exemplify

²⁶⁷ Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other*, p. 42.

²⁶⁸ “On the Firing Line,” *The Asianadian* vol. 2 no. 1, 1978, p. 7.

²⁶⁹ Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other*, pp. 41-42.

Asian Canadian creative expression and function as community records to situate the many moments Asian Canadians have had to empower themselves and their communities through critical reflection, dialogue, and self-determination.

The act of writing in English has liberating effects, including freedom from oppression associated with ignorance.²⁷⁰ Under the power relations of settler colonialism, adopting English as the dominant language of communication over one's heritage language is an anguishing dilemma and difficult sacrifice to convey and conceive of a deeper reality shaped by struggles of survival and the desire to simply belong. I used the examples of the Dubious Award and On the Firing Line columns to demonstrate how the interdependency of language, intellect, and creativity fortified earlier Asian Canadian social justice repertoires by speaking truths to retrieve more accurate depictions of Asian Canadians, instead of relying on smug and obsolete anti-Asian imagery. This was and continues to be important work for reorienting consciousness. To participate in writing and creative expression is to participate in the social change that Chao calls for in *Beyond Silence* because it inevitably unearths a strikingly different side of life radically incommensurable with the grand narratives of Canadian membership and assimilation. Reinforcing this, Miki considers the resistance of writers, cultural workers, and community activists of colour as having created "the possibility of explosive conflicts with establishment institutions, making all the more urgent the need for terminology and theoretical speculations that avoid the pitfall of simply re-circulating the old systems of power."²⁷¹ Without being ignorant towards how such involvement is susceptible to hierarchical scrutiny and compartmentalization, one may also consider how writing in English expresses a mastery of

²⁷⁰ Acoose, *Iskwewak—kah' ki yaw ni wahkomakanak: Neither Indian Princess nor Easy Squaws*, p. 59.

²⁷¹ Miki, "Asiancy: Making Space for Asian Canadian Writing," p. 107.

specific knowledges associated with dominance over the marginalized and vulnerable. It is an arduous filtration process that requires a reformulation of mastery *without* power, but with the comprehension that mastery is deeply rooted in the social nexus of human life.²⁷² Minh-ha's cautioning returns us to the example of author Mao who wrote for *On the Firing Line*: in order to resist the tranquil illusion that any of us have "made it," we must distinguish that such an illusion is an ideological apparatus that affirms Canadian settler colonial world views and values, which have always been contingent upon carefully selecting wanted citizens who can or are willing to mirror those same world views and values. Yet, as Miki notes in the epigraph that introduces this chapter, "truth does not reveal itself in the voice of clarity and plenitude," but in the mastery/manipulation of powerful languages that assists in transcending externally prescribed finitudes of subjectivity. The truths of Asian Canadian experience are ineluctably tied to an oscillating relation that hinges on the mastery/manipulation of language and resisting the traps of that mastery. The hegemonic function of language is ruptured by the same members who were historically denied participation in that language, uncovering a dynamic resourceful discussed by Acoose as a way to circumvent silence. Disrupting these metaphysical views involves finding "in-between grounds," "cracks," and "interstices" that act "like gaps of fresh air that keep on being suppressed because they tend to render more visible the failures operating in every system."²⁷³ In this way, *The Asianadian* did not reduce itself to the mimetic function of reproducing white historiography. The editorial collective thwarted their analysis of the inscrutable Asian with humor essays, photography, short stories, and poetry that reoriented attention towards glimpses of everyday life of Asian Canadians to reveal a level of resilient

²⁷² Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other*, p. 41.

²⁷³ Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other*, p. 41.

resourcefulness that helped to ease overwhelming sentiments of hopelessness, guilt, despair, all while resisting erasure and the tranquil illusion of assimilation.

To collect and understand the discursive records of a community undertaking a project of revaluation and reorientation to contest systemic racism in Canada through intellectual exchange in the language of the colonizer is to participate in changing how Asian Canadians conceive of their collective historical oppression, which helps to prevent silence and violence from being institutionally forgotten. Chao discusses the idea of “institutional forgetting” as “a form of control of memory and is the gravest damage done to minority groups.”²⁷⁴ Chao’s conception of institutional forgetting is closely related to Minh-ha’s brief mention of imperial aphasia, wherein racialized difference that materializes as incommensurable with white homogeneity is taken to be “awkwardness and incompleteness,” an essential division that consequentially preserves colonial deafness and reliance on the master’s tools to reinforce the normativity of social hierarchies and the illusion of belonging.²⁷⁵ But when cultural workers have the opportunity to challenge seemingly normative metaphysical principles of their reality, they are taking direct approaches to dispute the legitimacy of their externally constructed lives. Indeed, the postponement of cultural dialogue and production as a result of head taxes, Exclusion Acts, internment, and rejection—all of which had yet to be addressed by the Canadian state in the 1970s and 1980s—prevented any earlier substantial exchange of ideas between Asian Canadian community members. Such postponements suggest the state’s selective hearing. For instance, on the subject of creative postponement of Japanese Canadians, Miki writes:

Had their lives not been so utterly stymied by the mass uprooting of 1942, the Nisei, as is the pattern in other immigrant communities,

²⁷⁴ Chao, *Beyond Silence: Chinese Canadian Literature in English*, p. 25.

²⁷⁵ Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other*, p. 80.

might have developed aesthetic, political, and cultural strategies to promote their own expressiveness in visual and literary texts, but the radical discontinuity of internment at the hands of their own government severely shook their faith in democratic values—and threw them into a double bind. Their ethnicity, their cultural and linguistic skin inherited from their parents, as they “entered” the dominant society in their dispersed state, became a negative that had to be translated into a positive, if they were to be accepted/adopted within white culture.²⁷⁶

The Asianadian was progressive for its time and catapulted Asian Canadian cultural production into the public, including figures such as Jim Wong-Chu and Sean Gunn who helped build the Chinese Canadian literary scene in Vancouver. With multiple projects and collaborations in and between these Canadian spaces, opportunities to participate in the grassroots community grew. Such freedom to inform one’s community via speaking, writing, and discoursing is the manifestation of a form of textual resistance that calls into question the problems of historiography, who speaks it, who belongs to it, and who creates it.²⁷⁷ Reorienting Asian Canadian history and Asians in Canadian history involves resisting the tenuous notion of thinking history as teleologically structured. Instead, history as Young conceptualizes it, ought to have multiple meanings in order to break from the prescriptive and selective nature of History. If we think of “History,” Young writes, “as a metahistorical category” that “achieves its single meaning by subsuming a range of ethico-political concepts, such as ‘progress’, ‘human freedom’, ‘necessity’ and the like,” it will “then form the basis of the regulation and authorization of historical representation.”²⁷⁸ Young’s understanding of how ‘History’ thematizes a relation of difference into one of singularity is what endorses Chao’s idea of institutional forgetting, which she argues must be confronted through dialogue, given that

²⁷⁶ Miki, *Broken Entries*, p. 111.

²⁷⁷ See Robert Young, “Marxism and the Question of History” in *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 53-60.

²⁷⁸ Young, “Marxism and the Question of History,” *White Mythologies*, p. 54.

“dialogue introduces new voices into the existing discourse, it helps prevent the latter from becoming ossified” which is also why “adopting English as the language of writing then becomes a political task.”²⁷⁹ *The Dubious Award* and *On the Firing Line* have been my primary examples for showing how Canadian historiography and anti-Asian thought of the twentieth century mark the distinction between Canadian metanarratives of democracy and the lived realities of a collective still recovering from historical injustice. The combined force of deconstructing anti-Asian imagery and reclaiming pride in heritage displays a mastery of language and concepts that informs contemporary critical reading practices of early Asian Canadian textual resistance. Thus, not only does *The Asianadian* contain unique records of social justice discussions taking place in the 1970s and 1980s, it also contains a meaningful presentation of an Asian Canadian grassroots community emerging from externally assumed linguistic barriers, reorienting itself towards a positive and more truthful ontology that houses the profound notion that the surfacing of new realities and new ways of being are possible. On this de-escalating the power of language, Minh-ha writes:

Having always traced its own limits while going beyond the limits of its assigned role as expression or communication, it may be viewed as that which does not translate a reality outside itself, but more precisely, always the emergence of a new reality.²⁸⁰

The textual resistance of *The Asiandian* involved a multilayered process of historical recovery to conceptually challenge stereotypes and develop practices for self-reflection, self-criticality, and self-determination—all of which engender a level of political awareness oriented towards exposing and confronting the centrality of Canada’s racist and sexist foundations. Acoose supports the idea that writing of cultural and ancestral relations freely relative to one’s

²⁷⁹ Chao, *Beyond Silence: Chinese Canadian Literature in English*, p. 29.

²⁸⁰ Minh-ha, *Woman, Native Other*, pp. 21-2.

social and political circumstances helps situate or define one as someone other than Canadian, since Canadian primarily implied white, Christian, heterosexual.²⁸¹ As the growing number of South Asians from the Philippines, Vietnam, Bangladesh emigrated to Canada in the 1970s and 1980s, the meaning of being Asian Canadian inescapably required continuous re-shaping in the same way it still requires constant reflection and re-articulation so as avoid being ossified today. This is why writing in the language of the colonizer essentially becomes a life and death political task when comprehending the horrific and dehumanizing aspects that illogical state-sanctioned violence enacts. It draws out clear distinctions between the reality of the privileged and entitled with the lived experiences of those exposed to and exploited by the power imbalance of settler colonial governance that relies on a racial hierarchy, intimidation, and segregation. The political awakening of *The Asianadian* legitimates the integrity of a people attempting to prove, not only to themselves, but to their historical oppressors, that their belonging ought not to be contested, especially given the lengthy and tumultuous history of Canada's desire for cheap Asian labour to fulfill to lower-class working jobs so that lower-class whites had more opportunities to climb the social ladder.²⁸² Making conscious efforts to reorient the power of language by mastering and manipulating its function and destabilizing linguistic signifiers once under the tight control of colonialists reveals a political coming of age that, once experienced, enlightens a level of critical reflection that "enables Asian Canadian activists to avoid the trap of ethnic essentialism."²⁸³ With this careful restructuring of language, *The Asianadian* resolves Minh-ha's aporia that language constitutes a locus of power and unconscious servility at the same time. We cannot

²⁸¹ See Janice Acoose, *Iskwewak—kah' ki yaw ni wahkomakanak: Neither Indian Princess nor Easy Squaws* (Toronto: Toronto Women's Press, 1995).

²⁸² See Paul Yee, *Saltwater City: An Illustrated History of the Chinese in Vancouver* (Vancouver, Douglas & McIntyre, 1988).

²⁸³ Li, *Voices Rising*, p. 43.

simply reduce the importance of *The Asianadian* to say it proved Asian Canadians could speak and write ‘good English.’ Rather, as I mentioned earlier, the magazine cleared the grounding for the undoing of anti-Asian stereotypes and so created an opening for more creative tropes to fill its place that more accurately show the humanity of Asian Canadians.²⁸⁴ The interstitial space of *The Asianadian* allows for such multidimensional world-making.

Significantly, the reorientation of energy and attention towards a goal of self-determination enables one of two things: first, it shows that Asians in Canada have the power and potential to express themselves according to how they see themselves as human beings with multiple identities; second, when a group stands up for itself, the gaze of the status quo is bifurcated, blurring access to obsolete and harmful misrepresentations that formerly characterized Asian people. In doing away with the constructed foundations of inaccurate images and perceptions, new perceptions arise; new ways of challenging false narratives are synthesized because of the well-documented experience of institutional and structural exclusion that was yet to be told, and even farther removed from theoretical analysis. The editorial collective affirmed that radical grassroots social justice cannot be implemented from a top-down approach, from educated elites, but must come from the lived realities and experiences of those who have never been given an opportunity to turn their silence into voice and action. This work takes time and can lead one to unfamiliar territories. Encouragingly, Sara Ahmed speculates that “getting lost” is invaluable to “registering what is not familiar; being lost can in its turn become a familiar feeling.”²⁸⁵ While one may get lost in reading *The Asianadian*, a recurring and reassuring maxim appears every so often: Orientalist constructions of Asian Canadian men and women as docile,

²⁸⁴ We see this shift in cultural production, and more specifically in Asian Canadian literary production, with the growth in publications of memoirs, autoethnographies, and life writing at the end of the 1980s into the 1990s.

²⁸⁵ Sara Ahmed, “The Orient and Other Others” in *Queer Phenomenology: Orientation, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 7.

mysterious, and invisible are simply untrue. Fully comprehending the falsity of these untruths takes time and cannot be done away with the lip service that they are socially constructed. Over time, however, familiar feelings develop to counteract not only the destructive forces of these untruths, but also the discomfort and skepticism associated with settling for falsely constructed images of oneself, one's family, one's people. When socialized to think and be in a certain way unfamiliar to oneself (when one is made "normal"), Ahmed reminds us that "'doing things' depends not so much on the intrinsic capacity or even the disposition of habits, but on the ways in which the world is available as a space for action, a space where things 'have certain place' or are 'in place.'"²⁸⁶ Making space for the realization that these untruths are not merely a matter of opinion, but misleading truths crystallized in the consciousness of the status quo, is a struggle that comes at a great personal cost because "colonialism makes the world white, so it's already given to certain bodies and not others; bodies remember these histories, even if we forget them."²⁸⁷ There is important revaluation work being done from within the Asian Canadian community that grassroots collectives such as *The Asianadian* began so as to help current Asian Canadians reorient political consciousness towards an understanding of the power of the Orient. "The making of 'the Orient' is an exercise of power," according to Ahmed, wherein "the Orient is made oriental as a submission to the authority of the Occident. To become oriental is both to be given an orientation and to be shaped by the orientation of that gift."²⁸⁸ Productively, *The Asianadian* was attuned to this dichotomy in Orientalism and with its ability to master/manipulate language it could engage more critically in the undoing of Orientalist discourse and imagery. As such, this 'reOrientation' reached a level of dynamic interaction with

²⁸⁶ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 109.

²⁸⁷ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 111.

²⁸⁸ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 114.

community participants that served an informed feedback loop of knowledges which enhanced the community's self-understanding. Returning to the foundational deconstructive work of reclaiming stereotypes to exercise intellectual fluidity and articulacy and workshop creative modes of synthesis is, therefore, always a possibility for Asian Canadian studies, as with all studies that inhabit the fringe, because of the perspectival changes in conceiving how centralized knowledges and hegemony can be reformed.

In reclaiming stereotypes by rejecting their cultural normativity and identifying alternative ways of thinking about Canada's historical treatment of socio-economically marginalized people, *The Asianadian* represents the bridge between the scattered anti-racist work that began when the first Asian arrivants of the early twentieth century came to Canada and the new, promising, and hybridized understandings of pan-Asian Canadian cultural production that burgeoned in the 1970s and 1980s. In this way, truth reveals itself not "in the clarity and plenitude" of mimesis, but in the vigilance of infinitely reconceptualising the tumultuous parts of our past that allow us to better comprehend the entropic treatment of Asian Canadians in the past, present, and future, and thereby strengthen our creative outputs. That is, as Asian Canadian cultural workers began to actualize their lived experience through creative expression, they presented their assemblages of existence as a form of resistance against the limitations of settler colonial metaphysics. Understanding the intellectual history of anti-Asian sentiment in Canada is critical for the development of broader networks of solidarity, and so long as anti-immigrant, anti-refugee, and anti-Indigenous mentalities continue to shape Canadian social relations, returning to study the textual resistance and hybridity of *The Asianadian* will continue to produce newness and difference

Conclusion:

Gum San Sits on the Turtle's Back:

Writing for Posterity and Returning to the Ancestors of the Movement

*But what if your return to Fanon is solicited by a somewhat different situation in the world, a somewhat different geopolitical affiliation?*²⁸⁹

- Ato Sekyi-Out, *Fanon's Dialectic of Experience*

I began this work by situating my own ethical existentiality through Fanon's writing on lived experience and paying homage to his foundational work in critical race phenomenology. The relevancy of his work, as I and other critical race theorists have stated, extends far beyond the analytic confines of the French colonial project in Algeria or, for that matter, the African continent. Fanon speaks to all colonized people in the world and his call for attention to the subjects of the wretched of the earth suggest a strong spirit of collective anti-colonial action and alternative approaches to humanism. It is from studying *The Asianadian's* multiple approaches towards dignifying newly arrived Asians and Asians born in Canada that warrant drawing from Fanonian frameworks. I departed from a Fanonian phenomenological reorientation in order to situate the temporality of early Asian Canadian social justice work in relation to my transitory personal experience with institutional racism. That is, in mapping out the historical situations of early Asian ancestors in relation to my own lived experience, I am reminded of what Bhabha writes on remembering: "remembering is never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection" but "a painful re-membling, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma

²⁸⁹ Ato Sekyi-Otu, *Fanon's Dialectic of Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 11.

of the present.”²⁹⁰ It is within these painful moments of re-membering as a means to make sense that maps of misreadings develop. It is meaningful for me, then, to conclude this work by revisiting the initial purpose of this dissertation, which was to understand the impacts of *The Asianadian*’s hybrid social justice cultural production and to underscore what Asian women can know when they have collective, multi-generational support. In this formulation, I needed to situate Asian peoples, our cultures, and our histories in Canada into a framework of analysis that considered their various social and historical locations and multidimensional ontologies in nineteenth and twentieth century Canada.

Thinking, being, and doing beyond the settler-native binary of classical colonial analysis is particularly acute in those parts of the world stained red by the history of the British Empire (Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa). These settler colonial societies are constituted triadically between the evacuation of Indigenous lands (or the ‘tearing up of the trails’) and the importation of migrant labour (‘bring in the workers and bring up the rails’). As a result, the colonizer-colonized framework of much (post)colonial analysis cannot be transplanted to the settler colonial context for the simple reason that it analytically eclipses the perspectives, experiences, and histories of arrivants, migrants, and ‘settlers of colour.’ Such an erasure serves the settler state and its conservative agenda of white supremacy as it attempts to contain political agencies of arrivants within Western orders of statehood, sovereignty, and peoplehood. In Canada, this process is made visible when the settler state officially endorses multiculturalism or performs grand gestures of apology for Chinese head taxes, the incident of the *Komagata Maru*, or Japanese Canadian internment. What is often missed in these moments of emergency for settler state legitimacy is the opportunity for an emergence of a different

²⁹⁰ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 90.

schematic of triadic relations. On this basis, any official state apology to Asian Canadians has sought to redress the relationship between *settlers and arrivants*, thereby leaving out of the conversation entirely the matter of how Asian Canadians might relate to Indigenous nations, sovereignties, and peoplehoods in light of the fact that we find ourselves on their lands.

In *States of Race: Critical Race Feminisms for the 21st Century*, Sherene Razack, Malinda Smith, and Sunera Thobani open with the question: ‘how do we theorize our place when that place itself is stolen’? This question has inspired and challenged me throughout my academic career and while I seek to provide some sort of answer to it in this conclusion, I want to revisit it briefly to underscore the way in which my perspectives on the arrivant, settler, and Indigenous subject in Canadian social formations are not unique to me, but conditioned by the scholarly work of women such as Razack, Smith, and Thobani who have been pointing out the problematics and possibilities associated with writing as a racialized woman in Canada for some time. Though he is not situated in a Canadian or settler colonial context, it is clear that Homi K. Bhabha’s insights in *The Location of Culture* also helped shape the thinking of myself and others on the matter of ‘migrant space.’ Lastly, it is also necessary to note here that Bhabha would not have gotten far had he not been a close reader of Toni Morrison, whose heart-wrenching but masterful *Beloved* was published in 1987.²⁹¹

I feel compelled to contend in this concluding discussion that the level of political, philosophical, and historical consciousness shown in the pages of *The Asianadian*, whose final issue was printed in 1985, is inspiring beyond measure. I entered into this field of study and this research project weighted down by internalized notions of the ‘model minority myth’ and the

²⁹¹ Homi K. Bhabha says as much himself in his “Acknowledgments” to *The Location of Culture*; see pp. xxvi-xxxi.

myth of the ‘suffering minority’ but I am grateful that this work has allowed me to see more clearly the shoulders I stand on as a Chinese woman writing for social justice in Canada. As is evident from the preceding chapters, Asians in Canada cultivated a culture of radical resistance and belonging in the pages of *The Asianadian*—a name which itself recoils at hyphenated identities and rejects the living of a fragmented life lived across two worlds. *The Asianadian* is a document of hybridity written from that Third Space of enunciation that erupts the binary of settler-native, embarrasses the celebratory narrative of the nation-state through a process of re-inscription, and forges new sites of actively externalized identity-formation animated not in the passive position of victim but the conscious position of historical agent, witness, and writer. Indeed, *The Asianadian* did so much in so few pages per issue it is difficult to capture it in a few concluding pages; however, I will try to do so by reviewing the findings of each chapter before moving to my concluding thoughts.

Chapter Review

In my first chapter, I reviewed in an exhaustive way the historico-theoretical foundations of this study, which took as the basis of its outlook the exclusion of Asian arrivants in Canadian history. Importantly, this chapter discussed the metaphysics of early Chinese arrivants with reference to Confucian values and used this history as a critical metaphor to elaborate upon the triadic structure of settler colonial societies and economies, which are categorically founded on stolen land and constituted by the exclusion of arrivants who perform foundational forms of labour for state-formation. It was within this framework that I situated the histories of Chinese exclusion, the *Komagata Maru*, and Japanese internment in the Second World War. In so doing, I tried to offer readers a historical and theoretical basis from which to understand the emergence of *The Asianadian*, which I turned to in my second chapter.

In Chapter Two, I utilized the philosophies of existentialism and phenomenology to examine the ways in which *The Asianadian* can be productively understood as a hybridized text written in the Third Space of enunciation or the ‘initiatory interstice’ that produces new meanings and historical truths from an in-between space. The evidence for this argument was related to the fact that *The Asianadian* demonstrably put into critical conversation matters of stolen land and settler colonization, the mental wellness of Asian arrivants, and the struggles of Asian women who are not only fixed between the binaries of settler and native, but also between the pressures of old-world tradition and new-world progress. Because discussions of gender, Indigeneity, and mental wellness currently occupy primary positions in contemporary academic discourses in the social sciences, I believe it is fair to say that one can look to *The Asianadian* as a generative text that was able to locate these cultural problems because of its orientation towards Asian experiences. Theorizing reOrientation as a process by which Asians write themselves into Canadian history in a way that is counter-hegemonic to the settler state and society, I argued that *The Asianadian* reOriented Canada while simultaneously creating a critical space wherein Asians arrivants in Canada could discuss matters important to us.

In Chapter Three, I focused on two satirical columns in *The Asianadian*: The Dubious Awards and On the Firing Line. My reason for focusing on these columns was not merely to share the quite funny and cutting humour of the magazine, but to underscore how Asian arrivants, with our long and collective memory of exclusion and racism at the hands of settlers ‘embarrass the righteousness of recordation and the certainty of good government’ in Canada. Thus, whereas the former chapter was about collective identity formations, community issues, and matters internal to Asian arrivants within our own communities, this chapter was about the way in which *The Asianadian* mocked the settler state, white supremacy, the treatment of our

ancestors, and the contemporary realities of racism the editors raged against in their writing. My thinking in structuring the chapter in this fashion was to show that *The Asianadian* was a hybridized text in the full sense: that is, it not only created positive value by animating arrivant spaces of negotiated identity formations, it also spoke harsh truths about Canadian histories and contemporary realities, thereby endowing its editors with the power to produce authoritative meanings despite a noticeable lack of whiteness.

Dialectics of Experience

I would like to conclude, then, in the same way I began this dissertation – that is, by sharing a story that speaks to the dialectics of experience under Canadian settler colonial metaphysics. In 2015, I presented a paper on philosophical Daoism and Heidegger with the *Society of Existential and Phenomenological Theory and Culture*, where I was awarded best paper of the year for my comparative work. Professionally, this was a welcome development. Personally, however, it proved to be a frustrating experience that has been all too common for racialized women in white-dominated academic spaces. Fellow racialized female academics reading this will readily be able to identify with the story. It was during the question period that a white male scholar—a junior scholar—suggested I read political philosopher Charles Taylor so as to develop a firmer grasp on the concept of Western rationalism (a concept that I had taken the time to define within the first few minutes of the presentation). I was also aware of what can only be called Taylor’s misreading of Fanon and the problematic call for racialized minorities to involve themselves in Canada’s multicultural social order and be ‘recognized’ by the liberal apparatuses of the settler state. Indeed, as early as 2006, Dene scholar Glen Coulthard destabilized Taylor’s politics of recognition and stated frankly that, were Fanon here today, he

would state clearly that “Taylor has it wrong.”²⁹² The politics of recognition under Taylor’s logic seeks to reinscribe and replicate modes of recognition that reify “configurations of colonial power that Indigenous peoples’ demands for recognition have historically sought to extend.”²⁹³ On this basis, not only did the white male junior scholar attempt to educate me on my reading of Western philosophy by providing me with a reading list, he also sought to extend to me the opportunity to engage with him (and, by extension, Charles Taylor). I found this experience uniquely frustrating given that the entire point of my talk was to orient my audience away from outdated and theoretically compromised discourses on liberal politics of Canadian recognition. This experience also spoke to the ways in which established readings of texts continue to hold power in the eyes of authoritative and entitled white academics.

I struggle still with centralizing these frustrating men in the way I introduce and conclude this dissertation, yet I do so not to complain or even center them but to make clear the kinds of impediments that have existed for me and many racialized women and women-identified academics when trying to lead white scholars along the postcolonial path to the recognition that *recognition itself is a failed politico-philosophical project*. Quite frankly, I would much rather talk about Coulthard, the commons, and how capitalism connects, for instance, labour in China to the land on Turtle Island than white men, Charles Taylor, and how the settler state can say sorry. The former promises the potentiality for innovative theoretical cross-pollination across Asian and Indigenous languages, lands, and experiences; the latter, however, offers only hindrance, stagnancy, and tranquilized levels of consciousness. In the context of these experiences with authoritative male academics questioning the legitimacy of my ontological

²⁹² Glen Coulthard, “Subjects of Empire: Indigenous Peoples and the Politics of Recognition in Colonial Contexts,” *Contemporary Political History* 6, no. 4 (2007), pp. 1-22; 8.

²⁹³ Coulthard, “Subjects of Empire: Indigenous Peoples and the Politics of Recognition in Colonial Contexts,” p. 8.

orientations, *The Asiandian* was a source of inspiration that also pre-empted this dissertation's focus on the value of returning to history and culture as a praxis of hybridity.

Returning to the Ancestors of the Movement

With the recent deaths of Jim Wong-Chu and Tony B. Chan—two literary and academic activist titans essential to the development of Chinese Canadian literature and Asian Canadian studies—the urgency of finding self-determination through cross-cultural dialogue and creativity has never been more paramount. When I return to Asian Canadian histories and the social justice cultural production of *The Asianadian*, exciting and unexpected things happen. Cheuk Kwan graciously donated all seven volumes of the collection—mostly in their original print—to York University's library and archives, which is a vital contribution to Asian Canadian scholarship, history, and culture. To put my philosophical ethics into practice, I became a member and team leader for the Indigenous grassroots organization Bear Clan Patrol in Thunder Bay, Ontario, where the community-informed and action-oriented patrol work of the team ignited a curiosity in me to delve deeper into the secret and hidden histories between early Chinese arrivants and Indigenous hosts on the West coast. Further, in research projects outside of this dissertation, I have received strange national (mis)recognition for my academic critique on settler colonial apologies.²⁹⁴ My endeavour into these different locations of emergence is anchored by *The*

²⁹⁴ Joseph Brean, "Canada's new 'dark chapter': So many national apologies for past injustice, they've become insincere" *National Post*, 25 May 2018. http://nationalpost.com/news/canada/canadas-new-dark-chapter-so-many-national-apologies-for-past-injustice-theyve-become-insincere?utm_term=Autofeed&utm_campaign=Echobox&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Facebook#link_time=1527086519 The reaction of what we know to be the politically conservative public's misreading of my critique as one that lambasts current Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's crocodile tears and insincere apologies is uncanny and inaccurate given that I made little to no mention of Trudeau in either the work or the interview. Alas, it is not surprising that my words and thoughts were rendered unintelligible within the pages of the *National Post*, the *Vancouver Sun*, and the *Ottawa Citizen*. But, it is philosophically provocative in terms of further developing contributing insights (anthropological and otherwise) to the fields of critical race studies, subaltern studies, activist scholarship, gender studies, settler colonial studies, and whiteness studies.

Asianadian's fluid critiques of false internalized narratives of Canadian regimes of peace, order, and good government. In the same way the legacies of Jim Wong-Chu and Tony Chan are memorialized among Asian Canadian writers, the hybridized wisdom of the editorial collective is one of posterity, for its intervention as a Third Space of enunciation ensures "that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew."²⁹⁵ Indeed, it is my hope that the analysis conducted on the editorials and features has convincingly shown the ways in which counter-knowledges flourish when Asians, and racialized communities in general, write together. And because writing is always writing for posterity, Asian women and men who write, write for the future.

We are not the first ones to find ourselves in impossible situations. Emerging from a mix of cultures, associations, and relations that configure unique relationships with temporality and space, we as cultural workers understand that progress is not linear. Change is complex and it is frustrating to make progress and still be forced to deal with problems from the past. We still have to fight the battles of our ancestors. Luckily, the elders and ancestors of the movement immersed themselves within the broader collective of social justice and decolonization discourse and understood (and taught others) that the good fight is never done. Such immersion contests what Miki called the finitudes of subjectivity and centralizes grassroots, community-informed action and letting stories speak for themselves so that truths can be told and retold, interpreted and reinterpreted. Thus, as I came to conclude my work on this dissertation, I reached out again to my elders—Cheuk Kwan, Momoye Sugiman, and Terry Watada—who gave me infinite support, guidance, and patience as I traversed the difficult terrains of this project. I had the pleasure of interviewing all three and believe it to be appropriate to offer the wisdom of these social justice

²⁹⁵ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 55.

cultural workers as the final word in this work. I asked all three the following question: “Given your experiences in life and working on *The Asianadian* in your youth, what is your understanding of freedom?”

Cheuk Kwan (*The Asianadian* co-founder, filmmaker, community activist and organizer):

Well, if I have to say there are two types of freedom that I truly value because of my history. That would be freedom of expression and freedom of association.... In terms of internationalism that’s sort of my life in a sense. So, if you translate internationalism—well, what it means is basically freedom of association. Basically, as an ethnic minority in many places, I value their work, the connection I have with, first of all, my fellow countrymen or whatever you want to call it—fellow diasporic members of the Chinese community. And that’s my *modus operandi* for life... you find yourself through association with others and that’s what I value most. Sometimes I define myself, my association—be it tribal, be it connectivity, be it internet connected—so, connectedness is my *modus operandi*. And that’s basically the reason why I made my Chinese restaurants [film series]. I wanted to find a connection throughout the world through either my ethnic roots or my love for Chinese food. And I explored that to the nth degree whenever I can, so that’s how I express my freedom to associate myself.

It’s continuous. So, that’s what I treasure most—my high school friends, my grade school friends, whom I always connected with. And the reason for that is my background, like my going to international school in Japan. So, you know, 90% of my classmates were non-Japanese. Their mother might have been Japanese, but their father put them into international school because they’re not Japanese. In that sense, you know, each of us values the fact that we were living in Japan and we’re marginalized by the fact that we were not Japanese. We’re marginalized because we’re in a homogenous society, but we value their differences. We value that kind of independence and free expression to the extent that we don’t have to conform in the 60s to a simple way of life, like graduate high school, get a job. We don’t have to conform to that. We’re more international thinking. We moved to the States or elsewhere for school after high school. So, we were freer. That’s a fairly abstract freedom, but it’s also free from conformity. That’s would be my definition of freedom.

My freedom is not defined by the fact I am in a prison cell, but the fact that I can freely associated with other members of a global community and that's freedom from confines of cultural and linguistic boundaries that would have been imposed on me if I had grown up one place, in Japan. That's how I see myself like a bird flying through, unconfined by the fact that I have to touch down somewhere. I could touch down and make associations but then fly off again.

I mean, when we started, [being a counter-narrative] was the norm. For me it was. For Tony Chan maybe it was also the norm because he always felt a bit of an outsider. He found his roots. So, in that sense, you're right. It's normal for the way we talk about ourselves like this—that we have a forum for artists and writers. We don't—in a sense, we are outside of this—we don't have to normalize it. Or denormalize it.

I was going to say, actually, the whole pan-Asian thing was very much of my own being as well. Because I lived in different Asian societies, so, I don't have the ethnocentric kind of way a Japanese or Chinese Canadian would do.... I come from the idea that—I went to high school with many nationalities and ethnicities. Many of them are Chinese Canadian, Chinese Americans—whatever. And because I was in the Japanese society, I know how the Japanese think. I know what their culture is like and I know their mentality. And I was in Singapore, so I know a lot of other dialectic communities, like Cantonese, Shanghainese, Mandarin. I have Indian friends. I have Eurasian friends. So, what happens is when I come to Canada, I don't see myself as Chinese Canadian or a Chinese immigrant. I see myself as an Asian immigrant.... And that's how Tony Chan and I started this whole thing about pan-Asian identity. You know, the first editorial we talked about how we're not Chinese Canadian, we're not Japanese Canadian, we're not Korean Canadian. We are pan-Asian, because only when you're united can you fight the mainstream as a block—as a pan-Asian block. Now, at that time, in 1978, the pan-Asian block was a very, very novel idea, because every immigrant community that comes in, they're very defensive. They have the Korea town ghetto, the Chinatown ghetto.... Even in Vancouver with Jim Wong-Chu and things like that, it was a little bit of a more Japanese Chinese because they lived side by side on Pender street. They're side by side Japan town and Chinatown. So, in that sense, it was easier for them to do. But the whole pan-Asian thing with Koreans and Filipino was done in Toronto. It was never done in

Vancouver. So, to that, I think we were ahead of our times at the time.²⁹⁶

Terry Watada (contributor, community activist and organizer, poet, musician, novelist, interviewed by Gordon Takehara in *The Asianadian* vol. 5, no. 3, 1984):

Freedom allows us to demand and fight for human rights not only for ourselves and community but for all who have experienced injustice. I learned this through women like Midge Ayukawa, Yuri Kochiyama, Dora Nipp, Momoye Sugiman (Pamela's sister), Setsuko Thurlow, Irene Uchida, and Misao Yoneyama; and men like Tony Chan, Wes Fujiwara, Gordon Hirabayashi, Bill Kochiyama, Cheuk Kwan, Tom Shoyama, and Jim Wong Chu. All stood for integrity, strength-in-conviction and courage. As a result, I have sought to preserve that freedom through songwriting, performance, theatre, and writing fiction, poetry and non-fiction. It has led to a life of purpose if not satisfaction. The fight is never over.²⁹⁷

Momoye Sugiman (major contributing editor, community activist and organizer):

Hmm... *The Asianadian* in relation to "freedom"? I'm afraid I've never really thought about it beyond "freedom of expression" and freedom from the ethnic and racial stereotypes that were imposed on me during my formative, post-WW2 years. I can only really speak about how racism shaped my self-image—my personality, choices and political outlook.

All I can say is that the whole *Asianadian* experience was transformative because it politicized me and began to "free" me from the anger I had been internalizing. Throughout those first two decades of my life, I always felt a kind of self-perpetuated stultification and sense of inferiority. Growing up surrounded by a normative sea of whiteness, I believed that I had to maintain a low profile and avoid rocking the boat. I chose the blond Chatty Cathy doll, the blond Barbie doll. As a five-year-old child, I asked Mrs. Murray, my white Anglo neighbour, if my skin could turn white if I sat in the shade of her giant maple tree. Stoically, I endured the racist taunts on the way home from school.

Although I had no direct experience of the uprooting of the JCs [Japanese Canadians], that whole horrible episode in Canadian history haunted me throughout my childhood and made me want to conceal or downplay my "Japaneseness". The abrupt displacement of the JCs

²⁹⁶ Cheuk Kwan, (*The Asianadian* co-founder) in discussion with the author, May 8, 2018.

²⁹⁷ Terry Watada (poet, musician, novelist, *The Asianadian* contributor) in personal correspondence with author, April 23, 2018.

silenced my parents. Thus, it silenced me. However, when I became immersed in *The Asianadian*, I finally found an outlet, a vehicle for self-expression. I began to reflect on the injustice of colonialism around the world. I insisted that everyone around me start calling me by my Japanese middle name. I began to feel empathy with Indigenous people and other oppressed people of colour. And among the members of our grassroots collective, I felt a liberating sense of belonging and camaraderie. I began to rediscover my roots and repair the damage to my sense of self. I suppose I could say that “to exist freely” involves an acceptance and appreciation of who we are and where we came from. To “exist freely” means to be free to renegotiate one’s identity: something which is multi-faceted and constantly evolving.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁸ Momoye Sugiman (*The Asianadian* major contributing editor) in personal correspondence with author, April 11, 2018.

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