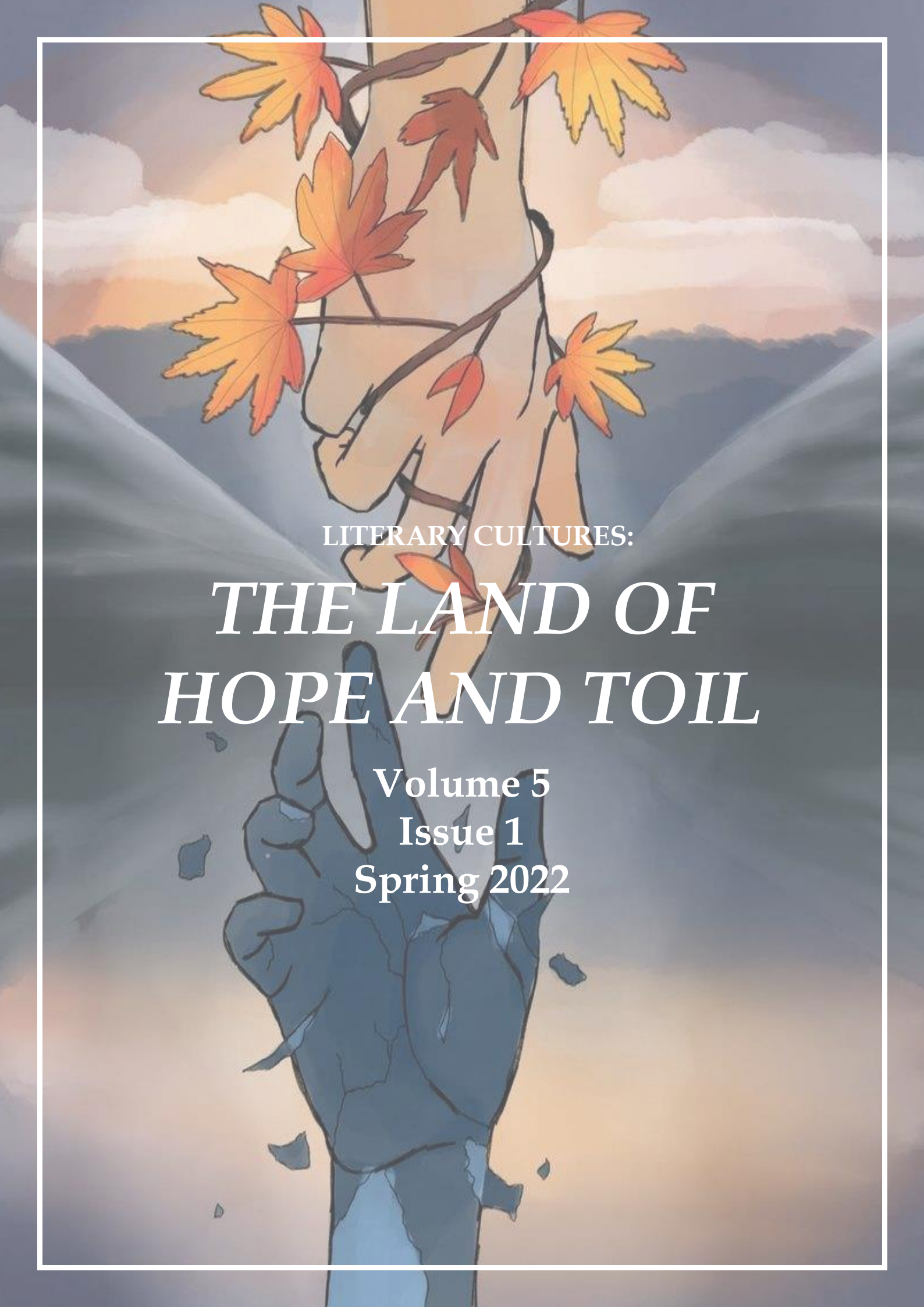

LITERARY CULTURES:

THE LAND OF HOPE AND TOIL

Volume 5
Issue 1
Spring 2022

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EDITORS

Journal Editorial Team

Abbegail de Wit – *Editor-in-Chief*

Katherine McGuigan – *Managing Editor*

Megan Sprous – *Writer and Associate Editor*

Amy Barlow - *Writer and Associate Editor*

Isabel Berry - *Writer and Associate Editor*

Izzy M. Pleasance - *Writer and Associate Editor*

Katie Halls - *Writer and Associate Editor*

Journal Team 2: Book Reviews Editorial Team

Ellie Jacobson – *Book Reviews Editor*

Shay Abell - *Book Reviews Editor*

Tom Read – *Book Reviews Editor*

Callum Clarke – *Book Reviews Editor and Copy Editor*

Kai Northcott – *Copy Editor*

Contributing Editors

Antonia Stassi – *Social Media Coordinator (Audience Engagement – Canada)*

Eve Coley – *Administrative Director*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ARTICLES

REVIEWS

EDITORIAL

This issue of the Literary Cultures journal focuses on Culture within Canada and its presence in Canadian Literature. The writers of this issue aim to answer questions such as: How is culture portrayed in Canadian Literature? How is it interpreted? And what can we, as readers, learn from it? The main inspiration for the works included in this issue is an experimental, collaborative online poetry work based on a novel by a Chinese Canadian writer Fred Wah: *High Muck a Muck: Playing Chinese*. 'This collaboratively created website explores historical and contemporary tensions surrounding Chinese immigration to British Columbia, Canada. It is the work of many artists, writers, designers, developers, community members and funders' (The *High Muck a Muck: Playing Chinese* website).

Like High Muck a Muck this journal issue is a collaborative piece, with Canadian students from Kwantlen Polytechnic University in Surrey, Canada contributing to the content. With the journal being a collaborative piece with students of Canadian heritage it better equipped to provide a varied and personal perspective on the influence culture has both *on* and *in* Canadian Literature.

The inspiration for the title of the journal, *The Land of Hope and Toil*, comes from a line in the Canadian National Anthem: 'Thou land of hope for all who toil'. The accuracy of this line has lost its credibility over time. The idea of having a haven to escape to is what attracted many immigrants to Canada but sadly with that came issues of racism, xenophobia, discrimination and many more. There is much that has changed in recent years, however there is still much more that needs to change in order to account for the actions of the past.

At the beginning of this project the students involved at Nottingham Trent University discussed the implications of students writing about a culture which they are not part of and how that could impact the overall influence of this journal. The hope is that with the inclusion of Canadian students' voices we are able to add to the journal's overall integrity and informative intentions.

This journal issue is host to articles and reviews based on or influenced by Canadian Literature. These sources vary from books to films to documentaries and so on. The research conducted by the students involved was done so with the intention to educate and enlighten readers. The topics vary as much as the sources do.

Articles

The inspiration for three of the articles are works of poetry by Canadian writers; however, contrastingly in one article, written by Katherine McGuigan, the author focuses on the imagery within Indigenous culture, namely the influence it has on their beliefs and fears. In another, the author, Amy Barlow, aims to highlight the injustices of the residential school system and in the final poetry inspired article the author, Isabel Berry, will explore the coming together of two separate cultures.

In keeping with the theme of Residential schools, Megan Sprous uses the novel *The Diviners* written by Margaret Laurence to highlight an erasure of Indigenous culture through the exclusion of its teachings in residential schools and the impact that has on future generations. The exclusion of Indigenous Culture is evident in *Sunshine Sketches of a Little*

Town, which is the inspiration for Ella Greenwood's article. Greenwood is able to shatter the illusion of perfection in Stephen Leacock's town of 'Mariposa' through exposing its flaws.

Conflict and trauma are at the epicentre of Izzy M. Pleasance's and Ollie M's articles, respectively. Pleasance is able to draw on a feminist understanding of the conflict which shaped Canada into how we know it today. Ollie M uses a film adaptation of Richard Wagamese's, *Indian Horse,* to highlight how the trauma experienced by Indigenous children at residential schools added to an erasure of native languages. Through the use of a similarly creative source Katie Halls discusses the 'development and the value of comic books' when considering literary work relating to Canada. Her article, 'Comics in Canada' showcases the influence comics have on people and how that could potentially be used as a means of educating a broader audience.

Reviews

The journal additionally showcases reviews written by NTU and KPU students. Antonia Stassi explores culture shock experienced by first generation immigrants through a review of Albert Kish's short film, 'This is a Photograph'. The film is benefited by the use of black and white imagery and the, at times, unsettling soundtrack as it puts the viewer in a state of discomfort in an attempt to relate the viewer to the horrors immigrants faced. Similarly, Megan Sprous reviews the documentary, *From C to C*, and states how it uses 'beautiful cinematography to tell a harsh truth'. *From C to C* is not the only piece to use imagery to convey a message, an integral part of Indigenous culture is the ability to use storytelling as a way of ensuring the continuation of the imagery important to Indigenous peoples. Wolf MacDonald discusses storytelling from a native perspective and the weight that carries culturally in his review of *The Truth About Stories*.

Brook Lowery and Emily Hardy aim to highlight issues faced by Indigenous women. Respectively, Lowery reviews Jessica McDiarmid's book *Highway of Tears* which aims to raise the volume on the drowned-out voices of the young Indigenous women going missing on the highway of tears and how this is a systemic issue in dire need of resolving. Whereas, Hardy's article focuses on the illustrated book, *If I Go Missing,* and how it tackles the issues faced by Indigenous women through the use of comic like imagery and intense colour.

The film *Holy Angels* centres around the erasure of Indigenous language and culture through the residential school system and the inevitable effect that has on future generations. Harvinder Singh evaluates how accurately this is achieved in the film through her review.

John Oberholzer reviews a collection of poetry written by Indigenous poet Billy-Ray Belcourt titled: *This Wound is A World.* Oberholzer analyses the language used and the events being described within the poems to showcase an unorthodox way of dealing with queerness as an Indigenous person. In a review of the documentary, *Jordan River Anderson: The Messenger,* conducted by Kareena, the author discusses the implications the lack of a healthcare system can have on communities when these communities are excluded due to a belief that the Indigenous peoples living on reserves should not be the governments responsibility. Finally, like many other authors Tae is using *Indian Horse* as inspiration for their writing, only this time Tae is choosing to use the novel which inspired the film.

This year's journal received an incredible amount of work, providing us with the opportunity to create a special issue. The special issue showcases an article written by Kai

Northcott, as well as a selection of reviews on books, films, documentaries, and poems written by students from both Nottingham Trent University and Kwantlen Polytechnic University.

As a final ode to the individuality of people, beliefs and cultures each article in this issue has a different designated colour. This was done to highlight the differences in the articles and provide the reader with a means of finding their way back to certain articles in the midst of all this content.

In addition to this journal and the special issue, the students from NTU and KPU have produced a conference, multiple podcasts, a blog and multiple social media accounts on twitter and Instagram respectively. The cover art for both the Journal and Special Issue was commissioned by an external graphic designer - @jaydehankins.

Abbegail de Wit
Editor-in-Chief

Links to External Sites

Special Issue – *The Land of Hope and Toil*: Special Issue

Twitter – @LHT_NTU

Instagram – @lht_ntu

Conference – Can be found on YouTube: 'Conference: Land of Hope and Toil'

Blog – Land of Hope and Toil

Podcast – Land of Hope and Toil Podcast

SUNSHINE SKETCHES OF A LITTLE TOWN – SILENCE SPEAKS THE LOUDEST IN STEPHEN LEACOCK'S REPRESENTATION OF IDENTITY IN THE TRADITIONAL CANADIAN TOWN.

Acknowledging the lack of cultural identity in Leacock's 'supposed' triumph, *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* and how this reflects the reality of life within Canadian literature.

Ella Greenwood
ella.greenwood2020@my.ntu.ac.uk
English BA (Hons), Nottingham Trent University

Abstract

The focus of this article centres around the novel by Stephen Leacock, *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*. Despite receiving global recognition for being a Canadian literary classic, analysis of Leacock's text uncovers the limitations of cultural appropriation and representation within the novel, masked by the silence of the narrator and ignorance of its characters. This perceived triumph of literature excludes individual and Indigenous voices, suppressing and masking the flaws that lurk beneath Mariposa's perfection. The article analyses three main concepts: cultural representation, the motif of silence and the lack of Indigenous voice within the novel, addressing Leacock's failure to represent all aspects and individuals that collectively define Canada and its complex identity. Ignorance held against Indigenous heritage, when analysed, uncovers a rather harrowing disregard for native Canadian identity, Indigenous history, and individual voice. Therefore, this article argues against praising Leacock's novel and suggests that he be criticised for neglecting Indigenous and native influence on traditional Canadian culture.

Written in 1912, Stephen Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* is often considered to be a renowned classic in Canadian literature. Praised for its humorous tone and insightful representation of small-town life, the novel explores the quaint beauty and satirical comedy used by Leacock as a device to write his own experiences of life into the fictional setting of Mariposa and its residents. However, admiration and respect given to, what some might call, a canonical Canadian text, cannot overshadow the glaringly obvious exclusion of Indigenous culture and representation. Leacock's series of stories in chapter-form illustrates the quaint, everyday life of townsfolk and their endeavours. But in a novel so central to Canadian literary history, one must question the reasoning behind the lack of Indigenous cultural representation.

Canadian culture is recognised globally for being one of the most diverse. In its extensive form, culture is largely dominated by a combination of British, French, and American. However, it must be understood that those currently dominant within society do not represent the traditional culture present before the country's European colonisation in the sixteenth-century. It would be unfair to suggest that Leacock does not depict culture within the novel, when it is clearly a focus of his work. However, a lack of acknowledgement for traditional cultures in particular, emphasises an ignorance towards Canadian heritage. Critic Margret MacMillan highlights that Mariposa's 'people are of British stock' and that this contributes to 'the book's charm for readers outside Canada.' This may have indeed been what Leacock was trying to achieve - association between international readership and the small-town inclusive lifestyle represented through Mariposa and its people.[1] Alternatively, it could be argued that MacMillan presents a deep-rooted issue with the narrowminded disregard for alternative culture in the twentieth century. Similarly, Davi Gonçalves argues against the light-hearted praise of *Sunshine Sketches*. He suggests that the Canadian identity portrayed in the novel is flawed, ultimately it 'does not stand for a fixed entity' and instead leads to 'problematising the idea of a concrete national identity.'[2] Although it is said that 'in Mariposa practically everybody belongs to the Knights of Pythias just as they do to everything else',[3] Gonçalves reveals that this is not the case. In fact, Mariposa can be interpreted as a suffocating and intrusive place where 'Everybody is in everything' (p.33) and unruly judgement of others is held right at the heart of the small town.[4] The pride of its residents

[1] Margret MacMillan, 'A Nation in a Town', Maclean's; Toronto, 122.10/11, (March 2009), 40-41 (p.40).

[2] Davi Gonçalves, 'Time, Literature, and Translation: a shared cosmopolitanism', *Ci & Tróp. Recife*, 42.2, (2018), 13-28 (p.19).

[3] Stephen Leacock, *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*, (Middlesex: The Echo Library, 2006), p.33. (Further references in parenthesis).

[4] Gonçalves, 'Time, Literature, and Translation', (p.19).

stems mainly from a collective inability to accept and embrace change. An example of this being Smith's Parisian café, which was opened solely for financial gain and stability. It was supported by the town through the gossip behind its opening, only to then be dismissed as soon as it had served its purpose. Although this seems like an insignificant factor in the novel, Leacock's reference to the French language, which was 'encouraged' (p.18) if it assisted individual profit, highlights the ignorance towards embracing migrant identity on a cultural level. As soon as the café closed, the 'use of the French language, as such, fell off tremendously' (p.21), implying the fragility of alternative culture in Mariposa and, without native knowledge, its community's unwillingness to learn, accept and support cultural change. 'Through Leacock's particular usage of irony', incorporated with themes of heritage and identity, Gonçalves explains that 'he has not only reflected the disconcerting history of Canadian colonialization and neo-colonisation, but also originally shaped it in a way of his own.'[5]

Furthermore, the lack of cultural acknowledgement brings into question how *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*'s interpretation of silence concerns readers in Leacock's text. It is the unspoken that must be addressed when understanding MacMillan's suggestion that 'there is a darker side to life and more below the surface in Mariposa than first appears'.[6] Throughout the stories in the novel, Leacock addresses readers directly; this humorous technique allows the reader to feel a certain inclusion in the quirky and exaggerated narrative that encompasses Mariposa. However, critic Jason Blake points out that it is 'sometimes reasonable to speak of 'appropriation through absence',[7] as the presence of the unspoken builds to a point of discomfort for readers who understand that Leacock is blatantly choosing to ignore the more ominous reality of life in twentieth-century Canada. Furthermore, MacMillan divulges that there is 'no poverty and no crime. Disagreements over politics never result in permanent rifts' which suggests that the reliability of our narrator should be questioned. It is doubtful that within a town as small as Mariposa there would not be societal tension or discomfort, however this is not accurately represented through Leacock's narrative.[8] Instead, concealment within the town prevents a truthful narrative, as 'secret benefactions, the kind of giving done by stealth of which not a soul in town knew anything' (p.15) is flippantly mentioned but quickly disregarded, much like other cryptic references throughout the novel. The fact that Leacock alludes to such a mysterious concept but refuses to explain, enforces curiosity within readers surrounding the omniscience of

[5] Gonçalves, 'Time, Literature, and Translation', (p.16).

[6] MacMillan, 'A Nation in a Town', (p.40).

[7] Jason Blake, 'Appropriation, Absence and the Canadian Studies Classroom', *American Review of Canadian Studies*, 49.2, (2019), 348-359 (p.354).

[8] MacMillan, 'A Nation in a Town', (p.41).

the narrator. The choice to withhold this knowledge creates a sinister undertone to the novel, leaving interpretation of the potential corruption and unlawful acts that occur within the town, solely up to the reader's imagination. By Leacock permitting the narrator to address the reader's apparent inside knowledge of Mariposa, the portrayed morality of its residents can be questioned, as 'there's a certain- well, you know how sensitive opinion is in a place like Mariposa.' (p.21) This lends itself to the concept of silence and the inability to address the underlying troubles rooted within the town throughout the text. Blake does suggest that 'not being talked about is not harmless, even if absence often stems from an author's benign intention to "write what you know."' However, Leacock's storyteller chooses to withhold the truth from readers and therefore further contributes to the motif of disregard for a balanced narrative, ultimately corrupting the apparent wonderfulness of Mariposa and its people.[9]

The silence that engulfs Leacock's narrative further enforces neglection of the Indigenous voice throughout *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*. The illusion of idyllic twentieth-century Canadian existence in Mariposa fails to acknowledge the presence of the Indigenous community. This oversight on Leacock's part questions social morality in the novel and the flaws of its widely celebrated success for being an insightful literary representation of twentieth-century Canadian people. Blake questions how a 'quintessential work of Canadian literature' can be praised as such,[10] when it dismisses the narrative of Indigenous heritage. Like the Indian's Island in 'The Marine Excursions of the Knights of Pythias'(p.32), which is not visible in the 'morning mist'(p.32) on the lake, Blake acknowledges the existence of Indigenous people as 'somewhere on the periphery, but only as an absence, as a non-existent collective entity of yore, at best a hazy abstraction.'[11] Something which is rarely referred to in the novel. As a result, Indigenous people and tradition become isolated and mimicked. 'Ho, for Indian's Island!'(p.36) alludes to cultural insensitivity and disrespect towards original settlers of the Canadian landscape, seen purely as a source of entertainment for a community that are,rather ironically, supposedly celebrating their country's wealth of culture and identity. The insensitive and patronising description of Indigenous land further reveals Leacock's shocking inability to represent all aspects of Canadian individualism effectively and dutifully. His characters delight over how 'wonderful [it was] the French had found their way through such a pathless wilderness' (p.38), as the island 'covered with trees and tangled vines'(p.39) is inferred to be a treacherously wild and hostile environment. The suggestion of uninhabitability subtly

[9] Blake, 'Appropriation, Absence and the Canadian Studies', (p.355).

[10] Blake, 'Appropriation, Absence and the Canadian Studies', (p.354).

[11] Blake, 'Appropriation, Absence and the Canadian Studies', (p.355).

implies that native Indigenous people must be seen as having animalistic and inhuman qualities in order to live in such a place. Similarly, this parallel of worlds bridged by the sinking Mariposa Belle, constructs a metaphor that presents how broken the town's community truly is. The 'cracks between the timbers…fill[ed] up with cotton waste… [that] must be properly corked'(p.41) symbolises the strain felt as a consequence of Mariposa's barbaric preconceptions and outdated beliefs that burden the harmony of the Canadian landscape. Ignorance ultimately hinders social innovation and cultural growth in the town. The irony of the boat 'suddenly and saucily'(p.41) rising from the 'mud bottom and float[ing]'(p.41), is that with the removal of social discrimination, true Canadian heritage can resurface and assert defiance against cultural silencing. Inhumane suppression of identity is further strengthened by 'side-references and throwaway lines' that reflect Leacock's 'mindset or […] the limitations of an age[s]' acceptance of linear growth of two cultural identities. Blake suggests that biased presumptions towards the cultural extinction of Indigenous representation from the author is the cause of the silenced native voice.[12] Shockingly, the passing reference to an 'Indian skull they had dug out of the railway embankment'(p.45), disregards the monstrous act of desecrating sacred burial grounds and, as Blake suggests, symbolises the mortality of Indigenous representation throughout the novel. The limited reference to Indigenous life stems mainly from artifact, bone0 and the past, therefore enforcing the motif of cultural voicelessness throughout the novel.

To conclude, *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* is an insightful portrayal of authorial focus and satire, centred around Canadian life. Despite the praise and respect the novel has received for its classical portrayal of small-town Canadian life, the light-hearted and playful tone of the text is tainted by the untold narrative of underrepresented culture, clear ignorance towards reality, and the shocking disrespect for Indigenous heritage. Although Leacock manages to capture the collectiveness of Canadian culture through the individualism of each character, his exclusion of diversity creates an irony in itself, caused predominantly by the lack of inclusion towards the definition of true Canadian identity in the novel.

[12] Blake, 'Appropriation, Absence and the Canadian Studies', (p.356).

REFERENCES

Blake, Jason, ‘) Appropriation, Absence and the Canadian Studies Classroom’, *American Review of Canadian Studies*, vol.49, no.2 (2019), pp. 348-359

Gonçalves, Davi, ‘Time, Literature, and Translation: a shared cosmopolitanism’, *Ci & Tróp. Recife*, vol.42, no.2(2018), pp. 13-28

Leacock, Stephen, *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (Middlesex: The Echo Library, 2006)

Macmillan, Margret, ‘A Nation in a Town’, *Maclean’s; Toronto*, vol. 122, no. 10/11 (2009), pp. 40-41

Milne, Nicholas, ‘Mariposa Moves On: Leacock's Darkening "Sequel" to Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town’, *Canadian Literature; Vancouver*, Is. 222 (2014), pp. 70-83

Trovato, Frank, Lauran Aylsworth, ‘Demography of Indigenous Peoples in Canada’, *The Canadian Encyclopedia* <Demography of Indigenous Peoples in Canada | The Canadian Encyclopedia>[accessed on 1st November 2021]

Zichy, Francis, ‘The Narrator, the Reader, and Mariposa: The Cost of Preserving the Status Quo in Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town’, *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'études canadiennes*, vol.22, no.1 (1987), pp. 51-66

DISCOVERY PASSAGES – GIVING A VOICE TO THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF ALERT BAY

Garry Thomas Morse uses poetry to explore how the Potlach ban stripped the Kwakwaka'wakw community of their cultural heritage.

Amy Barlow
amy.barlow2020@my.ntu.ac.uk
English Ba (Hons) – Nottingham Trent University

Abstract

This article explores how poet Garry Thomas Morse discusses the maltreatment of the Kwakwaka'wakw people of Alert Bay in his 2011 collection *Discovery Passages.* Alert Bay is a small village on Cormorant Island on northeast Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada; and has a history rooted deep in Indigenous heritage and practices. This article aims to unpack how Morse adopts the voices and tales of key figures throughout the periods of extreme repression, and details how their spirit was inspiringly strong throughout times of hardship and suffering.

Years before the Europeans initiated contact with Alert Bay in the late eighteenth century,[1] the Kwakwaka'wakwpeople traditionally inhabiting the area were comprised of twenty-eight sub-communities.[2] These communities lived in harmony, all speaking dialects of Kwak'wala, but practicing their own unique cultures. Over time, the European settlers began to take control and restrict the Indigenous landscape, applying the name of one band, the Kwakiutl, to the whole group, disregarding their individuality. Approximately 1,200-1,500 people live within the village and have suffered the effects ever since.

Canadian Literature has been an inclusive and informative means of highlighting the

[1] Alert Bay, < http://www.alertbay.ca/about-alert-bay> .

[2] The Canadian Encyclopaedia, Kwakwaka'wakw (Kwakiutl), <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/kwakiutl>.

struggles that Indigenous people have met since restrictions were placed upon their culture. In particular, poetry has served as a vessel of voice and change for the repressed communities, with many collections spotlighting significant figures who are finally emerging after decades of appropriation.

Garry Thomas Morse, an award-winning Canadian poet and novelist of Kwakwaka'wakw descent, is a key front runner in the Canadian poetry scene. In his 2011 poetry collection, *Discovery Passages,*[3] Morse strives to tell the harrowing stories of his ancestors' struggle for liberation through a symphony of repressed voices. The *BNA Act* of 1867 marked the end of the nation-to-nation relationship and set the stage for the *Indian Act*[4] of 1876, which in turn, ushered in the era of colonisation and enforced cultural assimilation.

A focal point of the collection is the Potlatch Ban, one of the many by-laws introduced under the *Indian Act* of 1876. Other by-laws including the Native Language Ban and Fine Moneys, had a devastating effect on the wider Indigenous community in Canada. Morse chooses to focus mainly on how the barring of the cultural Potlatch ceremony devastated the Ancestral people from Alert Bay and Quadra Island.

In his poem, 'No Comment', which is split into multiple parts, Morse speaks through the commanding and threatening voice of Wm. M. Halliday, the Indian Agent for the Kwakwlth Agency from 1906 until 1932.[5] Serving the North Island and Mainland Inlets, Halliday oversaw the implementation of the Potlatch Ban in the centre of its originating territory. Halliday felt that this tradition was a 'particularly wasteful and destructive custom, and created ill-feeling, jealousy, and in some cases great poverty'. In 'No Comment', Morse depicts Halliday's negative views and influential force over the community in the stanza:

'band, habit, giving, potlatch, each birth, marriage or death
warn you
the habit stopped
must be enforced those who break
punished'[6]

The powerful end line to the stanza, 'punished', summarises the main aim of the Indian Act: to identify any rule breakers who were trying to retain their freedom and either fine or incarcerate them. The asyndetic list

[3] Garry Thomas Morse, *Discovery Passages,* (Columbia: Talonbooks, 2011).

[4] Indigenous Corporate Training Inc, Potlatch Ban: Abolishment of First Nations Ceremonies, <https://www.ictinc.ca/the-potlatch-ban-abolishment-of-first-nations-ceremonies>.

[5] North Island Gazette, Northern Vancouver Island ~ The Undiscovered Coast: Indian Agent William May Halliday, (August 27th 2014).

[6] Garry Thomas Morse, *Discovery Passages,* 'No Comment', p31.

divulges the fundamental occurrences in life: 'birth', 'marriage', 'death', and includes 'potlatch' amongst the major events, illustrating its importance once more. This theme of celebration is harshly juxtaposed by the inclusion of words from the semantic field of danger, such as 'warn', 'enforced' and 'break', which conveys the opposition between the freedom of birth and the shackles of oppression.

In addition to this the Potlatch is likened to a 'habit' twice in this extract, insinuating that it is something annoying and detrimental in the long run, something that should be stopped over time in order to achieve personal growth. Punishments imposed upon the Indigenous people included the confiscation and sale of Indigenous artefacts to museums across Canada by Indian agents.

Short, declarative statements are featured throughout the poem, disrupting any rhythm that could have been included, and adding a harshness to the form. This mirrors the anger directed both towards and from the community of Alert Bay, putting their fear and torment into a jagged piece of poetry that refuses to use elegant language and polite address.

Another stanza of 'No Comment', featured below, broadcasts the voice of an additional influential figure in the mistreatment of the Kwakwaka'wakw people: Sergeant Donald Angermann, who worked for the government's RCMP investigative unit. Morse depicts how the Indian Agents were struggling to 'cleanse' the area from Indigenous tradition due to their underground rebellions:

'"sentenced two months
potlatching going on as bad as ever without foundation
pig sty reserves
Alert Bay Reserve the cleanest
the cleanest"
Sergt. D. Angermann
Jan. 28, 1921'[7]

The juxtaposition between 'pig sty' and 'cleanest' shows how the Indigenous people outside of Alert Bay (living in the reserves that had not had such strict enforcement) were deemed to be dirty and animalistic, living under conditions and legislations that did not match those of the regimented settlers. Furthermore, it is suggested that the Canadian government sought to remove all traces of the Kwakwaka'wakw's heritage and of their legacy, with Morse incorporating the repetition of the phrase 'the cleanest' to show how the Kwakwaka'wakw's heritage was also regarded as unclean and to illustrate the ideology of a spotless country. Under Section 91(24) of the

[7] Garry Thomas Morse, *Discovery Passages,* 'No Comment', p41.

Indian Act, the Parliament of Canada was provided with exclusive legislative authority over 'Indians, and Lands reserved for the Indians'. By grouping every Indigenous individual under the umbrella term 'Indian', the government sought to deprive them of their cultural identity and de-humanise them, regarding them to be of lesser value and status. This was an attempt to reduce a plethora of years of creative experience, tradition, and wisdom, to a singular word, seemingly overnight.

However, the spirit and determination of the Kwakwaka'wakw people refuses to be silenced and controlled by the settlers and political hierarchy, as they celebrated 'as bad as ever without foundation'. This decision was a perilous one, with the by-law stating that 'every Indian or other person who engages in or assists in celebrating the Indian festival known as the "Potlatch" is guilty of a misdemeanour, and shall be liable to imprisonment [...] and any other Indian or other person who encourages… an Indian or Indians to get up such a festival, or to celebrate the same… is guilty of a like offense…'.

Such an instance is covered by Morse in 'No Comment', as told in the stanza below,

'"big potlatch reported at Christmas
investigated by police
the court any way biased"
Wm. M. Halliday, *Indian Agent*
Dec. 21, 1921'[8]

Resistance to losing the freedom to continue with traditions was severely underestimated, and even with the threat of arrest looming closer every day, the people of Alert Bay remained determined. As reported in the stanza above, a famous underground Potlatch took place at Christmas in Alert Bay in 1921. Official reports claimed that 'Namgis Chief Dan Cranmer held a six-day Potlatch to celebrate a wedding. The Potlatch was held on Village Island in an effort to keep the activities out from under the nose of the Indian Agents and missionaries.' Unfortunately, the celebration was detected, and 45 people were arrested and charged under the Potlatch Law. Moreover, almost 750 items (from that particular Potlatch) were confiscated and later transported to Alert Bay and displayed; admission was charged, and the Canadian government profited off the theft of the ancestral artefacts. Most of these artefacts were later sent east, the majority of which were sent to the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, now the Canadian Museum of History in Ottawa. This specific incident can easily be viewed as the poster child for

[8] Garry Thomas Morse, *Discovery Passages,* 'No Comment', p42.

Canadian colonial behaviour in the early 20th century.

Morse spotlights Halliday's direct and emotionally devoid way of referring to the maltreatment of the Indigenous community, conveying him to be a callous figure, lacking empathy and humanity. Morse also refers to the inequality experienced in Court, stating that it is 'any way biased', suggesting that even if the people of Alert Bay strove to fight for justice, they would be met by a prejudiced system that would only deepen their struggles.

Although it was once outlawed by the Indian Act, the Potlatch remains an integral part of modern community life, being celebrated annually and utilising the Indigenous artefacts that were once locked away as items of taboo. Canadian Literature, with the help of poets like Morse, continues to expand its voice of the silenced, educating and offering different outlooks of the Indigenous communities that have suffered for centuries and are only just achieving retribution against their repressors.

REFERENCES

Alert Bay, < http://www.alertbay.ca/about-alert-bay > [Accessed on 20th November 2021]

Indigenous Corporate Training Inc, Potlatch Ban: Abolishment of First Nations Ceremonies, <https://www.ictinc.ca/the-potlatch-ban-abolishment-of-first-nations-ceremonies> [Accessed on November 22nd 2021]

Morse, Garry Thomas, *Discovery Passages,* (Columbia: Talonbooks, 2011)

North Island Gazette, Northern Vancouver Island ~ The Undiscovered Coast: Indian Agent William May Halliday, (August 27th 2014)

The Canadian Encyclopaedia, Kwakwaka'wakw (Kwakiutl), <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/kwakiutl> [Accessed on November 20th 2021]

COMICS IN CANADA

Katie Halls
N0909751@my.ntu.ac.uk
Nottingham Trent University, Creative Writing BA

Abstract

This journal article adds to the main discussion of the journal, which is to highlight the different ways culture is represented in Canadian Literature, but mainly to answer the questions: What is Canadian Literature, and what does Canadian Literature entail?

This journal article specifically will explore the development and the values of comic books and graphic novels in Canada. It will draw upon the vast history of comics in Canadian Literature, specifically looking at when and how graphic novels started gaining popularity. It will also zoom in on the drawbacks and negatives that comics have faced in literature, such as the law that was introduced in 1948 which banned all comic books which depicted crime and violence.[1]

In the world of literature, comics have become more prevalent and are becoming more popular in recent years. Well-known Canadian authors like Margaret Atwood have included the use of graphic novels in their body of work, which is a testament to the advancement of comic books in Canadian Literature.

This article will draw upon scholarly articles such as, 'Comics and Canadian Literature' by Brenna Clarke Gray, as well as articles like, 'Editorial Cartooning' by The Herb Block Foundation, and 'The Story Behind Canada's first ever Comic Book' by Justin Chandler.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, comic books began to gain popularity through being included in newspapers. Comics in Canada became noticeably more popular between the years of 1940 and 1947. This was influenced by

[1] Elton Hobson, 'Did you know comic books depicting crime are illegal in Canada?', *Global News*, < https://globalnews.ca/news/2685619/did-you-know-comic-books-depicting-crime-are-illegal-in-canada >, [accessed 10 November 2021], subsequent references in parenthesis.

wartime laws that prevented the import of American comics which allowed Canadian comics to surge, seeing the creation of heroes such as Johnny Canuck (Canuck is a fictional lumberjack and a national personification of Canada. He first appeared in early political cartoons in 1869 where he was portrayed as a younger cousin of the United States' Uncle Sam and Britain's John Bull). [2] After this period, however, the return of the American comics caused Canadian comics to plummet out of business.[3]

With the surge of likeability of comics in the 1940s came unwanted attention. Many people became concerned with the depiction of crime and horror in Canadian graphic novels. This led to a law being introduced in 1948 when, according to Global News, "two boys, playing the role of highway bandits, shot and killed a man in northern British Columbia seemingly at random. When it was found that the two were voracious readers of crime comics, a push began to legislate against the comic book industry"(Hobson, 2016).

This caused the implication of the law stating that comic books depicting crime and violence were to be banned from Canada. The law specifically states, "Section 163, 1b of the Criminal Code of Canada makes it a crime to possess, print, publish, or sell a crime comic if you are possessing that comic for the purposes of sale". Although today the Canadian police would most likely laugh in the face of someone reporting the crime of selling comics, when the law was introduced, the publication of Canadian comics almost came to a complete standstill, which halted the development of graphic novels and comic books in Canadian Literature.

One of the more recent drawbacks to the development of comics in Canada is the lack of large publishing houses, specifically for comics and graphic novels. This meant that many comic authors and illustrators went on to work with the US. Brenna Clarke Gray includes specific examples of Canadian comic book writers

[2] Margery Fee and Janice McAlpine, *Guide To Canadian English Usage,* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 93.

[3]Breanna Clarke Gray, 'Comics and Canadian Literature', *CanLit Guides*, https://canlitguides.ca/brenna-clarke-gray/comics-and-canadian-literature/ [accessed 15 November 2021], subsequent references in parenthesis.

who moved on to the US. Gray states that "one example is John Byrne who […] went on to become one of the most significant creators at Marvel Comics"(Clarke, 2018) after leaving an art and design college in Canada without graduating. Gray also gives the example of "Bryan Lee O'Malley, who lives in Los Angeles and published his popular Scott Pilgrim series through Oni in Portland."(Clarke, 2018) This factor heavily drew back the development of Comics in Canada since the fact that they are Canadian gets lost in the popularity of the US based graphic novels. Since there is less of a chance of fame and worldwide recognition by publishing comic books and graphic novels in Canada, writers are leaving to the US for better chances of getting published.

More recently, in the late 1960s, comics began to resurface slowly through self-publishing authors. Then, comic books in Canada began to gain importance through well-known Canadian authors, such as Margaret Atwood, beginning to publish comic books. Margaret Atwood including comic books into her body of work, with her being arguably the most significant name in contemporary Canadian Literature, is a sure way to influence the importance and the views people have on comic books in Canada. This is due to Atwood having a large audience of readers that, from being fans of her novels, would be inclined to read her comic books, which may then influence more people to explore comics from other authors.

While comics may not be as prevalent in Canada compared to the US, and they certainly aren't a prominent genre in Canadian Literature, they still have traditions and hold values to Canadian Literature. An example of this is the editorial cartooning tradition. An editorial cartoon, according to The Herb Block Foundation, is also known as a political cartoon. It is an "illustration containing a commentary that usually relates to current events or personalities."[4] Editorial Cartooning, in both English and French Canada, is the longest-running type of comic. Editorial comics hold a political tradition, for example 'Hark! A Vagrant'

[4] Author Unknown, 'Editorial Cartooning', *The Herb Block Foundation*, <https://www.herbblockfoundation.org/editorial-cartooning>, [accessed 13 November 2021].

by Kate Beaton, which includes pop culture, feminist themes and Canadian History.

According to TVOntario (TVO), the first ever comic book published in Canada included The Iron Man, and it was called 'Better Comics #1'. Released in March 1941, 'Better comics #1' "marked the beginning of a unique but little-known period of prosperity for home-grown comics publishing in Canada".[5]

Comic books being released in this time ensured community discussion. Community discussion is a vital aspect of the culture of comics, as it meant that Canadian children could connect with one another through the letter columns, almost becoming the first social network for the children. Justin Chandler, from the TVO article, 'The Story Behind Canada's first Comic Book', states, "They encouraged kids to form clubs, to raise funds for the war effort, to save scrap, to have paper drives, to contact each other and stay in touch"(Chandler, 2021). This highlights one of the main reasons why Literature is important to Canadian people. Comic books allowed children, who had no other way of contacting each other, to converse and have a chance to connect with one another through the use of literature. This is juxtaposed with the reason for the comic book ban being enforced due to the two boys who shot and killed someone. Comic books and graphic novels clearly have different aspects of interaction.

Canadian culture is represented in a multitude of ways through the use of comic books and graphic novels. An example of this is through Bengough's body of work. John Wilson Bengough was one of Canada's earliest comic book writers, as well as being an editor and a politician. He is most known for creating political cartoons. In 1873, Bengough founded 'Grip', which is a comedy magazine. It included a range of mostly political cartoons, some of which were his own. According to historian John Bell, Bengough was "probably the most

[5] Justin Chandler, 'The story behind Canada's first-ever comic book', *TVO*, < https://www.tvo.org/article/the-story-behind-canadas-first-ever-comic-book?amp>, [accessed 13 November 2021], subsequent references in parenthesis.

significant pre-20th-century Canadian Cartoonist."[6] Through his work, Bengough uses humour to indicate the stress of Canada's national identity since there was a rise of two political powers. He often portrays Canada as a young woman under the wing of Cousin Johnny, who represents the US, and she is typically guided by Mother Britannia, who represents England.

Canadian literature is rich with culture. Culture that has spread to the rest of the world. Canadian literature, specifically comic books, has introduced the world to some of the most well-known superheroes in the comic book industry. In an article released in 2017 by the University of Alberta, they state, "When it comes to Canadian content in comics, few artists can claim the influence John Byrne has had. […] Byrne became best known for his distinctive work on 'The Uncanny X-men', during which he championed the inclusion of the now-iconic Canadian character Wolverine."[7] Canadian comics contributing such well known characters to the world of comic books clearly depicts the influence that Canadian Literature has on the world of literature as a whole.

In consideration of this, comic books and graphic novels are a significant aspect of literature. It is a creative way to tell important and entertaining stories. Having comics be recognised as a crucial aspect of literature opens the doors for many more people. People who are less interested in reading large novels with a long word count, or people who are not a fan of poetry, for example. Comic books and graphic novels provide a way to tell stories that regular fiction, poetry, and script can't. With the blend of illustration and writing, it paints a clear picture for the reader and can make the story easier to follow. This style can be more beneficial for those who have a hard time concentrating on books or those who struggle to really immerse themselves into the story and have a clear view of what the world the author has created looks like.

---

[6] John Bell, *Invaders from the north : how Canada conquered the comic book universe*, (Toronto: Dundurn, 2006), p. 189.

[7] Author Unknown, 'A new Golden Age of Canadian comics?', *University of Alberta*, <https://medium.com/ualberta2017/a-new-golden-age-of-canadian-comics-44d942d5af11>, [accessed 15 November 2021].

The main point that has been introduced concerning the importance and values of Canadian Literature within this article is that comic books and graphic novels have, more recently, become a significant aspect of Canadian Literature. It provides a variety of culture, by including serious political and world views into their work. It also includes well-known faces, such as Margaret Atwood, which allows Atwood to display her talent through a different format compared to writing novels, which highlights her talent and range. Comic books need to be recognised by all as literature, and Canada are well on their way to give comics the recognition that they deserve.

REFERENCES

Author Unknown, 'A new Golden Age of Canadian comics?', *University of Alberta*, <https://medium.com/ualberta2017/a-new-golden-age-of-canadian-comics-44d942d5af11>, [accessed 15 November 2021]

Author Unknown, 'Editorial Cartooning', *The Herb Block Foundation*, <https://www.herbblockfoundation.org/editorial-cartooning>, [accessed 13 November 2021]

Bell, John, *Invaders from the north : how Canada conquered the comic book universe*, (Toronto: Dundurn, 2006), p. 189

Chandler, Justin, 'The Story behind Canada's first ever Comic Book.' <https://www.tvo.org/article/the-story-behind-canadas-first-ever-comic-book?amp>, [Accessed 13 November]

Clarke Gray, Brenna, 'Comics and Canadian Literature', <https://canlitguides.ca/brenna-clarke-gray/comics-and-canadian-literature/>, [Accessed 15 November]

Fee, Margery, and Janice McAlpine, *Guide To Canadian English Usage*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 93

Hobson, Elton, 'Did you know comic books depicting crime are illegal in Canada?', Global News, < https://globalnews.ca/news/2685619/did-you-know-comic-books-depicting-crime-are-illegal-in-canada >, [accessed 10 November 2021]

TULUGAQ – MYTHOLOGY, NATURE AND INDIGENOUS BELIEF IN ZACHARIAH WELLS' UNSETTLED

Exploring how culture and nature is presented in relation with Indigenous belief, and wider mythologies, in Zacariah Wells' *Unsettled.*

Katherine McGuigan
n0969003@my.ntu.ac.uk
BA Creative Writing, Nottingham Trent University

Abstract

This article looks at the ways in which the Indigenous peoples of Canada, predominantly Inuit, and their relationship with nature are presented in Zacariah Wells' collection of poetry, *Unsettled.* Addressing the relationship between colonists and native peoples, as well as exploring cultural elements of mythology and belief, this article aims to analyse the ways in which Wells depicts the presentation, perception and destruction of Inuit tradition and culture.

The raven forms an integral part of Indigenous belief and tradition. Zacariah Wells' collection of poems, *Unsettled*, uses the image of the raven consistently throughout, exemplifying the significance of the raven within the mythology of Inuit culture. Inuits are Indigenous peoples of, what is now known as, Canada. They traditionally have an extensive system of beliefs, with ravens being heralded as the ultimate creator, believed to have brought light to the world. The prominence of ravens within Wells' collection presents a way in which First Nations culture could be said to be ruled by nature, as well as how the traditions and culture of First Nations people are affected by the influence of colonisation.

The power of nature, and the First Nations integral part of the Canadian arctic culture, is presented in *Unsettled* through the medium of the Raven figure, the mythology of which depicts the power of natural cycles, and the Inuits' dependence on nature in order to maintain their culture. This focus on nature is exemplified by frequent reference to ravens, an animal which encompasses much of First

Nations culture through creation mythology.[1] Although raven mythology is not as prevalent in the eastern arctic areas of Canada as it is in the north-western Pacific areas, it is still a central part of the culture that Wells is presenting, as explored in Ousten and Laugrand's article 'The bringer of light: the raven in Inuit tradition', where it is termed the raven complex.[2] The theme of nature is further evident in the focus on seasonality and darkness throughout *Unsettled*. The figure of the raven is portrayed as a beacon of hope in the seemingly constant darkness brought by the arctic seasons, as depicted in the poem 'Qausuittuq', where 'the would be darkest [day], is no darker than yesterday'.[3] It is said that in the beginning, the world was dark until the raven brought light. The raven is said to have been the ultimate creator, with the Inuit word for raven being Tulugaq, meaning creator of light. Furthermore, 'A beacon black in the salmon sky' also signifies ravens as being an integral part of the survival of Inuit culture (p. 92), as the raven is said to initiate the beginning of the first salmon run of the year. The alliterative aspect of this line, with the use of repetitive plosive and sibilant sounds adds impact to this notion. This could also be seen as representing an invasion by foreign peoples, as, while the 's' sound exists in Inuit phonology, the 'b' sound does not. This perhaps displays the contrast between the conflicting cultures, showing how the settlers are imprinting upon the traditions of the Indigenous people. Additionally, this line demonstrates how Indigenous Canadian cultures rely on nature to survive, by following patterns of the environment and, therefore, forming a part of the ecosystem, and environment itself.

The symbiotic relationship between First Nations cultures and nature juxtaposes with the unbalanced relationship that Wells presents with the settlers. The poem 'White Trash' is one example of this, presenting the way in which white culture disturbs the natural environment. The actions of white settlers conflicts with nature, and settlers are showen to impose upon Inuits in order to repair the habitat that is being destroyed by the industrialisation and commercialisation of the South. This could be perceived through the reference to 'Inuit cons' (p. 50), who must clean up the damage caused by commercialisation, and the subsequent destruction of the environment.

Unsettled is shaped by the way in which First Nations culture is presented as being so deeply

[1] Franz Boas,"Mythology and Folk-Tales of the North American Indians". *The Journal of American Folklore,* (October-December 1914).
[2] Frederic Laugrand and Jarich Oosten, 'The bringer of light: the raven in Inuit tradition', *Polar Record,* vol. 42 (July 2006).

[3] Zacariah Wells, *Unsettled,* Insomniac Press (Toronto, Canada: 2006), p.97, subsequent references in parenthesis.

entwined with nature, the seasons and the coastal habitat of the north-western Atlantic area. The implication of this could be interpreted as being that First Nations cultures are, in fact, a part of the local ecosystem, disturbed by the colonisers, who saw the land as 'tabula rasa' (p.71), meaning clean slate. The raven, which is said to have been the sole creator of wild animals, could be indicative of the significance of animals in native culture. This is presented through Wells' constant reference to animals such as 'beluga' (p. 86), 'caribou' (p. 65) and 'bull-seal' (p. 36), all of which are integral parts of First Nations culture, providing a means for survival in the harsh Arctic environment.[4] Humans are also represented through animals, such as in 'Jake', who is described as a 'bull-seal of a man' (p. 36). The environment itself is also constantly related to nature and survival, where 'The bay's thousand whitecaps aren't waves, they're beluga' (p. 86). This could be seen as Wells signifying the relationship of Indigenous people with the environment, and how they form a natural part of the ecosystem, with age-old systems in place which are now part of the natural cycles. This contrasts with the way in which the settlers have forced their way into the environment, as depicted in the poem 'Terra Iam Cognita', where colonisers are said to have 'came upon this land [...] claimed it as Nunavut' (p. 71). The ironic use of the term 'nunavut', meaning Our Land in Inuktitut, demonstrates the callous nature of the theft of Inuit land. Although this land belonged to the Indigenous peoples, it was claimed, as though uninhabited, by 'brave explorers [...] the Bylots and the Baffins and the Frobishers' (p. 71). Here, Wells makes direct reference to the explorers Robert Bylot, William Baffin and Sir Martin Frobisher, who made expeditions to 'discover' the New World. All of these men have areas of Nunavut named after them: Bylot Island, Baffin Island, Baffin Bay and Frobisher Bay. Wells' distaste towards these men and their activities can be further seen in the poem 'Frobisher's Bay', which refers to 'Sir Martin's respectable pirates' (p. 46). This oxymoronic reference portrays the contrasting ways in which explorers and colonists perceived their actions, in comparison with the way in which it was received by the native peoples. Explorers believed themselves to be superior, educated and thus 'respectable', whereas their actions would have been viewed as those of 'pirates', who were invading land that did not belong to them and stealing it. This further displays the strained relationship between settlers and natives, and how the theft of native land relates to the destruction of Indigenous culture through the disruption of the natural patterns that were in place. The 'ravens wheeling over the boats' (p. 71) in 'Terra Iam Cognita' could be interpreted as

[4] Frederic Laugrand and Jarich Oosten, *Hunters, Predators and Prey: Inuit Perceptions of Animals* (January 2014)

depicting the distress, felt by the Indigenous peoples, of the impending destruction of their land. Wells immediately follows this with 'black inkblots on a white sky' (p. 71), which perhaps signifies the colonist's perception of the natives. The image of the raven could be seen as a representation of Inuit culture, which would have been seen as unsightly inkblots on the blank slate that they perceived the land to be.

Despite the raven's status as the creator, the Inuit relationship with the raven is a complex one. While revered, the trickster element of the raven, and its nature as a scavenging carrion bird, are depicted in *Unsettled* through the poems 'Critics Swarm the Gallery' and 'Scavengers'. These poems, respectively, describe the actions of the raven through the lines 'Ravens swing croaking low over carrion' (p. 95) and 'A bored raven picks white bones' (p. 61). These depictions of the raven as a thief and scavenger have resulted in Inuits both revering and dreading the presence of ravens. This duality has resulted in many representations of the crow as being two separate ravens, which each exhibit, separately, the raven as the creator and the raven as the mischief-maker. While the raven is said to have brought light to the world, it is also said to never do anything which is not for its own benefit. Additionally, the raven is said to revel in creating mischief in order to satiate his aforementioned boredom. These aspects of good and evil of the raven's personality mean that Wells' presentation of the raven is multifaceted, and can be perceived in a variety of ways, simultaneously representing the raven in both positive and negative ways. Although this may seem contradictory, this could be seen as a true representation of the Inuit's relationship with the raven, and the way in which they do not simply have either a positive or negative perception of the raven as a creator figure. This complexity is explored extensively in Bukowick's article 'Truth and Symbolism: Mythological Perspectives of the Wolf and Crow', which addresses the many ways in which the crow - which is seen as being interchangeable with ravens within mythology - is perceived as both a good and evil figure. For example, ravens are also said to be a traditional omen of death and destruction.

The motif of the raven throughout *Unsettled* could possibly be perceived as signifying an omen of the death of Inuit culture itself. The line, 'A creature of earth, no more of the sky' (p. 93), perhaps signifies the reduction of Indigenous cultures to simply that of myth and legend, removing their power as belief systems. Furthermore, the 'white fire' (p. 36) and 'setting white sun' (p. 37) referenced in 'Jake' could be an allusion to the legend of the crow being thrown into the flame and charred black. Jake embodies the spirit of the trickster, who is said to be able to take any form,

including humans.[5] This could possibly be further indicative of the destruction of First Nations culture, as Jake's spirit is destroyed when he visits the white-dominated South. This can be seen when he returns 'a shrunken shell...gaunt, hollow' (p. 37), having become dependent on drugs. Addiction is a prominent issue amongst the First Nations, where drug dependence rates are far higher than among the population of Canadians.[6] The traditional representation of the raven as an insatiable glutton can be seen through his 'monstrous hunger for pleasure and love...for booze...for sex…' (p. 36).[7] The character of Jake's sick humour and trickster tendencies could be seen as further evidence that Jake is a representation of the raven. This could be interpreted as further demonstrating the strains of the relationship between natives and settlers, seeing how the colonists are still progressing with the destruction of Inuit culture. 'Ravens wheeling...black ink blots on white sky' (p. 71) could, alternatively, signify the ravens as observing the invasion, thus symbolising change and opportunity.[8] This idea of change could be perceived as presenting the evolution, forced or assimilative, of Indigenous cultures. As ravens are said to be intermediaries between the physical and spiritual world,[9] as well as being omens of death,[10] this could be seen as further evidence of the death of Inuit culture. Contrarily, this could simply further signify a period of change and adaptation in Indigenous cultures.

A loss of Indigenous culture, as represented through an inversion or disregard for Inuit tradition and cultural beliefs, is evident throughout several Wells' poems. The poem, named 'Sauniq' (p. 92), meaning namesake in Inuktitut, could be seen to represent a modern disregard for the historical Inuit culture amongst younger generations. This could perhaps be as a result of modern Canadians having attempted to forcefully assimilate Indigenous children from their cultures through the use of residential schools. These schools were put in place with the purpose of eradicating all traces of Indigenous culture and

[5] Franz Boas,"Mythology and Folk-Tales of the North American Indians". *The Journal of American Folklore*, (October-December 1914).
[6] Dinah Kanate, David Folk, Sharon Cirone, Janet Gordon, Mike Kirlew, Terri Veale, Natalie Bocking, Sara Rea, Len Kelly, 'Community-wide measures of wellness in a remote First Nations community experiencing opioid dependence', *Canadian Family Physician*, vol. 61, Issue 2 (February 2015).
[7] Boas, Franz, 'Mythology and Folk-Tales of the North American Indians', *The Journal of American Folklore*.
[8] Karen Elizabeth Bukowick, Truth and Symbolism: Mythological Perspectives of the Wolf and Crow (Boston, 2004) https://dlib.bc.edu/islandora/object/bc-ir:102331/datastream/PDF/view.
[9] Karen Elizabeth Bukowick, Truth and Symbolism: Mythological Perspectives of the Wolf and Crow.
[10] Karen Elizabeth Bukowick, *Truth and Symbolism: Mythological Perspectives of the Wolf and Crow*.

beliefs.[11] The line 'He only shares one of his names with the hunter' (p. 93), being the hunter's 'grandson' (p. 93), who kills the hunter's companion the raven, the ultimate creator in First Nations mythology, could be symbolic of the dying nature of First Nations cultures, exemplifying the younger generations losing touch with sacred beliefs, possibly as a result of the aforementioned residential schooling, or, alternatively, through other methods of forced assimilation and indoctrination into western culture. Furthermore, the line 'A dead trickster's a hex to a hunter' (p. 93) could perhaps further serve to exemplify a loss of touch with, and belief in, traditional legends. According to Inuit legend, a hunter caught the raven and threw it into a fire, turning it black. This could possibly be seen, simply, as an adaptation of this traditional legend, perhaps signifying a sense of frustration towards traditional Inuit culture, and a rejection of their intricate belief systems by younger generations due to settler attitudes towards Indigenous cultures.

This loss, or adaptation, of Inuit culture could also be perceived through reference to various other mythological influences made throughout the collection. The many references to Norse mythology, specifically 'Fenris … ragnarok...vidar' (p. 74), may be indicative of the Inuit population which spreads from Canada into Greenland, and how there are a number cultural similarities between the traditions of the two peoples, as seen through the observable parallels between the mythological belief systems of the Norse and Inuit people.[12] Furthermore, reference is made to 'Apollo' (p. 73), who burnt the raven that returned with news of Coronis' infidelity.[13] Wells also alludes to Norse mythology, through the poem 'Huginn and Muninn' (p. 89). This poem is named after a pair of ravens which feature in Norse mythology, who are said to be messengers for the god Odin. Furthermore, the reference to 'conjuring Norse ghosts' (p. 98) could be in reference to the Norse belief that ravens are lost or damned souls,[14] perhaps indicating an assimilated fear of ravens, and, by proxy, Indigenous traditions. As well as directly referencing, or alluding to, other mythological belief systems, further direct reference is made to a specific Inuit legend depicting the trickster nature of the figure of the raven, where the raven leads travellers to a mountain and sets off an avalanche so he can return to peck out their eyes.[15] 'A raven led me to a cliff...In the

[11] Agnes Grant, *No End of Grief: Indian Residential Schools in Canada*, Pemmican Publications (Manitoba, Canada: 1996).
[12] Park, R. (2008). Contact between the Norse Vikings and the Dorset culture in Arctic Canada. *Antiquity*, *82*(315), 189-198.
[13] David Stuttard, *Greek Mythology: A Traveller's Guide from Mount Olympus to Troy* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2016), p.57
[14] Mark Schwan, 'Raven: The Northern Bird of Paradox', *Alaska Fish and Game* (January 1990)
[15] Cited as told by A. Qavviaktok in Frederic Laugrand and Jarich Oosten, 'The bringer of light: the raven in Inuit tradition', p191

spring the ravens...pecked out my eyes' (p. 89) could also be seen as an inversion of Inuit legend of the raven being the creator of light and thus allowing people to see. In 'Huginn and Muninn', where 'A boy has drowned. A raven wheels above him. A second squats on the shore' (p. 89). This exemplifies the trickster nature of the raven, who simply watches as the child drowns, as the water's surface turns black with his hair (p. 89). Additionally, this could perhaps be seen as an inversion of the tale of the raven as the creator, where, instead of being the creator of light, the raven is slowly turning everything back to black, perhaps as a form of trickster revenge for the perceived loss of faith in the mythological power of the raven.

Wells employs Inuit tradition, as well as various other mythological systems, in order to present the ways in which Indigenous Canadian culture relates to nature and the Arctic environment, and how Inuit culture and people coexist with, and participate in, the culture of the colonisers. Various subversions and adaptations of tradition exemplify how Inuit traditions remain, as well as evolve or degrade, as part of the modern formation of Canada.

References

Agnes Grant, *No End of Grief: Indian Residential Schools in Canada*, Pemmican Publications (Manitoba, Canada: 1996)

David Stuttard, *Greek Mythology: A Traveller's Guide from Mount Olympus to Troy* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2016)

Dinah Kanate, David Folk, Sharon Cirone, Janet Gordon, Mike Kirlew, Terri Veale, Natalie Bocking, Sara Rea, Len Kelly, 'Community-wide measures of wellness in a remote First Nations community experiencing opioid dependence', *Canadian Family Physician*, vol. 61, Issue 2 (February 2015)

Franz Boas, "Mythology and Folk-Tales of the North American Indians". *The Journal of American Folklore*, (October-December 1914)

Frederic Laugrand and Jarich Oosten, *Hunters, Predators and Prey: Inuit Perceptions of Animals* (January 2014)

Frederic Laugrand and Jarich Oosten, 'The bringer of light: the raven in Inuit tradition', *Polar Record*, vol. 42 (July 2006)

Jim Gritton, The Raven in Norse Mythology and Pacific Northwest Folklore (November 2017)

Karen Elizabeth Bukowick, Truth and Symbolism: Mythological Perspectives of the Wolf and Crow (Boston, 2004) <https://dlib.bc.edu/islandora/object/bc-ir:102331/datastream/PDF/view>

Mark Schwan, 'Raven: The Northern Bird of Paradox', *Alaska Fish and Game* (January 1990)

Robert Park, 'Contact between the Norse Vikings and the Dorset culture in Arctic Canada', *Antiquity*, vol. *82*, (2008) p.189-198

Zacariah Wells, *Unsettled,* Insomniac Press (Toronto, Canada: 2006)

CONFLICT AND CULTURE IN MARGARET ATWOOD'S *ALIAS GRACE*

Izzy M. Pleasance
N0925061@my.ntu.ac.uk
BA (Hons) Creative Writing, Nottingham Trent University

Abstract

Canadian Literature has existed long before the Canada we know was declared a self-governing nation. Over the course of its existence, it has captured the conflict of those contemporary to it, as well as now showing how Canadian citizens reflect on that past. As such, these texts are valuable when considering how the formation of Canadian culture is depicted, the novel *Alias Grace* authored Margaret Atwood is specifically valuable in considering how that past is now being portrayed to other countries. This article considers to what degree Atwood portrays the culture within *Alias Grace* to be the direct result of conflict. How much of the society she shows is reactionary and to what degree does she depict it developing independent of resistance?

Margaret Atwood is arguably the most well-known, current, Canadian author. She has published more than fifty books and novels in more than forty-five countries.[1] Her influence is worldwide, ensuring that her writing is many people's first or only encounter with Canadian Literature. The perspectives on Canada that she presents, therefore, may directly affect how Canada is understood by the rest of the world. Considering this, her novel *Alias Grace* becomes highly significant, and so does its depiction of mid-1800's Canada. This significance is only reinforced by the reflective nature of historical fiction. The way Atwood reflects on, considers and writes about the past of her country greatly effects how that past will be understood by her readers. Her writing shapes their understanding of how Canadian culture, and by extension Canadian Literature, was formed. It is therefore intriguing to consider how much of *Alias Grace* is centred in conflict. The book

[1] < http://margaretatwood.ca/biography/> [accessed 9 November 2021].

frequently mentions the Rebellions of 1837 that led to the unification of Upper and Lower Canada,[2] as well as depicting a society that is constantly adapting to the violence that threatens it, both from external sources and from members within itself. When this is reflected upon, it can seem that Margaret Atwood is presenting Canadian culture as being solely formed by violence and conflict. As such, the question becomes: does Atwood truly just depict Canada being a result of conflict, or is there any part of society she shows to be inherent?

To understand the full extent of how Atwood shows conflict impacting upon Canadian society, it is important to first consider what conflict is present within her novel. Primarily, there are two categories of conflict she depicts; these are interpersonal conflict and larger, countrywide fighting. Out of the two of these, it is perhaps easiest to see the effects of largescale fighting within Atwood's novel, as she very much implies that it was essential to Canada's formation. Most obviously this comes through in her references to the Rebellions of 1837, which have already been mentioned. It is perhaps simplistic to state that this is an example of conflict being shown to create Canadian society, but Atwood shows the effects of this conflict going beyond the unification of Canada. Characters in the novel are often shown to be treated differently based on their family's allegiances during the fighting. For instance, the reporter, Susanna Moodie, is shown to be disregarded because her family were 'Tories at the time of the Rebellion' (p. 148). As well as this, Atwood writes that her main character, Grace, might have been able to avoid arrest if her companion had 'thought to shout out that he was a revolutionary'(p.411). Through these examples and others like them within the novel, Atwood seems to be suggesting that some people are favoured for their allegiances during the Rebellions, whilst others are more likely to lose their freedom and voice. This implies both that there is a pressure to conform and that those favoured are more likely to end up in a position of power, both of which could be said to shape society.

Similarly, Atwood also provides other examples of largescale conflict influencing who has privilege and power. Atwood writes of Grace's time in Ireland that 'there was a house burnt down twenty miles away, of a Protestant gentleman that had taken the side of the Catholics, and another one found with his head bashed in' (p. 124). Atwood depicts stark

[2] Colin Read, *Rebellion of 1837 in Upper Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press (1985), p. 100.

conflict between Protestant and Catholic groups, but she does not write this conflict as being solely confined to Ireland. For example, Atwood writes Grace being threatened with unemployment if she is Catholic within Canada (p. 148). Unsurprisingly, the conflict in Ireland is depicted to have come with those who colonised Canada, as many of the people immigrating to Canada in the 1800's were Irish, [3] and is shown to influence what opportunities are available to different groups. Furthermore, the threat of unemployment suggests again that those who were favoured, in this case people who are not Catholic, were more likely to find themselves in positions of power. Again, there is both the pressure to conform to avoid violence and one group of people who are shown to have a greater influence over the forming society; both because of conflict.

As such, Margaret Atwood depicts this violence and fighting, both inside and outside of Canada, as being significant in shaping Canadian society, but it is not just this type of conflict that Atwood shows to be significant. She also emphasises how the resistance faced each day by her characters shapes their culture, both as they adapt or are again forced to conform. Perhaps the easiest demographic to demonstrate this concept within *Alias Grace* is that of colonial women. Women in the novel are frequently depicted as being forced to conform due to the threat of potential violence, even if the actions they take to conform actively cause harm to them. An example of this is the character of Mary Whitney. When she becomes pregnant outside of marriage, she fears future violence being done against her because of her transgression, mainly losing her job and being forced into sex-work (p. 201), and to avoid that violence she gets a risky abortion that leads to her death.

Mary Whitney is not the sole character who is written to have these fears. Margaret Atwood presents a society where there are very few options available for women to earn money and sex-work is almost always portrayed as the only alternative (p. 175). As such, her female characters are shown to fear the loss of their positions. This leads to a culture where women are forced to supress themselves, as seen in the quotes 'She…couldn't express her anger, of course, as she'd wanted to keep her position' (p.219) and 'very bold in her speech when we were alone. But towards her elders and betters her manner was respectful and demure' (p.173). Once again, Atwood shows how women within her book are expected to conform to certain expectations, along with the

[3] < https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/immigration/history-ethnic-cultural/Pages/irish.aspx> [accessed 1 December 2021]

potentially violent repercussions that result from non-conformity.

Atwood also shows more direct instances of the threat of violence and conflict shaping colonial women's society, specifically violence and conflict from men. That threat can be found both in the implications of a male character literally imagining one of the female characters as a slab of meat at the start of the novel (p.69), or the fact that female characters are written to be unable to travel alone. This is particularly true at the end of the story due to 'rough men about, discharged soldiers from the Civil War' (p. 518), as well as other instances of threatened violence from men. From the start to the end of the novel this threat of violence is continuously present. This is only reinforced by lines such as: 'The difference between a civilized man and a barbarous fiend – a madman, say – lies, perhaps, merely in a thin veneer of willed self-restraint' (p. 163).

Atwood makes the influence of this conflict on Canadian culture clear. For example, men can travel but women cannot due to the threat of violence from men. As such, men are shown to be able to escape their actions, whereas women are shown to have limited options to escape conflict. Atwood's character, Simon, is ultimately forced to flee Canada when his landlady threatens to make him an accessory to murder, but when Grace finds herself in a similar situation, she has no means to escape and so becomes implicated in the murder and imprisoned. Through this, Atwood shows a clear divide between men and women's culture. She writes that men 'do not have to think ahead or worry about the consequences of what they do' (p. 249), whilst the women in her novel are shown facing extreme repercussions for their actions because they cannot escape as a result of the fear of violence. As well as this, the freedom to travel is shown to create a more interconnected culture for men than women, as is clear through the letters which Simon is shown to receive from multiple acquaintances outside of Canada. In this way, it is made clear that conflict is shaping Canadian society, both by causing a divide within it and by inadvertently causing the groups on either side of that divide to have differing levels of communication, and to experience differing levels of severity for the consequences of their actions.

It is certainly easiest to analyse the effects of conflict on colonial women's culture in *Alias Grace*. Perhaps because of Margaret Atwood's own interest in women's rights, the novel focuses most heavily on the struggles faced by colonial women in mid-1800's Canada. However, this does not cover the effects of conflict on all women in Canada during that time. It would be remiss to not mention how Atwood depicts the effect of conflict on Indigenous people during the formation of Canada. This is a difficult topic to discuss, as Atwood almost entirely focuses on the culture

formed by those immigrating to Canada. The novel is completely written from the point of view of those colonisers, with few references to Canada's Indigenous people. When these references are made within the novel, it is always from an outside perspective, with the only two characters written to have any Indigenous ancestry being isolated and removed from that culture. The first of these characters is an unnamed woman who periodically is placed in asylums and the second is Mary Whitney (p. 34), who is written to have little knowledge of Indigenous culture even though her grandmother was an Indigenous woman (p. 173). It is hard to evaluate how Atwood depicts the impact of conflict within Indigenous culture when she references it so infrequently. Yet in this case it can be argued that the silence itself is significant. Indeed, there does appear to be a precedent for this kind of significant silence, such as in the poem written by Anna Marie Sewell.[4] Though perhaps not as deliberate as the theme of silence used by Sewell and less overt than the effects of conflict explored previously, this silence too could be interpreted to be a result of forced conformity. When Atwood writes on one of the infrequent occasions where she does mention Indigenous people that, 'They kept their faces still and you could not tell what they were thinking, but they went away when told to' (p. 34), there is a clear comparison to be made between how she depicts Indigenous people and the non-Indigenous women in her story. Atwood's female characters are forced to keep quiet out of fear, and there is a similarity between how she portrays this, and her depiction of Indigenous people having to visually supress their emotions and obey orders. It suggests that the arrival of a new culture has forced them into silence out of fear of conflict and violence.

When all of this is considered, it becomes clear that Atwood does depict conflict as affecting the formation of Canadian society. However, there are also instances within the novel where she shows certain aspects of that culture to exist independent of resistance and violence. Atwood seems to want to present particular aspects of humanity as inherent. Without active conflict, she depicts people as being fundamentally kind and helpful to one another. There is a sense of cooperation and diversity within the way she describes the general Canadian population, saying, for instance, that 'The people appeared to be very mixed as to the kinds of them' and all existing together (p. 143). Another example of this cooperation can be found in Atwood's description of Grace's time sailing to Canada.

[4] < https://prairiepomes.com/2015/01/19/the-poem-of-silence-an-open-letter-to-margaret-atwood-and-all-the-lions-of-canadian-culture/comment-page-1/> [accessed 1 December 2021].

She writes: 'the passengers were Catholic and Protestant mixed, with some English and Scots come over from Liverpool thrown into the bargain; and if in a state of health, they would have scrabbled and fought, as there is no love lost. But there is nothing like a strong bout of seasickness to remove the desire for a scrap; and those who would have cheerfully cut the other's throats on land, were often seen holding each other's heads over the scuppers like the tenderest of mothers… as necessity does make strange bedfellows' (p. 135). This sense of cooperation and tolerance seems to contradict the conflict that she so frequently depicts between different groups, and yet both are consistent throughout the novel. When conflict is removed, Canadian culture is shown to also be formed by cooperation, if perhaps not understanding.

At other times, inherent culture can be seen in the moments of calm between significant events, at least regarding colonial culture. The most consistent of these are the quilts that Grace sews. Each of the patterns represents a significant event or story (p. 112). They are a form of preserving culture and are significant for their existence in peace. As well as the quilts, practices in relation to death are shown to be important to the culture that Atwood depicts within her novel. There is shown to be significance in what people are buried with and in certain actions (p. 229), such as opening windows after a person dies (p. 139). All these practices have meaning and significance, irrespective of what conflict takes place around them.

And so, Atwood does not solely depict Canadian culture as being formed by conflict. There are aspects of her society that she clearly wants to depict as inherent, whether that is the way that people interact with one another, or the cultural practices found within colonial culture. However, it is also undeniable that Atwood depicts conflict as being central to the development of her society. There is little written in the novel about the impact of that conflict on Indigenous culture, but Atwood certainly suggests that, at the least, conflict has forced Indigenous people to interact in a much more guarded way around others. Furthermore, she heavily implies that conflict has caused divides within Canadian society, particularly between colonial men's society and colonial women's society, as well as leading to some people being silenced and placed at a disadvantage, whilst others gain a greater degree of influence. Finally, it is undeniable that conflict is shown to be crucial to the formation of Canada itself.

REFERENCES

Atwood, Margaret. *Alias Grace* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 1996)

Read, Colin. *Rebellion of 1837 in Upper Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press (1985), p. 100

< http://margaretatwood.ca/biography/> [accessed 9 November 2021]

< https://prairiepomes.com/2015/01/19/the-poem-of-silence-an-open-letter-to-margaret-atwood-and-all-the-lions-of-canadian-culture/comment-page-1/> [accessed 1 December 2021]

<https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/terminology/#:~:text=In%20Canada%2C%20the%20term%20%E2%80%9CAboriginal,too%2C%20are%20%E2%80%9Cnative.%E2%80%9D> [accessed 19 November 2021]

< https://www.national.ca/en/perspectives/detail/no-perfect-answer-first-nations-aboriginal-indigenous/> [accessed 19 November 2021]

< https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/immigration/history-ethnic-cultural/Pages/irish.aspx> [accessed 1 December 2021]

DIVINING EURO-CANDADIAN HISTORY AND ITS BIASES

An article discussing how Margaret Laurence uses her novel *The Diviners* to show the downfalls of teaching the Euro-Canadian perspective of history.

Megan Sprous
n0925303@my.ntu.ac.uk
BA Creative Writing, Nottingham Trent University.

Abstract

Canada is known as a multicultural country that is viewed as a place of opportunity for anyone, regardless of origin. However, the country has its own dark past that has only recently been addressed. This article will explore the ways in which Margaret Laurence uses her novel, *The Diviners*, to show how the teaching of the Euro-Canadian settler perspective of history leads to ingrained biases and a lack of remorse for Indigenous people, leaving an opening for further suffering and attempted genocide.

Canada prides itself on its inclusivity of different communities. However, in its recent history, there is seemingly a lack of remorse and an indifference to their Indigenous cultures. By analysing the novel, *The Diviners* by Margaret Laurence, published in 1974, as a postcolonial text, this article will discuss how Laurence shows that a teaching of Canada's history from the settler perspective has had a damaging effect on the views of Indigenous people, and how it creates a culture of apathy to their history of suffering, as victims of colonialism. This article will also use Laurence's novel to illustrate the importance of always questioning what you are being taught, as well as looking at things from a different perspective.

In her novel, *The Diviners*, Margaret Laurence uses the voice of her main character, Morag Gunn, as a vehicle to portray the ways in which the teaching of a colonial perspective on history causes not only internalised racial opinions, but also an erasure of the history and

suffering of the Indigenous people of Canada. Namely, in this novel, the Métis. Laurence, throughout the first few chapters of the book, lays out to the reader just how easy it is for children to be taught half-truths, and how it can lead to misguided opinions. Prin's dad was described as a remittance man; that he was sent away to Canada with the expectation that he wouldn't come back. Prin describes him as being 'a gentleman, a real one' and that his family was 'pretty mean and all'.[1] A remittance man was a man, usually from an upper- or middle-class family, who had emigrated and was funded by his family on the premise that he would stay away and cease being an embarrassment to the family.[2] As readers, we are expected to know what a remittance man is, but six-year-old Morag would not. Laurence is able to show how easily adults use their position as points of authority to give only one side of a story, as a way to sway the opinions of someone younger and more intellectually malleable. In this case, it is likely that her father wasn't as much of a gentleman as Prin says.

Laurence further solidifies this idea through Morag's commentary of the neighbour's boy, Vernon: 'He is a drip […] his nose drips drips drips all the time […] but he's just a little kid and it isn't his fault he's a drip. What is Vernon's dad going to *do*?' (Laurence, p. 51). A contrast between the first two sentences and the last two shows how Morag conceptualises what she hears, such as the likelihood that it was her foster parents calling Vernon a drip, and how Morag understands what she is hearing. Plainly Morag only thinking that he is a drip because of his runny nose. The second two sentences, which are obviously not the typical wording of a seven-year-old, are simply a repetition of what she has likely heard being said about Vernon. Laurence shows how Morag chooses to engage in the same genre of thinking that her foster parents employ when it comes to the people around her, even if she doesn't fully comprehend what they are saying.

This plays a larger part in the novel when Jules Tonnerres is introduced. A descendant of the Métis people of Canada, his family is looked down upon by the town because of his heritage. Laurence uses his character in order to further display the notion that children see the world through the lens the adults in their lives give them. When Morag ponders on Jules' family, she thinks how 'people talk about them but they don't talk *to* them. […]

[1] Margaret Laurence, *The Diviners*, (Toronto: New Canadian Library, 2007), p. 38, subsequent references in parenthesis.

[2] John Robert Colombo, 'Remittance Man', *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/remittance-man> [accessed 10 November 2021].

They are dirty and unmentionable' (Laurence, p.79). The idea that a person or a family who are, not only mixed race, but also Indigenous and are therefore looked down on, is a vision of the colonial mindset and implies that being any of these things is bad and, as Morag says, dirty. Laurence puts this notion in the mind of her readers before she introduces the next scene, in which the class sings the first chorus of the song *The Maple Leaf Forever*, written by Alexander Muir in 1867. The verse which the children sing refers to the Battle of the Plains of Abraham, a conquest of Quebec led by General James Wolfe. The song itself is well known as a song of patriotism, second only to the Canadian national anthem.[3] In the novel, Laurence writes that 'Morag loves this song, she sings it with all her guts' (Laurence, p.80). Morag, a young, orphaned girl of twelve, is a character who doesn't feel she fits in with the other children and is often bullied due to her social and class status. However, in the song she is elevated by her ancestry to being on a level with the rest of the children in her class: 'Thistle is Scots, like her and Christie (others, of course, too, including some stuck-up kids but *her* definitely, and they better not forget it)' (Laurence, p.80). This feeling of acceptance is a stark contrast to the next scene, where Morag discovers her classmate, Jules Tonnerre, isn't singing along to the song, 'He is not singing now. He comes from nowhere. He isn't anybody' (Laurence, p.80). The use of the song exemplifies how a colonial perspective of history is taught in Canadian schools. The Canadian Encyclopaedia claims 'the song essentially celebrates British military victories in Canada and the manner in which they ostensibly united the country' (Kallmann, para. 3 of 9), with the conquest of Quebec being a pivotal point in the making of Canada. It's clear to see that Laurence is showing how prominent the settler perspective is in Canada. Earlier in the novel, Laurence hints at the prevalence of this famous battle and its prominence in Canadian culture by mentioning a copy of the painting by Benjamin West titled *The Death of General Wolfe*, which is hung in Morag's classroom. After his death in the battle, Irén Annus states that 'Wolfe […] instantly became the embodiment of a […] imperial Britain: its emerging values of nationalism and patriotism, […] as well as its perceived unlimited potential for the future'.[4] It is interesting to note how often Wolfe is mentioned, as well as the fact that the scene takes place in an educational setting. Gillian Siddall wrote that

[3] Helmut Kallmann, '"The Maple Leaf Forever"', *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/the-maple-leaf-for-ever> [accessed 10 November 2021], (para. 1 of 9), Subsequent references in parenthesis.

[4] Irén Annus, 'THE DEATHS OF GENERAL WOLFE', *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies*, 13.1/2 (2007), 105–19, (p. 106).

'the significance of this image in the classroom is that it indicates the insidious pervasiveness of colonialism within Canadian culture'.[5] The use of the song and the painting, added with Jules' reaction and refusal to sing the song, shows Laurence's dedication within her text to highlight how a pushing of the colonial perspective of history – in this case only focussing on the battle between two settler camps (the English and the French) – leads to and solidifies a negative view on people who are of Indigenous descent by disregarding them from history taught and presented in the classroom. This lack of representation in the classroom has a negative effect on both Indigenous and non-Indigenous descendants. By not teaching, or even recognising the Indigenous history, Indigenous children experience the erasure of their own culture in an educational setting, potentially causing a fracturing of identity. Similarly, this lack of education of the Indigenous people's history leaves non-Indigenous children without the knowledge of the different kinds of discrimination, segregation, and abuse the Canadian government inflicted on the Indigenous people.

In keeping with her aim to highlight how prevalent the teaching of only one historical point of view is, Laurence shows the benefits of questioning the stories we are told. When Christie, Morag's foster dad, tells the tale of Piper Gunn, he talks about how they sailed from Scotland and settled in Canada. Morag asks whether the settlers killed any of the Indians, to which he replies, with a seeming lack of remorse, 'did they ever. Slew them in their dozens, girl. In their scores.' (Laurence, p.98). Christie, a man raised on the colonial perspective, pays no mind whatsoever to the slaughter of the Indigenous people, and appears to see it as not only a normal aspect of the story, but almost as something of a bragging right. It isn't until Morag asks him if the Indians were bad that he seems to put thought into it, eventually replying 'They weren't bad. They were – just there' (Laurence, p.99). This is the reality of a one-sided education; when the colonial mindset is prioritised, the victims of colonialism will be pushed aside and forgotten. This lack of awareness of the suffering that the Indigenous people went through leads only to more prejudice and racism. Laurence shows us in her novel how easy it is to simply not question what you are taught, both in an educational setting as well as in the stories that are told from generation to generation. Gillian Siddall believes that history is a tool for political oppression, and that a colonising country can

[5] Gillian Siddall, 'Teaching Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners* as a Postcolonial Text', *Canadian Children's Literature*, 79 (1995), 39-46, (p. 41), Subsequent references in parenthesis.

produce a historical viewpoint to assert their own narrative (Siddall, p. 39-40). Christie had seen the Scottish settlers of his story as heroes; people who had left their homeland in search of new pastures and had built a successful new life for themselves. Because this view of their ancestors is so glorified, the thought of looking at it from a negative standpoint is not even considered. The mindset that the Indigenous people were 'just there' poses the idea that the white settler lives were more important than the Indigenous. The story Christie is telling is one that has been passed down from generation to generation, showing a carried view that Indigenous lives mean little, creating a culture of apathy. This lack of knowledge on the experiences of Indigenous people breeds indifference to their suffering and genocide, whether it is intentional or not.

This level of apathy can also be seen through the residential schools; government sponsored schools that operated between 1831 and 1996, which took young Indigenous children (usually starting at the age of five) out of their homes and into religious schools in order to assimilate them into Euro-Canadian culture.[6] They were known to be places of sexual, physical, and emotional abuse. Kevin Hutchings believes that they 'disrupted the lives of thousands of families often becoming sources of multi-generational trauma and suffering. Denying Aboriginal people's moral right to their own forms of cultural knowledge and identity – indeed, not even considering the possibility that such a right could exist'.[7] It was not until 2008 that the Canadian federal government formally apologised to the residential school survivors, only doing so after the survivors spoke up about the abuse in the 1990's. Laurence shows her readers how easy it is to sway the minds of young people, and how those ingrained biases are often kept well into adulthood, due to a lack of questioning. These biases act as a butterfly effect in a hegemonic view of society. In this case, it is the view of an entire population of people and the idea that, because of a Euro-Canadian view of Indigenous people, they are lesser and should be treated as such.

The Diviners shows the influence of opinions and one-sided history from the very beginning. Laurence uses her characters to champion the

[6] Fred Glover, 'Residential Schools in Canada (Plain-Language Summary)', *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, <https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/residential-schools-in-canada-plain-language-summary> [accessed 18 November 2021].

[7] Kevin Hutchings, 'Cultural Genocide and the First Nations of Upper Canada: Some Romantic-Era Roots of Canada's Residential School System', *European Romantic Review*, 27.3 (2016), 301–8, (p.306).

idea that authority figures should be questioned and that, in a postcolonial world, more attention should be given to the victims of colonialism. Laurence successfully highlights, through her novel, the importance of showing the different perspectives of history; so as to throw light onto personal biases and ingrained colonial mindsets. Canada is a nation proud of its label as a multicultural country – and it is multicultural – however their past as a colonial country still needs to be addressed.

REFERENCES

Annus, Irén, 'THE DEATHS OF GENERAL WOLFE', *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies*, 13.1/2 (2007), 105-19

Colombo, John Robert, 'Remittance Man', *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/remittance-man> [accessed 10 November 2021]

Glover, Fred, 'Residential Schools in Canada (Plain-English Summery)', *The Canadian Encyclopedia* <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/the-maple-leaf-for-ever> [accessed 10 November 2021]

Hutchings, Kevin, 'Cultural Genocide and the First Nations of Upper Canada: Some Romantic-Era Roots of Canada's Residential School System', *European Romantic Review*, 27.3 (2016), 301-8

Kallmann, Helmut, '"The Maple Leaf Forever"', *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/the-maple-leaf-for-ever> [accessed 10 November 2021]

Laurence, Margaret, *The Diviners* (Toronto: New Canadian Library, 2007)

Siddall, Gillian, 'Teaching Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners* as a Postcolonial Text', *Canadian Children's Literature*, 79 (1995), 39-46

Young, Bryanne, '"Killing the Indian in the Child": Death, Cruelty, and Subject-formation in the Canadian Residential School System', *Mosaic (Winnipeg)*, 48.4 (2015), 63-76

CULTURE IN CANADIAN LITERATURE

A Look at Indigenous Writing in Canada

Isabel Berry
N0972567@my.ntu.ac.uk
BA Creative Writing, Nottingham Trent University

Abstract

In this article, I will be exploring how the blending of Indigenous cultures in Canada is represented in Canadian Literature. In particular, I will be exploring the representation of two separate cultures coming together in writer and poet E. Pauline Johnson's work. In a time of colonisation and settlement, Johnson's mixed heritage offers an interesting perspective on the cultures that form part of the backbone of Canada today. Throughout this article I will refer to the poems 'Canadian Born', 'Brant, A Memorial Ode', 'A Cry from an Indian Wife' and 'Happy Hunting Grounds'.

Today, Canada is known to be a country accepting of all cultures. This can be seen in the Canada Multiculturalism Act; a legal declaration of Canada's promise to protect the diversity and heritage of the land.[1] However, as a land that was colonised, can there really be one, connected Canadian literature? As the daughter of a British mother and Mohawk father, E Pauline Johnson's poetry captures the relationship between the Indigenous people and the British colonisers.

Before the French and the British came to Canada, the land was occupied by three groups, collectively known as the Aboriginals. There are the Inuits, the First Nations and the Métis. After the British defeated the French, the country fell under the rule of the Crown and all Canadian Aboriginals were made citizens of Canada.[2] For many, this poses no problem – loyalties lie with the land, not with the political leader. Johnson's poem

[1] "Canadian Multiculturalism Act", *Laws-Lois.Justice.Gc.Ca*, 2022 <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-18.7/page-1.html> [Accessed 12 January 2022].

[2] News, I. and Awareness, I., 2021. *Trying Hard To Be Equal - Indigenous Awareness Canada Online*

'Canadian Born' showcases this in the metaphor 'We are the pulse of Canada, its marrow and its blood'.[3] She paints the citizens of Canada as intrinsic parts of a whole – they are key components to Canada's 'body'. This could be perceived as expressing commitment to Canada, as Johnson is uniting both counterparts equally under the country name; this is also referenced in the inscription where it is stated that the 'White race and Red are one if they are but Canadian born'.[4] This harmonious ideal tie in with the Multiculturalism Act. Despite a difference in heritage and culture, both parties come together to advocate one unified Canada. It can be argued that this proves there is one connected Canadian literature, as, although there are many cultures involved, they are inextricably intertwined.

Further reference to this is found in the poem 'A Cry from an Indian Wife'. The poem is from the perspective of the wife of an Indian who has gone to battle to protect his tribe from colonisers. She voices her despair at the dire situation but almost deviates from this midway through the poem, pleading for her loved one to not go to battle as her 'heart is not the only one // that grieves the loss of husband and of son.'[5] Johnson subtly preaches a unified Canada by recognising that the 'rivals' are going through a similar pain, thus finding common ground. The idea that if they did not fight, then they could peacefully assimilate and avoid the loss of life - in addition to their land.

But this is not a sentiment felt by all. For some, to be a member of the state is to lose their cultural independence – they will have assimilated into the culture of the people that took land from them.[6] Assimilation was, and still is, a source of discord amongst some Indigenous peoples of Canada. It is defined as the process where those of differing heritages are absorbed into another.[7]

Training. [online] Indigenous Awareness Canada Online Training. Available at: https://indigenousawarenesscanada.com/indigenous-awareness/trying-hard-to-be-equal/

[3] E. Pauline Johnson, *Canadian Born* (Toronto: G.N. Morang, 1903), p. 1.

[4] E. Pauline Johnson, *Canadian Born* (Toronto: G.N. Morang, 1903), p. 1.

[5] E. Pauline Johnson and Margery Fee, *Tekahionwake* (Broadview Press, 2015), p. 133.

[6] FOCAL, *A Study On The Relationship Between Canadian Aboriginal Peoples And The Canadian State*, 2006, pp. 1-3.

[7] Definition Of Assimilation | Dictionary.Com", *Www.Dictionary.Com*, 2021 <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/assimilation>

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Canada implemented 'Indian Residential Schools', where young aboriginals were prevented from using their own language and any native traditions.[8] Many of the children were also abused, in multiple ways. In 2015, Canada's Chair of Commission and aboriginal Judge Murray Sinclair spoke at an event that presented the findings of an investigation into abuse at these schools. After reading out the horrors faced by indigenous children, he condemned the past, labelling it a 'cultural genocide'.[9] Recently, in June of this year, 751 unmarked graves were found at an Indian Residential School.[10] There are still many legal disputes regarding treaties and agreements made by the government.

In the past, the indigenous cultures were forcibly absorbed into the Canadian culture. Should we be doing the same to their literature?

Johnson echoes this opinion in 'A Cry from an Indian Wife'. The 'Indian Wife' speaks to the reader, saying 'They but forget we Indians owned the land … Was our sole kingdom and our right alone'.[11] Particularly interesting is the use of the noun phrase 'sole kingdom'. In a paper found on the website Indigenous Awareness Canada, a point is made that the Aboriginals had no choice but to assimilate.[12] There was no other option available to those who would not have wanted to claim citizenship – there is nowhere for them to 'go back to' as their sole home has been taken under the state.

Johnson brings a similar tone to her poem 'Brant, A Memorial Ode'. This poem was commissioned to be read at the unveiling of a statue of Mohawk leader Joseph Brant, in front of a crowd of various cultures. Initially, the poem comes across as patriotic, however the language used hints at a sadness around the

---

[8] Laurence Butet-Roch, "The Bitter Legacy Of Canada'S Forced-Assimilation Boarding Schools", *The New Yorker*, 2015 <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/photo-booth/the-bitter-legacy-of-canadas-forced-assimilation-boarding-schools>

[9] The Schools That Had Cemeteries Instead Of Playgrounds", *BBC News*, 2021 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-33099511>

[10] Canada: 751 Unmarked Graves Found At Residential School", *BBC News*, 2021 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-57592243

[11] E. Pauline Johnson and Margery Fee, *Tekahionwake* (Broadview Press, 2015), p. 133.

[12] Indigenous News and Indigenous Awareness, "Trying Hard To Be Equal - Indigenous Awareness Canada Online Training", *Indigenous Awareness Canada Online Training*, 2021 <https://indigenousawarenesscanada.com/indigenous-awareness/trying-hard-to-be-equal/>

assimilation of the Indian culture to the British. She pays tribute to Brant, recounting how he 'bade his people leave their valley home … And love the land where waves the Union Jack. What though that home no longer ours!'.[13] Johnson explicitly says that Canada, for some, is no longer their home. This begs the question; if Johnson does not fully consider Canada her home, should her work fall under the umbrella title of Canadian Literature? And if not, what should it be considered as?

Although this article only looks at one Aboriginal culture, it could be agreed that at least one Aboriginal culture, to a greater or lesser degree, has influenced and informed the totality of Canadian Literature. Whilst 'Canadian Literature' is defined as the body of written works produced by Canadians, it does not address the cultural differences felt by some writers of Aboriginal descent.[9] There is a distinct sense of unity, but enough comparisons and distinctions are made to ignore that they are separate cultures, and so demand separate recognition.

REFERENCES

Butet-Roch, Laurence, "The Bitter Legacy Of Canada'S Forced-Assimilation Boarding Schools", *The New Yorker*, 2015 https://www.newyorker.com/culture/photo-booth/the-bitter-legacy-of-canadas-forced-assimilation-boarding-schools

"Canada: 751 Unmarked Graves Found At Residential School", *BBC News*, 2021 https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-57592243

"Canadian Multiculturalism Act", *Laws-Lois.Justice.Gc.Ca*, 2022 <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-18.7/page-1.html> [Accessed 12 January 2022]

Definition Of Assimilation | Dictionary.Com", *www.Dictionary.Com*, 2021 https://www.dictionary.com/browse/assimilation

[13] E. Pauline Johnson and Margery Fee, *Tekahionwake* (Broadview Press, 2015), p. 42.

FOCAL, *A Study On The Relationship Between Canadian Aboriginal Peoples And The Canadian State*, 2006, pp. 1-3

Johnson, E. Pauline, *Canadian Born* (Toronto: G.N. Morang, 1903), p. 1

Johnson, E. Pauline, and Margery Fee, *Tekahionwake* (Broadview Press, 2015), p. 133

Kellett-Betsos, Kathleen, "Canadian Literature", *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2019 https://www.britannica.com/art/Canadian-literature

News, I. and Awareness, I., 2021. *Trying Hard To Be Equal - Indigenous Awareness Canada Online Training*. [online] Indigenous Awareness Canada Online Training. Available at: https://indigenousawarenesscanada.com/indigenous-awareness/trying-hard-to-be-equal/

"The Schools That Had Cemeteries Instead Of Playgrounds", *BBC News*, 2021 https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-33099511

LOSS OF LANGUAGE IN *INDIAN HORSE*

An article discussing the ways in which *Indian Horse* exemplifies how Indigenous people were forced to not speak their native language in residential schools, and how this is one of the reasons why Indigenous people struggle to keep their culture alive today.

Ollie M
ENGL 2300 (S10), Kwantlen Polytechnic University

Abstract

Throughout the duration of the film, *Indian Horse*, there were Indigenous characters who had to limit or completely stop speaking in their first language since not speaking English meant risking their safety. This article will focus on how the characters in this film reflect Indigenous individuals in Canada who were forced to speak English and could not use their mother-tongue. how the non-Indigenous characters react/respond to these instances, how these situations in the film reflect what happened in the time of residential schools, and how this translates into modern-day Canada.

Throughout the duration of the film *Indian Horse* (2017),[1] directed by Stephen Campanelli and produced by Devonshire Productions, there were Indigenous characters who had to limit or completely stop speaking in their first language as not speaking English meant putting their personal safety at risk. This article will discuss the instances in this movie that show the Indigenous characters who fight to keep their culture by trying to speak their first language, how the non-Indigenous characters react/respond to these instances, how these situations in the film reflect what happened in residential schools, and how this translates into modern-day Canada. Since this film is based on the atrocities that were committed against Indigenous individuals in Canada and how Indigenous children were forcibly separated from their culture, it is important to dive deeper into how real Indigenous children were treated and the extent in which the loss of language directly ties to the culture they were forced to separate from.

[1] *Indian Horse*, dir. by Stephen Campanelli (Devonshire Productions, 2017), online film recording, Netflix, <https://www.netflix.com/watch/80211455?trackId=14277281&tctx=-97%2C-97%2C%2C%2C%2C%2C>, subsequent references in parenthesis.

Residential schools were established in both Canada and the United States of America in the late 1800's. In Canada, Indigenous children were taken from their families and sent to government funded boarding schools that were run primarily by Catholic churches. There was an amendment to the Indian Act of 1894 making it mandatory for all First Nations Children to attend these government funded schools from 1894 to 1947.[2] Many children were rounded up and taken from their homes to these remote schools for months at a time. Duncan Campbell Scott, Head of Indian Affairs from 1913 to 1932, famously said in 1920, 'the goal of the Indian Residential School is to kill the Indian in the child'.[3]

Sadly, in many cases, this goal was accomplished. Children were not allowed to speak their language and had to give up their cultural practices, beliefs, and any connection to their Indigenous way of life (Wilson, para. 1 of 22). Residential schools were used to assimilate Indigenous children into English language, cultures, and beliefs. A report done by Reconciliation Canada documented that of the 150,000 Indigenous children taken from their families; 90 to 100% suffered severe physical, emotional, and sexual abuse; there was a 40 – 60% mortality rate in Indian residential schools; and over 130 residential schools were located across Canada, with the last school closing as recently as 1997.[4]

Indian Horse came out in 2017, and the plot of the movie follows a young boy, Saul, who is forced to go to a Residential School. The first scene shows how the children at said Residential school were forced to speak English. The scene takes place in a group therapy session in which two characters, whose dialog overlaps says, 'When we spoke our language, we were punished...would hit me with a broom… always punished for, um...for speaking our language' (1:38:45-1:38:40). The kids would have to speak English all the time or else fear some sort of reprimand. The teachers were swift and ruthless in their punishment; they treated the languages of Indigenous people as if they were curse words. In this movie, the children were depicted as having no contact with parents at all; not even writing a letter. Even if the children were able to write home, the parents would not be able to read the letters, as they would have been written in English.

The beginning of the film takes place in the 1950's in Northern Ontario. The residential school Saul was sent to was hours away from

[2] Margaret Conrad and Alvin Kinkel, *History of the Canadian Peoples: 1867 to the Present, Vol. 2, 5/E*, (Ontario: Pearson Education Canada, 1998).
[3] Kory Wilson, *Residential Schools* (2021), *Pulling Together Foundations Guide* < https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfoundations/chapter/residential-schools/>, (para 1 of 22), subsequent references in parenthesis.
[4] Tabitha Marshall and David Gallant, 'Residential Schools in Canada', *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/residential-schools.

his home and was quite isolated. The film suggests that the isolation of Indigenous children was so they could not be influenced by their own community and learn about their culture; this was done to assimilate them into the dominant Canadian culture. This is the reason the residential school system was created, and this section of the movie is an example of this. This is the first of multiple instances in this film that illustrate how Indigenous people sharing their culture and simply living as Indigenous people would result in punishment and physical abuse.

The second scene chosen from the movie takes place around a fire where Saul and his family set up camp as they travel north to get a blessing for Saul's dead brother. Saul's Nookmis (grandmother) says in the Ojibway language, 'The spirits of the lake are pleased we are here' (1:35:14 - 1:35:11) and Saul's mother says in English "That's blasphemy. We've gotta give thanks to Jesus" (1:35:11-1:35:07). Saul's Nookmis responds in Ojibway, 'Your Jesus never fished these waters' (1:35:05 - 1:35:00). Because Saul's mother and father were forced to spend much of their childhood in residential school, they will only speak English, not Ojibway. This was a lasting part of their Residential school education. Even after they were back 'home' they still felt that they must speak English and be practicing Christians or something bad would happen; in this case, their deceased son would not enter Heaven. This scene in the movie highlights the separation of culture through language and religion between Saul's parents and his Nookmis; the Euro-Canadian culture was seen as superior and the Indigenous people's culture as inferior in the eyes of the government. It is possible that the parents, when they returned from their time in the residential schools, had been indoctrinated into believing that the way of life of Indigenous people was more difficult and that assimilation would make their lives easier.

The third scene that highlighted how the characters were forced to speak English takes place when Saul is forcibly taken to a residential school. Saul and another boy, Lonnie, are asked their names by a priest. Saul is able to understand what the priest is asking him, but the other boy does not understand English and says, 'I want to go home' (1:20:53-1:20:51) in his mother-tongue. The priest tells him to speak in English and repeats the question; waits a few seconds before asking Saul if he knows what the boy's name is, to which Saul answers 'Lonnie'. The priest groans in distaste and says 'You'll need something more suitable than that. All right, from now on, your name is Aaron' (1:20:39-1:20:30). Lonnie says 'I have a name. My father's. Lonnie' (1:20:25-1:20:19). After Lonnie is told that his human father is worth nothing and that the Lord Father is his only father now, Lonnie is told he must speak English. Lonnie tries to leave, but the nun keeps the door closed, leans him over the desk, and starts laying blows on him with a leather belt. This scene illustrates how the teachers of

Christian faith running the school thought the Indigenous people and their ways were inferior and they felt justified in their mistreatment and physical violence; a force which these institutions thought was necessary to cause the children under their 'care' to change their ways.

The Canadian government also felt justified in taking children away from their parents and forcing them to assimilate. They did not want the children to learn their culture from their families, individuals who were not seen as true citizens of Canada in the eyes of the law. This mandated education and language would be seen as superior to what they would have learned if they were living with their families.

The fourth scene that highlights the children being forced to speak English takes place when Saul and Lonnie are in a religious class in the residential school. Lonnie tries getting Saul's attention by saying 'Anish' twice, in which the nun teaching says 'Stand up. This is the third time this week I've heard you speaking Ojibway. Come here' (1:16:33-1:16:24). She then takes him to the front of the class and says 'The Good God gave you this mouth. He gave you language. It is a very grave sin to corrupt these sacred gifts with falsehood and deceit' (1:16:17-1:16:08). She proceeds to take a bar of soap from her desk drawer, tells Lonnie to open his mouth and forces it in as he gags. The film makes note of the fact that the methods in which authority figures of residential schools 'taught' Indigenous students were based on white supremacy and Catholicism. According to The Globe and Mail, the Catholic Church ran about 60 percent of residential schools in Canada.[5]

The last scene that depicts characters that were forced to speak English takes place in the very last scene of the film before credits roll. In this last scene of *Indian Horse*, one Residential School survivor says, 'to this day, there's a lot of us that don't know our native tongue' (6:02 - 5:58) and this closes out the movie. It is the final commentary of one of the long-lasting impacts of residential schooling and the loss of language. It is common knowledge to a large portion of Canadians that most of the stories and lessons of Indigenous people are taught through the spoken word, called Oral Tradition. So, this seems incredibly sad that their languages, which are so intertwined with their cultures, have been harmed through many generations of residential schooling.

Even though the schools are now closed, the lasting effects of residential schools are not only felt by the people who were forced to

[5] Tavia Grant, 'Catholic Church ran most of Canada's residential schools, yet remains largely silent about their devastating legacy', *The Globe and Mail*, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-catholic-church-ran-most-of-canadas-residential-schools-yet-remains/>.

attend, but also by younger generations who have family members who were affected by residential schools. Transgenerational trauma is defined as 'a collective complex trauma inflicted on a group of people who share a specific group identity or affiliation—ethnicity, nationality, or religious affiliation [and] the legacy of numerous traumatic events a community experiences over generations'.[6] Transgenerational trauma affects groups because of their cultural identity. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) gave an estimate that 80,000 survivors of residential schools are alive all throughout Canada today.[7] Residential schools have been linked to issues within Indigenous communities today such as post-traumatic stress disorder, alcoholism, substance abuse, and suicide.

The themes of the film involve physical violence, forced religion, white supremacy, and the attempts of erasing Indigenous people's culture. The scenes in the film *Indian Horse* illustrated how Indigenous children struggled to keep their culture, specifically language; how non-Indigenous individuals interacted with Indigenous people, what happened in the time of residential schools, and how all of this translates into 21st century Canada. Most Canadians only learned a little bit about Residential schools as part of a social studies curriculum in secondary school. Films such as *Indian Horse* that discuss the atrocities that took place during this dark part in Canadian History are incredibly important as they highlight how essential it is to remember that the effects that these events had do not stay in the past. Indigenous people, not only those who suffered within the Residential School system but also their descendants, have had to fight to keep their culture. Lost culture does not suddenly come back because younger generations are not forced to stay in residential schools. The past will always affect the present and future.

[6] Fariba Kolahdooz, Forouz Nader, Kyoung J. Yi and Sangita Sharma, 'Understanding the social determinants of health among Indigenous Canadians: priorities for health promotion policies and actions, *Global Health Action*, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.3402/gha.v8.27968>.

[7] Anonymous, 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada', *Government of Canada*, <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1450124405592/1529106060525>.

REFERENCES

Campanelli, S. Indian Horse dir. (2017). Devonshire Productions. at: https://www.netflix.com/watch/80211455?trackId=14277281&tctx=-97%2C-97%2C%2C%2C%2C%2C

Finkel, A. and Conrad, M., (1998). Pearson - History of the Canadian Peoples: 1867 to the Present, Vol. 2, 5/E - Margaret Conrad & Alvin Finkel. [online] Catalogue.pearsoned.ca. Available at: http://catalogue.pearsoned.ca/educator/product/History-of-the-Canadian-Peoples-1867-to-the-Present-Vol-2/9780321539083.page

Government of Canada. (2021). Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. [online] Available at: https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1450124405592/1529106060525

Grant, T., (2021). "Catholic Church ran most of Canada's residential schools, yet remains largely silent about their devastating legacy." [online] The Globe and Mail. Available at: https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-catholic-church-ran-most-of-canadas-residential-schools-yet-remains/

Kolahdooz, F., Nader, F., Yi, K. and Sharma, S. (2015). "Understanding the social determinants of health among Indigenous Canadians: priorities for health promotion policies and actions." Global Health Action. np. PubMed Central. Available at: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4506643/

Marshal, T. and Gallant, D., (2021). "Residential Schools in Canada." [online] The Canadian Encyclopedia. Available at: https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/residential-schools

Wilson, K., 2021. "Residential Schools." Pulling Together Foundations Guide. [online] Open Text BC Available at: https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfoundations/chapter/residential-schools/

A REVIEW OF ALBERT KISH'S SHORT FILM "THIS IS A PHOTOGRAPH"

Do pictures really speak a thousand words?

Antonia Stassi
N0910954@my.ntu.ac.uk
BA Creative Writing, Nottingham Trent University

Albert Kish, the Hungarian-Canadian film director has managed to encapsulate the universal feelings of alienation, initial discomfort, hope/relief and freedom among immigrants in his 10 minute short film/documentary "This is a Photograph". The short experimental film uses a simple formula of music, voiceover and snapshot images (taken by Kish himself throughout the years) and a splash of colour to explain and showcase a European immigrant's first five years in Canada.

In 1964 Albert Kish joined the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation as a film editor and soon after, in 1967, he joined the National Film Board of Canada where he stayed for a distinguished amount of time in his career, directing and editing over 30 films — one of the first being 'This is a Photograph'. Released in 1971, the documentary was one of Kish's first nominated short films, showcasing his photography, ingenuity and personal experience. The documentary opens with a black and white photograph of two parents holding their child with, what I found to be, quite eerie music, followed by a voiceover of a teacher in a languages class, teaching English. It goes on to reveal the protagonist's journey, captured in solely black and white photos, with a wash of watercolour —added in post-production — from travelling on a boat overseas, to apartments and close-ups of cafés, grocery stores and classrooms. Kish uses humour and insight to reveal the protagonist's reaction to the country and environment he accepted, and the Canadian customs and habits he tried to adapt to. In the beginning everything seemed strange, adjusting to new settings, scenarios, ways of life, and getting accustomed to the initial 'Culture Shock'.

First coined by Kalervo Oberg (1960), he explained culture shock as the consequence of strain and anxiety resulting from contact with a new culture and the feelings of loss, confusion, and impotence, which are due to loss of accustomed cultural cues and social

rules. It implies that the experience of the new culture is an unpleasant surprise or shock, partly because it is unexpected and partly because it can lead to a negative evaluation of one's own place in society and happens especially when individuals have totally faced a new culture, such as first-generation immigrants.[1]

In my opinion, the music score by Alain Caver was unsettling and jarring at times, which although I found unpleasant, helped increase this idea of culture shock throughout the piece. It helps to bolster the themes of alienation, panic and foreignism, and I thought the inclusion of similar sounds and melodies to polish folk music/polka song was felicitous. The score works cohesively with the rest of the film, which is important when exploring such a widely experienced topic. I enjoyed the fact it comes from an immigrant's first-hand perspective. The polka music is almost used to pay homage to Eastern European immigrants and the concept of uniting them together. The voiceovers that run throughout —provided by Ronald A. Javitch and James Carney— include a mix of English, Polish, German and various other languages that filter in and out, almost a Pidgin English, allowing for a further sense of community and recognition of other nationalities.

As someone who grew up with immigrant grandparents and was brought up in between two cultures - Greek and British, I must agree with one commenter on the video, Lois Segal, who said, 'Anyone who has been an immigrant can identify with this film.' Despite being a third-generation immigrant, I still felt a sense of validation and relatability. It is certainly a film my family as well as other immigrants from different backgrounds - especially the generations above me - can resonate with. Although the film focuses on and perhaps caters more to immigrant audiences, I still think that it's a film that all people can enjoy and learn from, as it's not too long or heavy to get through.

The entire, quirky, composition of images does do a fantastic job of creating a sense of familiarity and nostalgia, and is a pleasure to marvel at, from the snapshots of foreign bakeries, butchers, and communities of immigrants sitting together, or with one another outside, posing with/in front of cars and western products/commodities. I believe the reason it was so successful is because it comments on and explores the shared experiences of those migrating, such as citizenship tests, going to English language speaking lessons, reciting the Oath of Allegiance, and socializing with other immigrants of your own heritage. Kish has not only summarized and paid homage to the

[1] L. I. Dongfeng, "Culture shock and its implications for cross-cultural training and culture teaching.", *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 8.4 (2012) 70-74.

immigrant experience but also created such a saturated sense of community in what is basically a 10 minute slideshow. I would say it's definitely worthy of its win for 'Best Theatrical Short and Best Sound Re-recording' at the Canadian Film Awards in 1972, as well as a place in Canadian Film and/or Culture studies.

REFERENCES

Dongfeng, L. I., "Culture shock and its implications for cross-cultural training and culture teaching.", *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 8.4 (2012) 70-74

Kish, Albert, *This Is a Photograph*, (National Film Board of Canada: Montreal, 1971)

A REVIEW OF JESSICA MCDIARMID'S *HIGHWAY OF TEARS: A TRUE STORY OF RACISM, INDIFFERENCE AND THE PURSUIT OF JUSTICE FOR MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS*

How Jessica McDiarmid Tackles and Highlights One of Canada's Darkest Secrets.

Brook Lowery
English 2300, Kwantlen Polytechnic University

In her book *Highway of Tears: A True Story of Racism, Indifference and the Pursuit of Justice for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*, originally published in 2019, Jessica McDiarmid recounts many heartbreaking stories surrounding one of the darkest stains on Canadian history: the countless Indigenous woman and girls who have gone missing, been murdered and found along Northern British Columbia's Highway 16. Dubbed the Highway of Tears, in this book, McDiarmid gives a voice to the victims of these crimes and their families by detailing their lives before they became just another statistic in the eyes of the law. McDiarmid presents the faults of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the Canadian government and social services. *Highway of Tears* brings to light the frequent mistreatment of Indigenous people whilst challenging the typical idyllic view of Canada as an exposé on the injustice, lack of accountability and systemic racism that plagues the country.

The main takeaway from McDiarmid's book is that the Indigenous victims of the Highway of Tears deserve to be served justice, regardless of the life they lived. As McDiarmid notes, Indigenous women and girls are "six times more likely to be killed than non-Indigenous

women" and yet,[1] when they go missing, it appears that their cases are blatantly dismissed by the RCMP and the media because of their race and backgrounds. Consistently their cases are not taken seriously until it is far too late. Furthermore, the victims are often blamed for their fate based on factors beyond their control.

Fighting to change this view, McDiarmid details the lives of Ramona Wilson, Delphine Nikal, Roxanne Thiara, Alishia Germaine, Lana Derrick, Alberta Williams, Tamara Chipman, Aielah Saric-Auger, Bonnie Joseph, Immaculate "Mackie" Basil, and Beverly Williams, just a few of the countless Indigenous women and girls lost along the Highway of Tears. McDiarmid also discusses the loss of Nicole Hoar, a non-Indigenous victim of the highway and touches on the lives of many other victims. By interviewing victims' family members, McDiarmid provides a deep and intimate look into the lives of these women and girls, and the never-ending pain their loved ones suffer from their loss. McDiarmid also focuses on the shortcomings and injustices of the RCMP regarding the handling of the Highway of Tears investigations and does not shy away from pointing out systemic racism. Sprinkled throughout the book as well is historical information and social commentary to provide the reader with a fuller picture of how a place like the Highway of Tears could have ever come to be. At its core, the book is about the families of those lost to the Highway of Tears: how they remember their loved ones, how they honor their memories, and how they fight for justice in hopes of preventing another family from going through the same situation.

McDiarmid's research for the book is thorough, with a variety of different sources ranging from personal interviews to article clippings. McDiarmid aims to de-stigmatize the victims of these crimes and challenge society's troubled, stereotypical view of them. They were young women and girls who Canada's systems and society failed. Some were forced to sell themselves for money to survive, and some were abused, but that was not all they were. They were human beings, some as young as fifteen, who deserve to be remembered and deserve justice.

McDiarmid's research illuminates some of the blatant issues within Canadian society that disproportionately affect Indigenous peoples at an alarming rate such as over-policing, the targeting of Indigenous youths by social services, and addiction. Another key point within *Highway of Tears* is the systemic racism that weaves its way through every

[1] McDiarmid, *Highway of Tears: A True Story of Racism, Indifference and the Pursuit of Justice for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* (Anchor Canada, 2019), p. 4.

aspect of these cases, from the RCMP's frequent dismissal of Indigenous missing person cases as runaways, to the media's portrayal of Indigenous victims compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts. McDiarmid brings these issues into the spotlight, showcasing that Canada is not the perfect country it portrays itself to be. It is one whose continued mistreatment of, and lack of resources for, Indigenous peoples is lining the Highway of Tears with the bodies of more and more innocent Indigenous women and girls.

It is important to keep in mind whilst reading *Highway of Tears* that, while prior knowledge of Canada's mistreatment of Indigenous peoples is not required to read the book, it is an asset that will help the reader understand the book and its message better. It is also important to understand that while McDiarmid does attempt to provide both sides of the story, from the family and RCMP's viewpoints, the book has a slight bias towards the stance that the RCMP frequently falls short. Also, while McDiarmid provides many statistics throughout the book to provide the reader with a better understanding of the scope of the issues at hand, the statistics are sprinkled throughout paragraphs rather than separated into tables and charts which can make them hard to grasp. The book also jumps around frequently between different focuses, from family interviews, descriptions of locations and crimes, and RCMP-centric sections that it can be very confusing to follow at times and comes off slightly disorganized.

In the end, McDiarmid's *Highway of Tears* is a heartbreaking yet necessary read that presents one of the most tragic and darkest aspects of Canadian history. It gives the families of those lost to the Highway of Tears a space to tell their own stories, to express their loss and grief, and to move forward. It is a beautifully written true crime tale that manages to tell the victims' stories in a gut-wrenchingly real way and highlights the blatant issues of racism, injustice, and lack of accountability present throughout the nation. *Highway of Tears* is a must read, one that showcases that these terrible and horrific crimes can happen anywhere, even in the great white north, when the act of serving justice is treated as a privilege for some rather than a right.

REFERENCES

McDiarmid, J. (2019). *Highway of Tears: A True Story of Racism, Indifference and the Pursuit of Justice for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*. Anchor Canada.

Brook Lowery, Kwantlen Polytechnic University

IF I GO MISSING

Dismantling Stereotypes within Canada.

Emily Hardy
English 2300, Kwantlen Polytechnic University

If I Go Missing is an illustrated book following a letter written by 14-year-old Brianna Jonnie to the Winnipeg, Manitoba Police Department. This book includes beautiful and rich illustrations to compliment the intensity of the words being written. The attention to detail within the story and knowing that this comes from such a young Indigenous person, provokes many emotions as the book progresses. Jonnie touches on many pressing issues faced by Indigenous women and youth such as violence, prejudice, and systemic racism within her letter.

Jonnie begins by exploring who she is, her talents and strengths, emphasizing the honor she holds being an Indigenous woman in Canada. Jonnie displays the beauty of her culture and her deep connection to her family. The beginning of the letter introduces Jonnie, though not exposing her name till later in the book. This aspect of Jonnie's letter allows the reader to know more about who she is as an individual Indigenous teen, aside from the stereotypes forced upon her and her fellow Indigenous peers. Thus, pointing out the systemic racism held within our police departments and highlighting the tendency police have to put aside Indigenous cases more than others.

Jonnie aims to breakdown stereotypes fenced around Indigenous teens pertaining to their tendency to be involved in "drugs, underage drinking, prostitution, or other illegal activity" to minimize the ignorance Canadian police held towards their legal cases.[1] While loving her culture and the people included in it, she acknowledges that Indigenous folks are "more likely to go missing than [others]",[2] and less likely to have societal support surrounding it. Her letter stresses that the focus of the police department lies on the cases of Caucasian people, and that this pattern of systemic racism needs to come to a halt. She takes her position in a very mature way, thanking the police for

[1] Jonnie, B. and Shingoose, N. *If I Go Missing*. (James Lorimer & Company Ltd, 2019), p. 16.

[2] Jonnie and Shingoose, *If I Go Missing*. p.21.

returning people home, even though they have disregarded people of her culture. Her letter was written with purpose of persuading the police force to act as promptly on Indigenous missing persons' cases as they would on Caucasian cases.

The illustrations of this book were lightly detailed, allowing the readers to focus more deeply on the message at hand. The illustrator focused on using mild colouring — greys, blacks, and white — to make the accent colour of red appear bolder. The colour red is used to symbolise and recognize the many "missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls" within Canada.[3] May 5th has been titled as the day to bring awareness to this cause, and this movement has hung red dresses to symbolize and represent these women. Furthermore, within Jonnie's letter, she uses it throughout to symbolize mistreatment towards Indigenous peoples. This addition of colour to the letter correlates with the message within the book, as the pages with the most emphasis contain the most red. This connection towards the brutality of Indigenous women and youth, may spark some anger, alongside curiosity within potential readers as they continue to learn more. With Jonnie's focus on the systemic mistreatment of indigenous women and youth, this connection to an existing movement brings further perspective to the matter.

The manner in which the text weaves together with the illustration is cohesive and appealing to the eye. The illustrator, N Shannacappo, set up the illustrations almost like a comic strip. The informality of the letter allows the message to be more versatile in who it reaches, as the message is intended to meet a broad range of readers. Since ideas and messages are typically more easily conveyed to younger folk through informal, eye-appealing literature, this set up is a resourceful way to allow more than one age category to appreciate the letter.

While most short stories have satisfying endings, a satisfying end to this book would be inappropriate. The information being transmitted through Jonnie's letter is an ongoing matter, and if the story were to have a resolution that would tell the reader that this matter has been resolved, and she is speaking from the past. Without revealing the ending of her letter, it is worth noting the author does not allow this to come full circle to please the reader. Jonnie's emphasis on the importance of containing more than just appearance and ethnicity in a missing persons' case allows for a more in-depth perspective on the prejudice Indigenous teens within Canada face. Her fight

[3] Uguen-Csenge, Eva. 'Red Dresses Hang across B.C. in a Call for Justice for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women', CBC News, CBC/Radio Canada (2021) <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/red-dresses-hang-across-b-c-in-a-call-for-justice-for-missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-1.601546> [accessed on: 1 November 2021].

towards racism in Canada, allows the reader to feel her frustration and pain with each page.

The message being conveyed within Jonnie's letter, allows us as readers to recognize the pain and despair felt as she poured her heart into this letter. This letter grants readers from outside of Canada with the ability to identify the many ways in which racism in Canada has affected the lives of Indigenous peoples.

Jonnie's pain and anxiety seeped through each page, making her words speak even louder. The ways in which *If I Go Missing* works towards dismantling stereotypes and prompting importance on Indigenous missing persons' cases, shows itself as a valuable resource for those to learn from.

REFERENCES

Jonnie, B. and Shingoose, N. *If I Go Missing*. (James Lorimer & Company Ltd, 2019)

Uguen-Csenge, Eva. 'Red Dresses Hang across B.C. in a Call for Justice for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women', CBC News, CBC/Radio Canada (2021) <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/red-dresses-hang-across-b-c-in-a-call-for-justice-for-missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-1.601546> [accessed on: 1 November 2021]

HOLY ANGELS REVIEW

Lena Wandering Spirit.

Harvinder Singh
English 2300, Kwantlen Polytechnic University

The short film, *Holy Angels* directed by Jay Cardinal Villeneuve, is profoundly important for students, teachers, and researchers, as it effectively manages to teach viewers of Indigenous/Canadian Literature.

Holy Angels eloquently conveys Canada's colonialist history through impressionistic images, and is extremely important for students, teachers, and researchers as it teaches the significance of residential schools and how poorly the Indigenous peoples were treated by the churches and Canadian government.

The short film explores residential school victim Lena Wandering Spirit and explores, through her personal experience, how Indigenous children were treated at the Holy Angels Residential School in North-East Alberta, Fort Chipewyan. The institution began as a mission school in 1874 and became a residential school in 1900. In 1942, the federal government built a new residential school facility named Fort Chipewyan Day School. As a significant part of colonialism, the residential school was primarily conducted by churches and religious groups and was administered and subsidised by the federal government. Lena Wandering Spirit was one of many individuals who were forcefully taken to a residential school away from home by the Canadian government, in hopes of making Indigenous people more 'civilized' and Westernized.

The short film's discussion of language loss may be of particular interest to those studying Indigenous and Canadian Literatures. Lena Wandering Spirit mentions that anytime someone spoke the Indigenous language the nuns would 'hit them in the mouth' (NFB 4:21). The film's portrayal of language loss is important as it discusses how the church wanted only English spoken at all times in hopes to 'civilize [the] savages' (National Film Board of Canada). Essentially, the native language was not 'civilized' and so the church wanted only English-speaking people.

Furthermore, *Holy Angels* is extremely important for students, teachers, and researchers as it teaches them the significance of residential schools and how poorly Indigenous peoples were treated by the churches and Canadian government. The film manages to shed some light on the fact that

Indigenous children were often treated like prisoners. Lena Wandering Spirit states, 'they called [us] by numbers, [and I] was number thirty-four' (NFB).

Lena Wandering Spirit, and more than 150,000 Indigenous children, were taken from their families and were forcefully transferred to residential schools in 1963. The *Holy Angels* film provides great insight and large amounts of profound information on what went down in residential schools and how Indigenous peoples were treated, especially young children. Wandering Spirit says that they would scrub us with water and lighter fluid, which would cause a lot of bleeding, but no amount of scrubbing and cleaning was going to get rid of their brown skin color (NFB). They were given food with worms in it and were forced to eat it, and if they did not the consequence was being locked up in a cupboard, states Wandering Spirit (NFB).

Moreover, *Holy Angels* eloquently conveys Canada's colonialist history through impressionistic images and a child's fragmented speech. The short film not only excavates but also moves beyond history. It effectively speaks of the tenacity of a people who have discovered means of healing and of returning home after the trauma of residential schools. *Holy Angels* explores key themes such as how the church forcefully took Indigenous children from their homes and families and put them in residential schools. It examines how Indigenous children were treated and punished in those schools. The film highlights Wandering Spirit's journey, and through her personal experience, narrates how other children were treated and victimized.

In conclusion, *Holy Angels*, Jay Cardinal Villeneuve's short documentary is an excellent video to learn about Canada's colonial history. This short video review looked at Lena Wandering Spirit, a survivor of a residential school, and her personal perspective of how Indigenous children were treated. The video *Holy Angels* is extremely essential for students, instructors, and scholars since it successfully teaches audiences about Indigenous/Canadian literature. Through impressionistic imagery, the video effectively exposes Canada's history of colonialism. It teaches people about the significance of residential schools and how the Church and government exploited Indigenous people.

REFERENCES

Cardinal Villeneuve, J. (2017). *Holy Angels.* National Film Board of Canada.

TEARING AT THE SEAMS

This Wound Is A World, Book Review.

John Oberholzer
John.Oberholzer@icloud.com
BA Creative Writing, Nottingham Trent University

This Wound Is A World is the first and highly acclaimed collection of poetry by Ingenious writer, Billy-Ray Belcourt. Part essay, part poetry, this collection tussles with the very ideas of Indigeneity and queerness, as Belcourt attempts to reconcile and cultivate a world where he can exist. The result is a disturbing and sometimes beautiful tapestry of spiritual, bodily and natural imagery. Through which the language of loss permeates each poem respectively – as, above all, this collection is an act of mourning. To grieve in *This Wound Is A World* is deeply political. This collection is an eye-opening journey through a complex web of intersectional experiences.

One of the most unmissable observations the reader will make, is of all the bodily imagery. Belcourt cultivates the body as a site of extreme tension between the individual who inhabits it, and colonial society, which sees it as an object. Belcourt's definition of colonialism: 'turning bodies into cages that no one has the keys for', Summarises this perfectly. It strikes home the reality of racialised and gendered bodies. Through the eyes of Belcourt, the reader is able to observe and feel how they are oppressed as a result of exterior factors, which cannot be mitigated by the individual. At the same time, the very nature of this fact runs counter to indigenous culture, which 'troubles the idea of having a body' in the first place. The majority of western readers might find this concept challenging. It manifests a kind of dualism within the self, as the hierarchy between the Indigenous body and mind, causes the two to fracture, creating an intense feeling of disembodiment. Often times, the speaker is little more than a soul, loosely tethered to existence.

The next observation the reader could make, is all the sexual encounters. It seems at times, that in Belcourt's experience, the only way to exist for a queer Indigenous man is through the act of sex. Which, in this collection, is frequently akin to a type of transcendence through 'disappearing into someone else'. Belcourt presents his own body as a 'crime scene' which is only escapable through sex. Despite how these situations often feel like 'taking apart pieces of yourself and giving them to someone who can't use them', there

appears to be comfort in this type of sadism. It allows him to become untethered from his body, by sacrificing it to someone else. This idea by itself is relatable and speaks at least in part to an experience which a lot of readers can identify with. It demonstrates the way in which colonialism and western society turns us all into prisoners. However, there is of course an additional, intersectional layer here. Since his body, 'like the land, is also up for grabs', sex, especially gay sex, is also an act of rebellion and anticolonialism. Because allowing such easy access to his body is also to deny personal ownership of it.

Ultimately, the speaker's presence in his own body is ethereal and floats in the liminal space between trauma and love in the 'abandoned house of me'. His experience as an Indigenous queer man is somewhere beyond but also in between life and death and sometimes even time itself. Even physical intimacy is an intricate act of disappearing and reappearing. The fascinating social politics which sit at the centre of this collection are cradled by poetic language, which is literary and truly a joy to read. Belcourt's imagery is simple yet profound, accessible and rewarding to engage with. It provokes readers to think outside of their privilege and gives an understanding of the weight and the complexity of Belcourt's intersectional experience.

This Wound Is A World has won the 2018 Griffin Prize, the Robert Kroetsch City of Edmonton Book Prize and the Most Significant Book of Poetry in English by an Emerging Indigenous Writer at the Indigenous Voices Awards – and it is easy to see why. There is much to be learned from a writerly perspective. Particularly in the audacious experimentation of form and structure, and the seamless blend of different competing elements. Mixing a literary style with crass subject matter, packed with colloquialisms – as well as social political theory. As mentioned before, there is also much to be learned about the indigenous experience through these poems. Thus, making this collection a perfect read for anyone who either enjoys poetry or, who is wanting to learn about the Indigenous Canadian experience. Read with an open mind and open heart, maybe one day, these wounds will heal for good.

REFERENCES

Belcourt. B (2018). This Wound Is A World. *Calgary*: Frontenac House Ltd.

Film Review of *Jordan River Anderson, The Messenger*

Kareena
English 2300, Kwantlen Polytechnic University

The documentary *Jordan River Anderson, The Messenger* is one of a series of films from Director Alanis Obomsawin that focus on the struggle Indigenous children have regarding health care, social, and educational rights. This documentary was created in 2019 and centers on the health difficulties of an Indigenous child named Jordan River Anderson.

Jordan was born with a rare muscular disorder that was only seen in eight other children around the world. He lived his full five years of life in a hospital due to a dispute between the federal and provincial governments. He was supposed to be out of the hospital at the age of two; however, the governments were unable to decide who should pay for his care. His improper treatment from the government caused a legal battle that was aimed at ensuring that a dispute between both levels of government would never affect an Indigenous child again.

This documentary takes a deep dive into Jordan's life and the struggles his family faced by having him stay at a hospital that was far away from their home. The provincial government was not funding his care as it felt it was not responsible for individuals living on reserves. This was also the case for other Indigenous disabled children that were refused funding and resources due to their place of residence. Jordan's Principle was then created to address this concern and create equality for Indigenous youth. This whole journey of this legal battle is followed and seen from the perspectives of different Indigenous families just wanting what is fair and best for their children.

This heart-wrenching film accurately described what is going on in the Canadian government and deserves to be watched by all. Frequently, Indigenous issues within the government and health care are kept hidden to prevent backlash from the community. Controversy regarding Indigenous people living on reserves is kept under the covers, however, through creating documentaries like these and having events such as Truth and Reconciliation Day, mistreatment is finally coming to light. Change will not be made unless awareness is created and presented to the nation. Bringing viewers along for the entire process over the period of a few years

makes it seem as if they are involved in the development of this case, creating a connection between viewers and the family portrayed.

An emotional connection was created by showing actual footage of Jordan as a baby in the hospital. Showing him attached to all the machinery and tubes creates a sense of empathy and engages viewers to be understanding of the situation. Throughout the film, they also show beautiful views of Manitoba from the reserves Indigenous people live on. Living on a reserve may seem perfect from the outside as they have free space and many do not pay taxes; however, this is not the case. Indigenous families are struggling to take care of their children and are being refused funding for help with disabilities and mental health issues.

When watching this documentary, it is suggested that viewers familiarize themselves with the Jordan's Principles and legal terms that are discussed quite frequently throughout. Having a lack of knowledge makes some parts confusing, since the majority of the film is based on a legal battle that is taking place in court and the House of Commons. It is also recommended to watch the film with subtitles, as there are times when it is unclear what they are saying in the interviews. It is also not required that Obomsawin's other documentaries are watched before this one; however, it would help viewers better understand the battles that Indigenous people are facing against the government.

Overall, this was a well-constructed documentary that stayed focused throughout. It gave insight to issues regarding inequality of Indigenous youth in the Canadian community. It exposed the flaws in the Canadian health care system that is deemed to be so perfect. Many times, principles are made addressing issues such as inequality; however, they are not actually being implemented and are ignored within the judicial system. It is recommended to watch this documentary and learn about the struggles of living on a reserve since it is not openly talked about elsewhere.

REFERENCES

Obomsawin, Alanis. (2019). *Jordan River Anderson, The Messenger*. National Film Board of Canada

FROM C TO C CHINESE CANADIAN STORIES OF MIGRATION

A review of the captivating and enthralling documentary of the Chinese Canadian journey

Megan Sprous
n0925303@my.ntu.ac.uk
BA Creative Writing, Nottingham Trent University

Canada, a country proud of being a land of multicultural diversity, has had its history placed under the spotlight in Jordon Paterson's riveting and vivid documentary *From C to C: Chinese Canadian Stories of Migration* (2010). Produced by SFU Creative Services, this piece tells the stories through first-hand accounts of Chinese immigrants' experiences living in and fighting for Canada and the importance of sharing history to be remembered by future generations.

Opening with the moving lyrics from the *Gold Mountain Song* (1896), the documentary offers a strong and beautiful foreshadowing of the stories to be shared of migration, racism, riots, starvation, war, and heart break.

Using a prominent contrast, the opening scene shows families gaining their citizenship through the Canadian Citizenship Ceremony. Voice over narration by Henry Yu, a historian at the University of British Columbia, speaks about how Canada refers to their young as having a 'global citizenship'. That they are encouraged to grow up and help change the world, but this is often a vision limited to those who were born in the country. A noteworthy comment Yu says, 'we need to re-examine the history of Canada through the lens of those who are left out, those who paid the price of the building of a particular type of nation that's built around white supremacy. If we want to move

forward, we can't ignore those things anymore.'

A view of Canada often omitted, *From C to C* gives authentic recounts of first-person experiences. Frank Wong, a World War II Veteran, relates in heart breaking detail growing up in Vancouver. Where he was confined to live in China Town, where the only jobs available were farm work or in the Cavalry. No professional white-collar jobs were available for Chinese immigrants.

From C to C also highlights the difficulties of immigration. Charlie Quan recalls how he moved from China to Canada to earn a better living. The Head Tax at the time was $500, an equivalent today to over $7000 per person. He recounts the horrific treatment of immigrants, in which the Chinese Immigration centre was described as 'the pig house', a chilling gaze into the dehumanisation of the Chinese immigrants. The process sometimes would take up to two months to complete. In 2006, Prime Minister Stephen Harper apologised for the Chinese Head Tax and the fallout from the startlingly recent 1923 Chinese Immigration Act, however only 30 out of the 80,000 people who paid the Head Tax were alive to receive the $20,000 redress payment.

From C to C discusses Canada's own version of the American Dream, the Gold Mountain, and how many Chinese men moved there to mine the gold as an easy way to earn a good living. However, as the documentary highlights, this wasn't the case for many of the Chinese population. Keith Quan speaks about how many of the men that went never returned. A mixture of lack of money to return, pride and embarrassment of failing, many men stayed in Canada, never seeing their wives or children again. The documentary is successful in showing all aspects of the story, it highlights the hardships of not only the men, but also the women who lost their husbands. Selia Tan, an Architectural Conservationist in Kaiping tells how, with their husbands gone, many of the women had added hardships of not only grieving their husbands, but also making sure they were able to juggle childcare, house care, and farming.

Throughout the whole documentary, a reoccurring theme shown is the importance of sharing history and making sure the younger generations know the struggles their ancestors endured. Lieutenant Colonel Howe Lee speaks about how little

the Canadian history books tell of the Chinese Canadian history and how, when speaking to the younger generations, they are unaware as to what their ancestors went through. Tommy Chen, a student, believes learning about the past helps him to better understand and feel closer to his elders. This documentary could be a leading force in showcasing the importance of sharing history, not only to highlight the various hardships and austerity faced by immigrants, but to bring different generations together, telling the true stories of their ancestors. If the history books are unable to recount what happened to the younger generations, then perhaps more documentaries such as this should be used to educate them. Forty-six minutes of run time covers almost two hundred years of history without losing the emotion nor tension.

A stunning piece of work, *From C to C: Canadian Stories of Migration* tells an important story using nostalgia inducing imagery, captivating musical scores, and poignant truthful accounts of the past. Using beautiful cinematography to tell a harsh truth, *From C to C* captivates a strong source of emotion to show its audience the truth straight from the mouth of those who experienced it, and those who still experience it today.

Going in depth and showing its viewers the history that Canada seems almost unwilling to share itself, this documentary is a useful tool to bring light to generations of struggle and hostility funded and supported by the Canadian government. I highly recommend this documentary to those who wish to know the undiluted truth of the history of the Chinese Canadian migration experience.

REFERENCES

From C to C Chinese Stories of Migration<https://atom.archives.sfu.ca/uploads/r/simon-fraser-universityarchives/1/1/4/114df5090cbeb9a994381bdcbf9011389a557c2fad967933d4c5eaef04058dd9/2f7eff00-5cd1-47bb-a227-378027b23085-From_C_to_C__Chinese_Canadian_Stories_of_Migration__HD__-

_Canadian_Screen_Awards.mp4?token=4ce0827ad3d2b8cb4fd9326036beb18f9121ecfc7b58dede7da533266aea58fe> [Accessed: 1st November]

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS THROUGH THE LENS OF *INDIAN HORSE*

Residential Schools

Tae
English 2300, Kwantlen Polytechnic University

Indian Horse by Richard Wagamese is a 2012 novel that depicts the horrors of the residential schools. The author himself was someone who was hurt and troubled by the torment inflicted on communities by the schools. According to *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 'Both of Wagamese's parents had also been removed from their families at a young age; they were survivors of Canada's residential school system'. [1]

Unfortunately, Richard Wagamese passed away on the 10th of March 2017, leaving behind his wife, children, and grandchildren.[2] Nonetheless, his legacy lives on through his work. In this specific case, a part of this legacy lives on through *Indian Horse*, a fictional novel that draws from his personal life to illustrate the displacement of Indigenous communities. The book tackles themes such as sexual abuse, violence, and child abuse.

Written in first-person perspective, *Indian Horse* portrays the main character, Saul and his Indigenous family living out in the open. However, Saul eventually gets taken to a residential school after an extremely turbulent journey, which marks the start of his worst nightmare.

Overall, the story is inferred to be of Saul's personal life as he experiences the trials and tribulations that come his way through the corrupt system of cultural assimilation.

Eventually, he learns to cope with the death, torture, and abuse of his peers after being assimilated into the school through hockey. However, even that dream becomes short lived as further discrimination and harassment is showcased in the story.

Due to the entire story being written in the first person, the author appeals to pathos to get the readers to empathize and sympathize with Saul.

[1] Lewis, J. "Richard Wagamese." *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. (Historica Canada, 2018), n.p.

[2] Lewis, J. "Richard Wagamese." *The Canadian Encyclopedia.*

It is believed that one of the ways to educate and spread awareness on certain topics is to put people in other shoes, and *The Indian Horse* does an amazing job in doing that. Wagamese makes the reader feel as if they were friends with Saul, if not Saul himself. Saul's trauma becomes a reader's trauma, and Saul's grief becomes a reader's grief. While describing and presenting the horrors of cultural assimilation and racism, the author maintains a vivid and strong ability to story tell and enrapture his audience. Wagamese displays his bountiful wealth of knowledge on the subject, utilizing his personal experiences as fuel to the plot. These experiences include the 'neglect he experienced from his parents as a result of the abuse and trauma they had suffered in the residential school system'; the'painful legacy would become a reoccurring theme throughout his body of work'.[3] It can be inferred that this 'painful legacy' is what allows his work to be so powerful and impactful. A person describing his pain and suffering will of course lend to not only more credibility, but also superior storytelling.

Humans are sympathetic creatures. Rather than telling facts, it is better to utilize the appeal of pathos and get the reader to empathize with the writer.

However, it is important to note that Richard Wagamese is an indirect victim of the residential school system. While it can be assumed that he gets his information from his estranged parents and his community, everything described in the book may not be completely accurate. The book is a work of fiction; it is not based on a real person and is also not meant to be accurate. Wagamese's goal, in the end, is to spread awareness and portray horrors of the time period, and he does that splendidly. If *Indian Horse* were to be republished, it could incorporate a biography of Wagamese's experience to provide a better understanding for readers, as the most accurate and precise source of information would always be a primary source. For more information on residential schools, it is recommended to the reader to investigate real survivors of that cruel time. Here Wagamese/the publishers could provide links or other books at the end of the novel for readers to continue research. That being said, what is presented here is by no means to undermine Richard Wagamese's experiences of the situation, but rather a devil's advocate's take on it. The story is a good entry to the subject if someone is overwhelmed by the topic. And as mentioned earlier, presenting the possible dread of residential schools is very effective through the appeal of pathos.

The Indian Horse by Richard Wagamese is a

[3] Lewis, J. "Richard Wagamese." *The Canadian Encyclopedia.*

very intricately woven story while at the same time educational. It connects to Canadian culture by illustrating and pointing out the disgraceful mistakes we have made as a nation. Nevertheless, it could be these exact mistakes that allow us to never repeat them. It is to our knowledge that even today, the Prime Ministers of our nation have issued apologies to those subjected to the inhumane treatment of residential schools; albeit apologies may not be enough. *The Indian Horse* by Richard Wagamese spreads awareness and wishes for a change. The story is a way of representing those who have suffered at the hands residential schools and providing a beacon of hope for future generations through the appeal of pathos, showcasing the horrors of the residential school system.

REFERENCES

Lewis, J. (2018). "Richard Wagamese". *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Historica Canada. https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/richard-wagamese. [Accessed 10 November 2021]

Wagamese, R. (2011). *Indian Horse*. Madeira Park: Douglas & McIntyre

Storytelling of a Different Kind: Book Review of Thomas King's *The Truth About Stories: A Native Perspective*

Story Telling should not be overlooked.

Wolf MacDonald
English 2300, Kwantlen Polytechnic University

Storytelling is an interesting part of culture, having been influenced by both history and myths from various peoples. Those who are no strangers to this are the Indigenous people of Canada and the United States, where stories and storytellers hold an important place culturally. This is particularly important when talking about a specific storyteller, known as Thomas King, author of the book *The Truth About Stories: A Native Perspective.* Inside his book, he goes over various stories he's told and been told over time. Given the mixture of his own experiences as a mixed-race person of Indigenous descent and his storytelling, it would make sense to compare his experiences with racism to the experiences of those who survived the dark times of the residential school system and other injustices of colonization.

While this book is an older one, given the age of King, and that he was born American, not Canadian, his experiences are still relevant considering he himself is part native by birth. Within the pages of his book, he talks of the various struggles of his life associated with being mixed race, including how people perceived him. As a result of his background, he has a wealth of knowledge in terms of the treatment of Indigenous peoples.

On this note, he uses his own experience as a way to try and bridge the gap left by the lack of native voices. This gives a degree of authenticity to his book. His experience with racism is profound, with him being labelled as looking too Native at some events, or not Native enough at others, depending on how he dressed. His description of what an 'authentic' native is, at least according to those of European descent, is also telling, with him being very disparaging of those same people who made that image.

Another thing that comes up quite frequently is the challenges which the Natives face. King does a good job of focusing on the big issues

that various Native bands have throughout both the United States and Canada, such as policies created by the colonial governments, trauma created by attempted genocide, and residential schools. His focus on those problems makes it clear that his perspective on these historic issues is quite important given his background.

King explains how colonial governments attempted to get rid of the Natives, first by violence, and then by legislation (King, 138-149). In Canada's context, he goes through the Indian Act, and then the disastrous attempt to apologize for that which came with Bill C-31, which led to a whole court case (King, 149-160). Bill C-31 was an act introduced to amend the Indian Act, attempting to end more than a century's worth of attempted genocide.

King also addresses residential schools. While he may not have experienced it, he mentions people who had been through the horrors of those schools. In the section where he mentions residential schools, he talks about a friend who was able to survive, however briefly. What he describes in that section of the book, however short, tracks with the various abuses suffered by survivors who are speaking out today.

King's talk about residential school survivor and fellow writer, Robert Alexie, adds another level of authenticity to the case his book makes. Through a short purview of Alexie's book, King provides various details that are consistent with those of whom have or are descended from those who have survived physical and sexual abuses, that were attempts to assimilate them (King, 126-127).

Of course, it would be unfair to give the book high praise without giving it some criticism. In the case of King's book, there is a side of which one learns *too* much about him, as the accounts get very personal. Not just that, while his style of writing is very easy to understand, it also contains a lot of dated language which might be considered offensive currently. Furthermore, the stories he tells within that are not personal accounts are few and far between, though he does a very good job of connecting them to what he talks about in his personal life and from the native perspective.

This book is an engaging read, despite its few flaws. King does a very good job of describing the Native experience to those who are not privy to such information. He brings a good perspective into the mix, as again, he himself is of mixed race, thus giving what he says within the pages a great deal of authenticity. Furthermore, his knowledge of what happened provides good accounts of the trauma that Native people have experienced during colonization. At the same time, while this plays a large part of his book, it also speaks to the power of native stories, and knowledge, as well as their ability to survive the harsh treatment of colonialism.

REFERENCES

King, T. (2010) *The Truth about Stories: A Native Narrative*. House of Anansi Press Inc.