

INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES TO CANADIAN STUDIES

# CONTEMPORARY KANATA



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**ROBARTS**  
CENTRE FOR CANADIAN STUDIES





# *Masthead*

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<sup>1</sup> The articles are ordered alphabetically by the authors' last names

# From the Desk of the Editorial Board



Often in writing such introductions or statements that ought to summarize the long journey towards completing an inaugural journal issue, there is a marked tendency to turn to platitudes and/or witty summations. And while we are conscious of that fact, it is to one such witticism we turn as we reflect on our path here: ‘it takes a village’. In the beginning, we set out to provide a space for undergraduate students to engage in critical discourse that speaks to the contemporary Canadian moment. There is a sense – although almost every generation tends to feel this keenly – that we are living through the turn of an era, tumultuous times that portend great transformation, and require new ways of organizing our ideas and our interactions.

Our name choice was in part to reflect this, ‘contemporary’ was about the moment we found ourselves in, but ‘kanata’ was about reimagining Canada. The Iroquois word from which ‘Canada’ emerged is said to mean ‘the settlement’ or ‘the village’, and that was what we were trying to evoke. A space for critical discourse that began from a precise understanding of community. One that would draw on our commonality as Glendon students who have spent four-plus years studying and researching in a close-knit campus. It remains in many ways our hope for the future. And so, when we say it takes a village, we are not just reflecting on the path it took to get us here, but also on the path we wish to emerge from our work. We practice gratitude to all: those who have come before making this possible (Indigenous caretakers, our ancestors), those who are with us now upholding our vision (our faculty, staff, and volunteers), and those who will join us (*altaeri saeculo*).

While we decided not to impose a theme on our article submissions, one nonetheless arose from the papers submitted: marginalities and marginalized bodies. In “How Do You Criticize a Life Story?: Form, Trauma, and Memoir in *Canada Reads 2020*”, T. Brown explores how the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation utilizes the marginal genre of memoir often thought of as ‘lowbrow’ to create emotional connections that emphasize empathy and build paths for revisiting personal trauma and memory. Continuing the conversation on less prominent literary forms, C. Gardner takes Madeleine Thien’s *Do Not Say We Have Nothing* as a starting point for analyzing the reciprocal link between text and image. In the paper, “Mash-up, Smash-up: Mixing Genres and Mediums to Rewrite History in *Do Not Say We Have Nothing*”, the authors posits that such a collision of genres might allow for previously omitted and marginal voices within historical accounts to become more audible.

R. Ghanem turns the conversation towards marginal bodies and their encounter with the Canadian borders. In “Canada - A Long Way to Go: The Designated Country of Origin Policy and Refugee Protection”, the Designated Country of Origin policy is evaluated within a larger context of other immigration regulations and human rights concerns as a tool that undermines refugee protection. R. Lovering’s “Graphic Reminders: Confronting Colonialism in Canada through *Betty: The Helen Betty Osborne Story*” invites the reader to consider a form that moves between text and images, much like C. Gardner’s paper. Here, however, the form being analyzed is that of a graphic novel. The paper argues for a reading of Canadian history through its central text as one that has long held patterns of racism against Indigenous women.

J. Marsella continues this dialogue on racism against Indigenous women in “Examining the Subjugation of Indigenous Women through Community Partnerships with Extractive Industries”. Here, the case is made that extractive industries are enmeshed in the history of Canadian colonization and patriarchy, disproportionately impacting Indigenous women, prompting an evaluation of such corporate projects and the rationale underpinning them. S. Topp as the final article’s author brings our conversation full circle to the home city of our journal. Tackling Toronto and specifically the Runnymede-Bloor West Village community, Topp calls for greater awareness of the effects of gentrification on cities as a precursor to segregation along racial and class lines.

# From the Desk of the Editorial Board



Part of our resistance to the power structures that academia and scholarship reify, required us to create avenues for other forms of knowledge-making within our pages that depart from the traditional essay structure: cartoons, poetry, personal and visual essays. In our *Alternative Epistemologies* section, a found poem entitled “we’re all in this together” by M. Rykov invites us to consider – in response to our call along these thematic lines – (in)visibility and primacy accorded to objects and bodies, and the meanings behind this ordering. We remain immensely proud of the offerings of our first issue and invite you to read and engage with the discourses they interact with.

Thank you,

B. Cohen

A. González

J. Oduro

D. Vasquez

& M. Joseph

# Un message du bureau du comité de rédaction



Lors de la rédaction d'introductions et de déclarations qui devraient résumer le progrès vers l'achèvement d'un texte inaugural, il existe une tendance marquée à inclure les banalités ou les anecdotes pleines d'esprit . Bien que nous soyons conscients de ce fait, c'est vers tels mots d'esprit qu'on se tourne lorsqu'on réfléchit à notre chemin : « il faut tout un village ». Au départ, on a voulu offrir aux étudiants de premier cycle un espace où ils pourraient s'engager dans un discours critique sur l'actualité canadienne. On a l'idée, malgré le fait que quasiment toutes les générations ont tendance à ressentir vivement – que l'on vive le tournant d'une époque, une période tumultueuse qui laisse présager de grandes transformations et qui exige de nouvelles façons d'organiser nos idées et nos interactions.

En tant qu'une organisation, on a choisi le nom *Contemporary Kanata* méthodiquement. Le mot *Contemporary*, choisi en partie pour refléter la situation susmentionnée, correspond au moment où on se trouve. Cependant, le mot huron et iroquois, *Kanata* signifie Canada imaginé de nouveau. Le mot iroquois, d'où vient le mot « Canada » signifie « établissement » ou « village ». C'est ça ce que l'on a essayé de créer – un espace désigné pour les débats critiques nés de la connaissance de la communauté, un espace où on célèbre la communauté des de Glendon qui ont passé plus de quatre ans à étudier et à faire des recherches dans un campus très uni. Cela reste à bien des égards notre espoir pour l'avenir. Ainsi, lorsque nous disons qu'il faut tout un village, on ne réfléchit pas seulement au chemin, mais aussi à celui qu'on souhaite voir émerger de notre travail. On remercie cordialement à tous ceux qui nous ont précédés et qui ont rendu tout cela possible (les gardiens indigènes, nos ancêtres), à tous ceux qui défendent notre vision (nos professeurs, notre personnel et nos bénévoles) et à tous ceux qui nous rejoindront (*altaeri saeculo*).

Bien que nous ayons décidé de ne pas imposer de thème aux articles soumis, un thème s'est néanmoins manifesté des articles soumis - les marginalités et les groupes marginalisés. L'article "How Do You Criticize a Life Story ? Form, Trauma, and Memoir in Canada Reads 2020" par T. Brown explore la façon dont CBC – Radio-Canada utilise les mémoires de genre marginal, souvent considéré de ne pas avoir de prétention intellectuelle, afin de créer des liens émotionnels qui mettent l'accent sur l'empathie et permettent de revisiter les traumatismes personnels. Poursuivant la conversation sur des formes littéraires moins importantes, C. Gardner utilise *Do Not Say We Have Nothing* de Madeleine Thien en tant qu'un point de départ pour analyser le lien réciproque entre le texte et l'image. *Mash-up, Smash-up : Mixing Genres and Mediums To Rewrite History in Do Not Say We Have Nothing* souligne qu'un tel mélange de genres pourrait laisser exprimer les gens qui ont été précédemment omis et marginalisés dans les récits historiques.

R. Ghanem tourne la conversation vers les groupes marginalisés et leurs expériences aux frontières canadiennes. L'article *Canada - A Long Way to Go : The Designated Country of Origin Policy and Refugee Protection* observe la politique du pays d'origine désigné dans un contexte plus large en contraste d'autres réglementations sur l'immigration. Et les préoccupations en matière de droits de l'homme comme un outil utilisé à affaiblir la protection des réfugiés. L'article *Graphic Reminders : Confronting Colonialism in Canada through Betty : The Helen Betty Osborne Story* de R. Lovering force le lecteur à considérer une forme qui se déplace entre le texte et les images, similaires à l'article de C. Gardner. Cependant, la forme analysée est celle d'un roman graphique. L'article plaide en faveur d'une lecture de l'histoire du Canada, qui a longtemps entretenu des schémas de racisme à l'encontre des femmes indigènes.

J. Marsella poursuit ce dialogue sur le racisme à l'égard des femmes autochtones dans *Examining the Subjugation of Indigenous Women through Community Partnerships With Extractive Industries*. L'auteur souligne que les industries extractives sont ancrées dans l'histoire de la colonisation et du patriarcat canadien et qu'elles ont un impact disproportionné sur les femmes autochtones. Ce qui incite à évaluer ces projets d'entreprise et les raisons qui les sous-tendent. S. Topp tourne la conversation vers la ville d'origine de notre journal, Toronto. Notamment à la communauté de Runnymede-Bloor West Village. Topp demande une plus grande prise de conscience des effets de l'embourgeoisement sur les villes, un précurseur de la ségrégation raciale et de classe.

# Un message du bureau du comité de rédaction



Notre résistance aux structures de pouvoir réifiées par le milieu universitaire nous a obligés à créer d'autres réseaux de connaissances qui s'écartent de la structure traditionnelle de l'essai; les bandes dessinées, la poésie, les essais personnels et visuels. Dans notre section Épistémologies alternative, le poème nous sommes tous dans le même bateau (*we're all in this together*) par M. Rykov nous invite à réfléchir en réponse à notre appel sur ces lignes thématiques, à la visibilité (plutôt l'invisibilité) et à la primauté accordée aux objets et aux corps, ainsi qu'aux significations moins apparentes. Nous sommes tellement fiers des propositions de notre premier numéro et nous vous invitons à les lire et à vous engager dans les discours avec lesquels elles interagissent.

Nous vous remercions,

B. Cohen  
A. González  
J. Oduro  
D. Vasquez  
et M. Joseph

# *Articles*





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TAYLOR BROWN<sup>1</sup>

# “How Do You Criticize a Life Story?”: Form, Trauma, and Memoir in *Canada Reads 2020*

## Abstract

“How do you Criticize a Life Story?”: Form, Trauma, and Memoir in *Canada Reads 2020*” investigates the practice of reading for empathy, as it pertains to memoir and trauma operating in the hypervisibility of the public sphere. The emotional connection between reader and author that memoir inspires is also encouraged on *Canada Reads*, the popular intersection of a literary contest and reality show. The panelists’ 2020 discussion of Jesse Thistle’s *From the Ashes* and Samra Habib’s *We Have Always Been Here* encouraged reading as a means of empathizing with the author’s experiences. As Danielle Fuller details, this is also how many viewers appraise the titles featured on *Canada Reads*, adopting a method of literary evaluation that is inherently personal. Memoir, given its connection to the real world and real people, becomes an excellent candidate for connecting with the reader. While Philippe Lejeune argues that memoir must be entirely non-fictional, G. Thomas Couser and Leigh Gilmore demonstrate that for a genre grappling with selective memory and trauma, this is impossible. As a result, memoir proves to be a genre that is both popular amongst readers and necessarily literary and inventive in its construction. The popularity of *Canada Reads* and memoir indicate that empathetic reading deserves a place in literary discourse, which in turn reimagines the Canadian literary canon and traditional methods of evaluation.

**Keywords:** Memoir, Canada Reads, Trauma, Canlit, Public

## Résumé

« Comment critiquer une histoire de vie ? » Form, Trauma, and Memoir in *Canada Reads 2020* » étudie la pratique de la lecture pour l'empathie, en ce qui concerne les mémoires et les traumatismes opérant dans l'hyper visibilité de la sphère publique. Le lien émotionnel entre le lecteur et l'auteur qui inspire les mémoires est également encouragé par le Combat national des livres, l'intersection populaire d'un concours littéraire et d'une émission de télé-réalité. La discussion des panélistes sur *From the Ashes* de Jesse Thistle et *We Have Always Been Here* de Samra Habib a encouragé la lecture comme moyen d'empathie avec les expériences de l'auteur. Selon Danielle Fuller, c'est également de cette manière que de nombreux spectateurs évaluent les titres présentés dans le cadre du Combat national des livres; on adopte une méthode d'évaluation littéraire intrinsèquement personnelle. Les mémoires, étant donné leur lien avec le monde réel et les personnes réelles, deviennent un excellent candidat pour établir un lien avec le lecteur. Alors que Philippe Lejeune soutient que les mémoires doivent être entièrement non fictionnelles, G. Thomas Couser et Leigh Gilmore démontrent que c'est impossible pour un genre qui s'attaque à la mémoire sélective et aux traumatismes. Par conséquent, les mémoires s'avèrent être un genre à la fois populaire auprès des lecteurs et nécessairement littéraire et inventif dans sa construction. La popularité du Combat des livres et des mémoires indique que la lecture empathique mérite une place dans le discours littéraire, qui à son tour, reconçoit le canon littéraire canadien et les méthodes traditionnelles d'évaluation.

**Mots clés:** mémoires, Canada Reads, traumatisme, Canlit, public

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<sup>1</sup> University of Guelph, Ontario.

As a genre, memoir is largely regarded as lowbrow art. In Julie Rak's *Boom!: Manufacturing Memoir for the Popular Market*, Rak (2013) outlines the memoir boom, a "period roughly spanning the first decade of the twenty-first century, when the production and public visibility of American and British memoirs" increased (p. 3). Rak's analysis focuses on memoir as a commodity, linking the genre's popularity to its performance in the marketplace. Rak argues that "the long association of memoir with the marketplace and its 'demands' for timely, truthful and sometimes sensationalized non-fiction continues today, as does the backlash against this kind of writing as trashy, lowbrow, and not worth reading" (p. 51). Evidently, memoir sells well but is largely overlooked by academics, and perhaps not taken seriously as a legitimate, distinctly "literary" medium.

While writing the first draft of this paper, I worked at a major book retailer. Right in time for the frenzy of holiday shopping, Barack Obama published his second memoir, *The Promised Land*. My job became inundated with unloading boxes upon boxes of that book and pointing customers to its various locations around the store. Many customers were drawn to Obama's memoir because they liked his personality and his politics, and because they were intrigued by the fact that everything within those pages *actually happened*. They were drawn to the real person and the real story he promised. The appeal of Obama's memoir and perhaps by extension, every memoir, appears contingent upon the reader's connection to the author and the real world they represent.

If one considers the emphasis of personal connection to a text, it is important to consider literary contests that also emphasize personalities and real-world connections. CBC's *Canada Reads* is a reality show that features a panel of five celebrated Canadians who discuss the merit of five Canadian books. The show is formatted like *Survivor*, as panelists eliminate one book every episode until the winner remains, crowning the "one book all of Canada should read" (CBC, 2021). The show is televised, broadcast over the radio, Spotify, Apple Podcasts and available through CBC Gem and YouTube. The show's popularity is best demonstrated through its influence on the Canadian publishing industry. Fuller and Rak (2015) define the "*Canada Reads effect*" as the exposure that each book receives throughout the discussions, placing almost every contender on the bestseller list (p. 38). While reality television is usually framed as frivolous or superficial, the proceedings of the program have material consequences for authors, readers, and booksellers.

What exactly makes *Canada Reads* so popular and sets it apart from other Canadian literary contests? According to the CBC, the show's success is attributed to "inviting celebrities who were avid readers but not the 'usual suspects' when it came to talking about books" (CBC, 2020). Here, the CBC highlights the most important aspect of the show: the panelists are not literary critics or experts in any capacity, they simply enjoy reading. As a result, the show becomes framed as accessible and relatable for viewers who are not always interested in intensive literary analysis. The panelists' appraisal of each book is usually linked to their personal connections to the book they are defending. *Canada Reads* differs from traditional, academic modes of evaluation in that it encourages relatability, accessibility and considers the personal likes and dislikes of the reader. As a result, the structure of *Canada Reads* almost guarantees memoir will perform exceedingly well on the show, as both outlets inspire a method of reading that differs from strictly academic interpretations of books, inspiring empathetic and inherently personal readings of the texts.

*Canada Reads* 2020 featured two memoirs: Jesse Thistle's *From the Ashes*, a memoir of Thistle's life as he overcomes addiction and homelessness to find recovery through cultural connection, was defended by George Canyon. The other memoir is Samra Habib's *We Have Always Been Here*, an account of Habib's life as a queer, Muslim, immigrant woman in Canada, defended by Amanda Brugal. These two memoirs form the basis of this analysis due to their popularity amongst readers, how each memoir and author contended with trauma as a public facing entity and the similarities in how the panelists appraised them. Habib's memoir ultimately won the competition and although *From the Ashes* was eliminated in the second round, according to Genner (2020), it became a top-selling Canadian title (par. 6). Evidently, Canadians are moved by, or at least inclined to read and buy, memoir.

Memoir's popularity in *Canada Reads* can be attributed to how the panelists spoke about each memoir. The panelists foregrounded the authors' personalities, as Canyon argued that reading *From the Ashes* "felt like I was sitting with a close friend you know, a brother if you will, listening to his life story over a casual cup of coffee" (CBC, 2020). Panelist Kaniehtiio Horn validated Canyon's experience of understanding an author through their memoir, because she felt "like I knew [Habib] by the end" of *We Have Always Been Here* (CBC, 2020). As a result of the panelists' focus on the author's knowability in memoir, they emphasize its status as non-fiction, as authors are framed not as

characters within a book but as knowable, accessible personas.

Through *Canada Reads* 2020, the panelists debated the merits and shortcomings of each genre represented in the contest, with certain panelists fixated on the comparison between fiction and non-fiction. Canyon dismissed fiction because “you won’t develop the same empathy” for fictional characters because “you can separate yourself from that fictional world” (CBC, 2020). Truth is paramount to the appeal of memoir and defines the genre in contrast to fiction. For a work to be considered autobiographical and therefore non-fiction, Philippe Lejeune (1989) argues the work must comply with the “autobiographical pact,” achieved when a book is the “retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality” (p. 4). Lejeune’s definition, while not flawless as it leaves much to be considered<sup>2</sup>, provides a sufficient understanding of what memoir is and most importantly, what memoir is not. Even if fiction is inspired by true events, the reader invests in the reading experience differently, as argued by Canyon. G. Thomas Couser (2011) argues that fiction requires the “willing suspension of disbelief,” while memoir is contingent upon its promise to portray true events (p. 17).

While memoir is often defined in contrast to fiction, that distinction cannot adequately establish the two as binaries of truth and falsehood. Couser (2011) argues that an author’s memory can prove to be “notoriously unreliable and highly selective” (p. 19). Therefore, memoirs cannot be evaluated as a carbon copy of reality. Life writing is “undeniably ‘fictive’ (inventive) even when it is not [considered] ‘novelistic’” (p. 53). Lejeune (1989) demonstrates that as a genre, memoir hinges upon the “autobiographical pact” (p. 3)<sup>3</sup>, while conversely, Couser points out the inherent inventiveness of the genre. Memoirs represent true events but in the process of writing non-fiction, the invention akin to fiction is required. The two models of memoir offered by Lejeune and Couser highlight the most pronounced problem of the genre. While both *From the Ashes* and *We Have Always Been Here* serve as

accounts of past events, the limitations of memory and trauma are imposed upon them.

*From the Ashes* and *We Have Always Been Here* both include references to traumatic episodes that cannot be explicitly represented. Leigh Gilmore (2003), in writing about memoir and trauma, argues that trauma is “unspeakable” and therefore difficult for the survivor to come to terms with themselves, let alone disclose to the reader, rendering it nearly “unrepresentable” (p. 702). This does not reflect a memoirist’s literary abilities; rather, the failure to represent trauma subsequently emphasizes the presence of craft; the narrative *must* be constructed to work around restrictions imposed by trauma. As a result, memoir should not be considered wholly non-fiction and therefore automatically unliterary, as its very existence indicates stylistic choices made by the author.

In an author’s note that succeeds *From the Ashes*, Thistle (2019) explains that “trauma distorts perspectives. I think my mind blocks out a lot, bends time, folds that trauma in on itself so that I can function today” (p. 355). Thistle acknowledges the presence of his trauma and yet, the traumatic events in question cannot be explicitly detailed because the existence of his present, writing self is contingent upon the bracketing of his trauma. To write his memoir and subsequently appear on *Canada Reads* as a figure made available to the public, he cannot fully represent some of the circumstances that inform his position as a memoirist.

*From the Ashes* chronicles Thistle’s life as he struggles against systemic barriers resulting in homelessness, addiction, and physical and sexual violence. In Thistle’s retelling of the night that he was sexually assaulted, he loses then regains consciousness. After a break in the narration indicates time has passed, he awakes to inspect the damage to his body by describing the graphic details. Although Thistle unflinchingly represents the aftermath, he is unable to disclose “what happened, who was around me before I fell unconscious, why I woke up near the washroom” (p. 173). The moments leading up to the narrative break, combined with the aftermath, make it evident to both

<sup>2</sup> Lejeune’s definition of autobiography elicits the following questions: must the work be prose? How does an author only focus on their individual life, given the external factors inherent to any person’s experience? Does the “story of his personality” imply a narrative arc and a definitive conclusion, leaving anything short of that incomplete? Is a perfect narrative arc possible, because the author is alive to write their memoir and therefore still has life left to live?

<sup>3</sup> Consider the outrage sparked by James Frey’s fabricated account of addiction in *A Million Little Pieces*. Rak (2013) highlights that the public’s reaction indicates that Frey betrayed his readers and his publishers by marketing a novel as memoir (p. 25), which demonstrates the ramifications of betraying Lejeune’s autobiographical pact.

Thistle and the reader that he survived a sexual assault. When he begins to realize what happened to him, he cannot bring himself to explicitly name it, articulating a "deep feeling of shame" instead (p. 173). While the presence of a traumatic event is identified to the reader, just as Thistle acknowledges its presence in his author's note, the actual incident can only be implied; traumatic episodes fail to be represented in Thistle's memoir.

*We Have Always Been Here* operates under the same restrictions of representation. Habib (2019) recalls an incident in which she is sexually assaulted as a child. In the aftermath, it "became important to me to act as though I hadn't been scarred by the incident" (p. 15). Like Thistle, whose trauma is bracketed to allow him to continue with his life and his writing, Habib collapses the traumatic event in her narration. She chose to "forget his name and his face" (p. 14), reflecting not only trauma's impact on her memory, but on how she's chosen to represent it. The vagueness in her narration is furthered by the setting she recalls: a "dark room, heavy curtains obscuring any hope of clarity" (p. 14). This is another instance, like Thistle's unconscious state, that illustrates the narrative restrictions of representing trauma. The man is faceless, and the room prevents clarity, illustrating both Habib's failure to be explicit in her retelling and how her mind has blocked out certain details.

This analysis of trauma within *From the Ashes* and *We Have Always Been Here* does not serve to position unconsciousness or dark rooms as apt metaphors for how trauma functions in the text. Nor does this exploration cast doubt upon the circumstances of each incident. Instead, this analysis demonstrates the necessary construction of memoir. Both Thistle and Habib must be inventive in their writing, not only for the sake of a cohesive narrative, but for the preservation of their current, writing selves. Their writing is a result of self-preservation as they bend the narrative to move around and beyond traumatic events. Memoir is inventive and intentional because the authors are aware of the gaps in their memory and subsequently, their narration. A consideration of trauma and its impacts on narrative undermines memoir's status as "lowbrow" writing.

While Gilmore's articulation of trauma is observed in both memoirs featured on *Canada Reads* 2020, the format and execution of the show runs

contrary to how trauma functions in the texts. Lorraine York (2007) demonstrates the tension of balancing the author's private, written world with the wider, public realm they promote their work to (p. 13). Writing is "most frequently performed in privacy" despite a notable author's visibility and availability to the public (p. 12)<sup>4</sup>. This is exceptionally true when authors appear on *Canada Reads*. Throughout the show, Habib and Thistle are virtually present to embody the traumas that their memoirs attempt to articulate. Their public personas appear to contradict the private worlds that their memoirs present.

Fuller and Rehberg Sedo (2006) demonstrate how the structure of *Canada Reads* brings the private act of reading and writing into the hypervisibility of the public sphere (via radio, television, and the Internet), creating a sensationalized "media spectacle" (p. 19). As a result of the show's format, intimate moments involving both authors and panelists are broadcast across the country. This contradiction between the private and the public, the intimate and the spectacle, pervades every installment, as the panelists encourage viewers to engage with or be compelled by the most intimate and traumatizing moments of an author's life. In *Canada Reads* 2020, every panelist referred to the relationship they fostered with the authors, both through reading their work and interacting with them. Canyon established a sense of intimacy with Thistle by referring to him as a "brother" (CBC, 2020). *We Have Always Been Here* received the same treatment from the panelists, as Brugal praised the memoir as a "window into a world" she had not previously understood (CBC, 2020). The panelists emotionally connected with Thistle and Habib through their memoirs and advocated for viewers to observe the same practice in their own readings of each text.

Many viewers of *Canada Reads* partake in what Fuller (2007) refers to as the show's empathetic "response to literature" (p. 12). Fuller argues this method of "personalized criticism," is how many fans, inspired by the panelists' discussion, shape their evaluation of the titles (p. 12). The personal connection that *Canada Reads* encourages is further evidenced by Simon and Shuster's promotion of *From the Ashes* following its elimination:

Thank you to all the readers who embraced  
FROM THE ASHES. Thank you  
@georgecanyon for your beautiful words of

<sup>4</sup> It is worth mentioning that social media renders authors more visible now than ever, further exacerbating the tension between the author's private realm and the public world where their work circulates.

support, and always and forever, thank you to @michifman for sharing your story with the world.

With this tweet, Simon and Schuster insinuate Thistle's memoir is not to be simply read, it is to be embraced, suggesting a level of intimacy between the book and its reader. Even the term "sharing" taps into the connective quality of memoir. Given that Simon and Schuster, Thistle's publisher, directly benefit from the success of *From the Ashes*, it can be assumed that a memoir's relationality to its readers forms an essential aspect of its value in the marketplace, reflecting its widespread appeal to readers.

With the program's emphasis on content and connection, critics of the show argue that a consideration of form appears to be absent from readings of each text. Russell Smith (2019) argues that *Canada Reads* fails to reward books based on their literary merit (par. 4). He opposes the ways in which *Canada Reads* frames reading as a method of garnering empathy for another Canadian's experience. Smith (2019) further argues that memoir will not be "remembered in encyclopedias and taught to schoolchildren" (par. 9), excluding the entire genre from imaginings of a Canadian literary canon. Smith is not the first critic to argue that form is overlooked for the sake of content in Canadian Literature. In "The Canonization of Canadian Literature: An Inquiry into Value," Robert Lecker (1990) contends not just with the contents of a Canadian literary canon, but the process of constructing and defining a national literary tradition. He argues that many literary scholars failed to produce "sustained discussion of one of the most crucial, problematic, and theoretically important questions that gives the Canadian canon its power – the question of how the literary values it embodies achieved and maintain their currency" (p. 658-659). His use of the term "how" is important here, because Lecker, much like Smith, is advocating for a consideration of style and form, not a consideration of the reader's empathy.

Smith's lamentation about the poor literary quality of memoir overlooks how Thistle and Habib and many other memoirists intentionally write around trauma. Based upon the restrictions that memoirists operate under, the genre proves to be an inherent exercise in form. Memoir's craft is revealed upon considering a synthesis of Lejeune, Couser and Gilmore. The genre represents real stories that have been reconstructed from memory, despite the disturbances imposed by trauma. The writer's craft is felt throughout

the memoir, dispelling Smith's assertion that life writing is not 'literary enough' to be taught or remembered by future generations.

Considerations of *Canada Reads* always stirs up inevitable questions about the purpose of the program, and what it contributes to both public and academic discourse. Does *Canada Reads* serve to create a CBC-endorsed literary canon, or otherwise solidify certain titles as Canadian classics? According to Smith (2019), most memoirs, despite their impact on readers, will not have a long-lasting impact on the Canadian literary canon (par. 9). Julie Rak (2013) agrees that literary critics often overlook both memoir and its readership (p. 7), while simultaneously noting the popularity of the genre (p. 9-10). Perhaps memoir's wide-spread popularity, when complimentary to the model of empathetic reading offered by *Canada Reads*, indicates a form of literary evaluation that, as Fuller (2007) explains, might be "re-shaping the use of Canadian literature" (p. 13).

Memoir, as evidenced by *We Have Always Been Here* and *From the Ashes*, represents a genre that not only holds the potential for literary merit but also proves to be popular amongst readers. While creating a literary canon is always riddled with complications and contradictions, perhaps the best place to start is to understand which stories Canadians are drawn to, and why. Therefore, empathetic methods of reading do not need to be heralded as inferior, nor indicative of an uncritical readership influenced by the author's personality, and their personality alone. An empathetic response to literature should be perceived as what it is: a method of reading that inspires an alternative inquiry into value, to borrow from Lecker. Canyon laments, "how do you criticize a life story? Someone's true life story?" (CBC, 2020). The answer to his question rests in the subjective spirit of *Canada Reads* itself. In his response to Lecker, Tracy Ware (1991) recalls Canadian literature's history of fluidity (p. 487), implying that changes to how scholars respond to literature are inevitable. Disagreements regarding the formation of the Canadian literary canon are emblematic of a tradition of subjectivity. To pay homage to that tradition is to allow *Canada Reads* (panelists, readers, and authors alike) to indulge in the popular, the overlooked, and the necessarily literary, Canadian memoir.

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CARLI GARDNER<sup>1</sup>

# Mash-up, Smash-up: Mixing Genres and Mediums to Rewrite History in *Do Not Say We Have Nothing*

## Abstract

In Madeleine Thien's novel *Do Not Say We Have Nothing*, a historical photograph of three protestors at Tiananmen Square is directly inserted into the fictional text. The goal of my research is to start a scholarly conversation on this work by exploring the relationship between the historical image and the fictional text to establish Thien's novel as postmodern. Drawing on postmodernist theories, this paper applies the works of prominent thinkers in the field to ask how the collision of genres and mediums (history and fiction; image and text), in *Do Not Say We Have Nothing* renders the novel postmodern. The first aim of this paper is to demonstrate the reciprocal relationship between text and image. The relationship is reciprocal because while the photograph certifies and undermines the story, the story also certifies and undermines the photograph. After establishing the multiple functions of the relationship between text and image, this paper explores how the collision of genres elicits multiple interpretations of the novel and the historical events it details. To understand how multiple interpretations of history destabilize historical metanarratives, this paper will finally investigate how the novel gives a voice to those omitted from history. By acknowledging Thien's novel as postmodern, this paper analyzes the important role of fiction in representing those whose experiences are effaced by historical metanarratives. My postmodernist interpretation of *Do Not Say We Have Nothing* will provide new ways of reading and interpreting the novel and situating it within the canon of Canadian Literature.

**Keywords:** Historiographic metafiction, Canadian Literature, Postmodern novel, Historical metanarratives, Historic photograph

## Résumé

Le roman de Madeleine Thien, *Do Not Say We Have Nothing*, une photographie historique de trois manifestants sur la place Tiananmen est directement inséré dans le texte de fiction. L'objectif de ma recherche est de lancer une conversation savante sur le travail en explorant la relation entre l'image historique et le texte de fiction pour établir que le roman de Thien est postmoderne. En s'appuyant sur les théories postmodernes, cet article applique les travaux d'éminents penseurs du domaine pour demander comment la collision des genres et des médiums (histoire et fiction ; image et texte), dans *Do Not Say We Have Nothing*, rends le roman postmoderne. Le premier objectif de cet article est de démontrer la relation réciproque entre le texte et l'image. Cette relation est réciproque, car si la photographie est certifiée et sape l'histoire, l'histoire est certifiée et sape également la photographie. Après avoir établi les multiples fonctions de la relation entre le texte et l'image, cet article explore comment la collision des genres suscite de multiples interprétations du roman et des événements historiques qu'il détaille. Pour comprendre comment les interprétations multiples de l'histoire déstabilisent les métarécits historiques, cet article examine enfin comment le roman donne une voix à ceux qui ont été omis de l'histoire. En reconnaissant que le roman de Thien est postmoderne, cet article analyse le rôle important de la fiction dans la représentation de ceux dont les expériences sont effacées par les métarécits historiques. Mon interprétation postmoderne de *Do Not Say We Have Nothing* offrira de nouvelles façons de lire et d'interpréter le roman et de le situer dans le canon de la littérature canadienne.

**Mots clés:** métafiction historiographique ; littérature canadienne ; roman postmoderne ; métarécits historiques ; photographie historique

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<sup>1</sup> Glendon College, York University, Ontario.

In Madeleine Thien's novel *Do Not Say We Have Nothing*, a historical photograph of three protestors on their knees before the Chinese government at Tiananmen Square is directly inserted into the fictional text<sup>2</sup>. The goal of this paper is to engage in a scholarly conversation about the relationship between the historical image and the fictional text in *Do Not Say We Have Nothing* to establish Thien's novel as postmodern. Drawing on postmodernist theories, this paper applies the works of prominent thinkers in the field to ask how the postmodern collision of genres and mediums (history and fiction; image and text), in *Do Not Say We Have Nothing* challenges historical metanarratives.

To understand how the novel's postmodern elements function to share stories of those silenced by history, the first aim of this paper is to demonstrate the reciprocal relationship between text and image. The relationship is reciprocal because the photograph inscribes and undermines the story while the story inscribes and undermines the photograph. To inscribe the story and the photograph means to assert the legitimacy of the history presented in the text and image, whereas to undermine the story and the photograph means to question the legitimacy of the history presented in the text and image. After establishing the multiple functions of the relationship between text and image, this paper explores how the collision of genres elicits multiple interpretations of the novel and the historical events it details. To understand how multiple interpretations of history destabilize historical metanarratives, this paper will finally investigate how the novel gives a voice to those omitted from written history. By acknowledging Thien's novel as postmodern, this paper analyzes the important role of fiction in representing the experiences of "ex-centrics," individuals whose stories are typically effaced by historical metanarratives, objective accounts of history written by the dominant culture. This postmodernist interpretation of *Do Not Say We Have Nothing* will provide new ways of reading and interpreting the novel and situating it among other works of Canadian Literature.

In her book *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, literary critic Linda Hutcheon outlines her theory on

the role and the effects of historiographic metafiction in the postmodern novel. Hutcheon defines historiographic metafiction as the mixing of history and fiction in the postmodern novel. According to Hutcheon, a key feature of historiographic metafiction is the insertion of historical data directly into the fictional text to "inscribe and undermine the authority and objectivity of historical sources and explanations" (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 123). This dual role of historiographic metafiction: to assert and to question history, destabilizes totalizing accounts of history written by the dominant culture, and is what Hutcheon names "the centre." For Hutcheon, "the centre" represents a single homogenous historical perspective of a male, white, Eurocentric and upper-class voice. In destabilizing the homogenous and totalizing accounts of history told by "the centre," historiographic metafiction carves out spaces for alternative accounts of history told by "ex-centrics:" individuals whose identities in the contexts of gender, class, race, ethnicity, sexual preference, education and social role fall outside the single fixed identity of "the centre" in that they are different, specific, heterogeneous and in flux (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 59). In fact, Hutcheon understands the role of "ex-centrics" as another essential element of the postmodern novel: "the protagonists of historiographic metafiction are anything but proper types: they are ex-centrics, the marginalized, the peripheral figures of fictional history" (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 114). Through an analysis of the function of the historic photograph of Tiananmen square within the fictional text, this paper investigates how the relationship between history and fiction, and image and text, provides space for the stories of "ex-centrics" to emerge from the margins of history in the postmodern novel *Do Not Say We Have Nothing*.

The process of documenting history in *Do Not Say We Have Nothing* is multi-layered and multi-generational: Marie, the main character of the novel's frame narrative, copies and compiles bits and pieces of her family history. Marie collects stories from the past to excavate and then shed light on the histories of "ex-centrics:" characters whose personal stories were previously hidden from totalizing accounts of history. Marie attempts to uncover the hidden histories of Jiang-Kai, Zhuli, and Sparrow, characters who bear a connection to her family and are "ex-centrics" because

<sup>2</sup> This image was directly inserted into page 298 of Madeleine Thien's novel *Do Not Say We Have Nothing*. The image has no known source.

of their heterogeneous social positions as: lower-class citizens, educated musicians, subjects of the Chinese Community Party, and immigrants, all fall outside of the dominant cultural “centre.” Though positioned as “ex-centric,” the characters’ status as such leads Marie to preserve the information she compiles about their stories by copying a historic image of the Tiananmen Square protests directly into the new stories she writes. This method of copying and compiling history mixes fictional accounts of the past with a historic image, thus mixing the mediums of text and image and the genres of history and fiction in the novel. Because of the mixture of genres and mediums, a reciprocal relationship between text and image forms. The relationship is reciprocal because the photograph inscribes and undermines the story while the story also inscribes and undermines the photograph. Together, the relationship between text and image in the novel challenges objective accounts of history written by what Thien positions as the dominant cultural “centre:” the Chinese Communist Party and Canadian whiteness.

The insertion of the documentary-style photograph of three protestors at Tiananmen Square directly into the novel inscribes the stories of the characters because it asserts their participation in the events captured. To understand how the photograph of Tiananmen Square inscribes the character’s stories as legitimate accounts of history, philosopher Susan Sontag’s *On Photography* is relevant to studying the relationship between text and image in *Do Not Say We Have Nothing*. In her work, Sontag claims that “photographs furnish evidence. Something we hear about, but doubt, seems proven when we’re shown a photograph of it” (Sontag, 1973, p. 5). Sontag’s assertion that a photograph can act as “evidence,” to affirm the reality of “something,” directly applies to the function of the Tiananmen Square photograph as a piece of “evidence” to certify the fictional accounts of the characters’ experiences in the novel (“something”). Sontag expands on her understanding of a photograph as evidence in her statement that “a photograph passes for incontrovertible proof that a given thing happened” (Sontag, 1973, p. 5). This theory of photographs as historical proof applies to the function of the image of Tiananmen Square as validation of the characters’ experiences of history. Consequently, the iconic photograph of Tiananmen Square serves as a piece of historical “evidence” to connect the characters from

their fictional accounts of the Tiananmen Square protests to the historic events documented in the image.

The historical photograph of the three protestors at Tiananmen Square further validates the fictional stories of Jiang-Kai, Zhuli and Sparrow as legitimate accounts of history because its direct insertion into the text highlights the reader’s emotional connection to the novel’s characters. Because the photograph captures the experiences of three unnamed protestors whose personal stories are not narrativized in the text, the image contrasts the reader’s intimate relationship to the characters’ personal stories. This contrast between the text and image highlights the reader’s emotional distance from the objective history documented in the photograph of Tiananmen Square. Since the image emphasizes the reader’s relationship to the fictional stories of the Tiananmen Square protests, the photograph underscores the power of fiction to create an emotional intimacy between its characters and reader. Thien speaks about the emotional effects of fiction compared to the unemotional effects of history in her statement that “when we read history, we have this feeling of inevitability. But fiction is different. History knows how things are going to turn out, but for individuals, nothing is inevitable” (Lee, 2019, p. 13). Thien’s distinction between the uncertainty of fiction and the inevitability of history shows why fiction is able to arouse emotion in its reader. By not knowing how the stories of Jiang-Kai, Zhuli, and Sparrow will end, the reader’s pre-existing attachment to these characters grows. The strength of this attachment is also solidified by the reader’s comparative lack of knowledge about the personal stories of the protestors pictured in the historic photograph. Without knowing the intimate historical experiences of the unnamed protestors, Thien’s understanding of history as “inevitable” is emphasized for the novel’s reader.

While the photograph of Tiananmen legitimizes the personal histories of Jiang-Kai, Zhuli and Sparrow, the characters’ fictional accounts of history also legitimize the representation of history captured in the photograph. The text validates the image because the reader’s emotional connection to the narrative extends to the three protestors in the photograph. In the passage preceding the image, Marie retells Jiang-Kai’s experiences of living through the

Tiananmen Square protests from her perspective as his daughter: "he watched on television as three university students stood before the Great Hall of the People bearing a letter to the government" (Thien, 2017, p. 298). Although Marie retells Jiang-Kai's story from the third person, the storytelling is nonetheless intimate: as Jiang-Kai's daughter, the reader imagines the passing down of family history between generations, emphasizing the intimacy of the personal histories told. This intimate style of inter-generational storytelling thus affects the reader's emotional connection to the inserted photograph. Because the reader recognizes Jiang-Kai's implication in the events captured in the photograph, Marie strengthens the reader's connection to the idea that the photograph is a piece of historical "evidence" that affirms objective accounts of history (Sontag, 1973, p. 5). The idea that fiction can substantiate objective pieces of historical "evidence" recalls Thien's comment from her interview: "the work of fiction is in part to get in between what history can tell us, and the mechanisms that history shows us" (Lee, 2019, p. 13). Thien's acknowledgment that fiction can rewrite history to expand upon it demonstrates how Jiang-Kai's witness of the Tiananmen Square protestors legitimizes the historical event presented in the photograph. So, by mixing the two genres and mediums (fiction and history; text and image), Marie's fictional account of the Tiananmen Square protests authorizes the objective history represented in the iconic photograph of the three protestors.

Although the historic image of the Tiananmen Square protestors authorizes the novel's retelling of history, the photograph simultaneously undermines the stories it authorizes. The photograph undermines the credibility of the historical accounts of the Tiananmen Square protests in *Do Not Say We Have Nothing* because it shows how the novel interprets history to write fiction. The novel's interpretation of history is evident in the descriptive passage preceding the photograph of Tiananmen Square: "the three stayed where they were, tiny figures, the petition heavy in the air, waiting for an authority figure to receive it" (Thien, 2017, p. 298). Thien's description of the photograph prior to its insertion points to the text's fictional interpretation of the historic events captured. The tension created in this passage between the text and image highlights the contrast between history and fiction in *Do Not Say We Have Nothing*. By drawing attention to the novel's interpretive approach to

history, the photograph emphasizes the characters' stories as fictional accounts of the Tiananmen Square protests. In emphasizing that the historical experiences of Jiang-Kai, Zhuli, and Sparrow are indeed fictional, the photograph undermines their stories. By threatening the legitimacy of the characters' stories, the photograph raises the question of whose experiences are incorporated into the dominant history.

The photograph further complicates the question of historical representation because its inability to objectively capture history undermines the characters' stories. To understand the limitations of historical photographs, Sontag highlights how photographs, like paintings and written stories, interpret history. Sontag's (1973) assertion that "photographs are as much an interpretation of the world as painting and drawings are," (p. 6) is relevant to understanding how the documentary-style photograph in *Do Not Say We Have Nothing* is merely an interpretation of history. Because this photograph is intrinsically only an interpretation of the Tiananmen Square protests, the photograph undermines the credibility of the characters' historical experiences in the novel. According to Sontag (1973), photographs are interpretations of reality because they can be staged and crafted like paintings and written stories: "while a painting or a prose description can never be other than a narrowly selective interpretation, a photograph can be treated as a narrowly selective transparency" (p. 6). That is to say, although photographs aim to capture reality, they are not entirely objective as photographs are always subjective in their selection of subject/object. Due to the limitations placed on photography, such as the omnipresence of the photographer's perspective on the subject/object they are trying to represent, the photograph of Tiananmen Square does not objectively capture historic events. In claiming a subjective relationship between the photographer, the photograph, and the subject/object it represents, Sontag questions the role of photographs in documenting history. In questioning the role of photography in validating historical events, Sontag's theory helps support the argument that the photograph of Tiananmen Square in *Do Not Say We Have Nothing* both undermines and inscribes the histories of Jiang-Kai, Zhuli, and Sparrow. In threatening the legitimacy of the characters' stories, the photograph raises the question of whose

experiences are incorporated into the historical record and why.

To question the role of history in omitting certain experiences from the historical record, it is important to understand how the characters' stories in *Do Not Say We Have Nothing* combat this marginalization. In fact, the characters' fictional experiences of history function to undermine the supposedly objective history represented in the photograph of Tiananmen Square. Specifically, the story's use of italics to write an imagined dialogue of the photograph's scene draws attention to the novel's fictional account of the historic Tiananmen Square protests: "Why are you kneeling / Stand up, stand up! / This is the people's Square! Why must we address the government from our knees" (Thien, 2017, p. 298). By creating a fictionalized exchange between the three protestors and the government official in the photograph, the novel highlights the lack of historical information provided by the image. In recognizing the limitations of the photograph in representing the Tiananmen Square protests, it is necessary to draw on Roland Barthes's philosophy from his critical work *Camera Lucida*. According to Barthes, a photograph can only "refer" to the "real" thing which it captures. For Barthes (1981), a photograph contains a "referent," which is "not the *optically* real thing to which an image or a sign refers but the *necessarily* real thing which has been placed before the lens" (p. 76). In making reference to the "real" events at Tiananmen Square, the photograph inserted in the novel shows its inability to capture the stories that the fictional text creates. Instead, the italics used to tell the story behind the photograph fill in the gaps of the "*necessarily* real thing" (history), to which the image of Tiananmen Square "refers" (Barthes, 1981, p.76). Since the fictional text is able to provide more information about the protestors in the photograph, the novel shows the limitations of the photograph in accurately portraying a complete account of a historical event. So, the photograph reveals how objective history silences the stories of Jiang-Kai, Zhuli, and Sparrow while fiction creates space for multiple stories and thus, many different historical accounts. This relationship between image and text, history and fiction, questions whose story is included or omitted from the culturally dominant history written by the "centre."

The collision of genres and mediums in *Do Not Say We Have Nothing* functions to include the voices of "ex-centric" in the historical record. The reciprocal relationship between the historic photograph of Tiananmen Square and the fictional stories of the novel's characters facilitates the novel's resistance of historical metanarratives, objective accounts of history written by the dominant cultural "centre." Because of the tensions created from the mash-up of these elements, the novel elicits multiple interpretations of history to destabilize historical metanarratives. Hutcheon (1988) demonstrates how resistance to a single and objective account of history is characteristic of the postmodern novel: "postmodern fiction suggests that to re-write or re-present the past in fiction and in history is, in both cases, to open it up to the present, to prevent it from being conclusive and teleological" (p. 110). Hutcheon's assertion regarding the postmodern novel affirms that *Do Not Say We Have Nothing* not only destabilizes historical metanarratives, but also affirms the stories of the "ex-centric" previously silenced by history. Thien's attempt to give a voice to those marginalized by history is evident in her interview statement: "the novel explores how, in such a shadow, a life might have been lived if history had allowed this life to continue" (Lee, 2019, p. 13). In acknowledging that history omits characters' stories and leaves them hidden in the shadows, Thien demonstrates how her novel aims to uncover the hidden stories from the shadows of history to showcase alternative experiences of historical events. In applying Hutcheon's theory on postmodern fiction to *Do Not Say We Have Nothing*, it is important to ask how representations of history that utilize multiple genres and mediums to challenge historical metanarratives complicates the reader's experience of the novel within a Canadian context. For instance, does the presence of these postmodern elements in *Do Not Say We Have Nothing* challenge the genre of Canadian Literature as space typically limited to including voices from the culturally dominant "centre" (Canadian whiteness). Does Thien's use of postmodern elements in her novel work to reconceptualize what stories fit into the narrow definition of Canadian Literature? In short, yes: *Do Not Say We Have Nothing* challenges the cultural "centre" of Canadian whiteness dominated in the Canadian literary canon to situate the stories of Jiang-Kai, Zhuli and Sparrow as imperative to understanding the rich and complex histories of Chinese Canadians.

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REJEAN GHANEM<sup>1</sup>

# Canada - A Long Way to Go: The Designated Country of Origin Policy and Refugee Protection

## Abstract

The Designated Country of Origin (DCO) policy was a political response to unwanted migration in Canada. Adapted from Europe, Harper took a liking to the EU's SCO policy after Canada received a large influx of Middle Eastern and Balkan refugees seeking asylum. He adapted it in Canada, renaming it Designated Country of Origin (DCO). Under the DCO, the government of Canada would decide if a refugee's country of origin was dangerous enough to be considered for asylum. If the asylum seekers country is determined as safe, that person would be disregarded and sent back to their country of origin. Many refugees who had already settled in Canada had their files reopened and were told to return to their country of origin. The DCO policy became an integral part of the refugee status determination process in Canada to which some regarded as faulty, inefficient, and unjust. In 2019, the SCO was deemed unconstitutional and violated The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Ahmed Hussen, Minister of Immigration, wanted to create an asylum system that was considered fair and efficient. While it is important for an asylum seeker to prove they are truthful about the facts of their case, the DCO policy represents a climate of hostility towards migrants in Canada. In this piece, it will be argued that the DCO policy is a discriminatory migration tool used to "weed out" what the government deems as fake migrants. This policy could deny international protection to those who are genuinely in need. The DCO proves that the nation has a misleading reputation of being welcoming to all who come. The DCO threatened the human rights of asylum seekers who sought refuge in Canada.

**Keywords:** Designated Country of Origin, Immigration Studies, Refugees

## Résumé

La politique de pays d'origine désigné (POD) était une réponse politique à la crainte de migration au Canada. Adapté de l'Europe, Harper s'est pris d'affection pour la politique de l'OCS de l'Union européenne après que le Canada a reçu un afflux important de réfugiés en provenance du Moyen-Orient et des Balkans demandant l'asile. L'ancien premier ministre l'a adaptée au Canada, en rebaptisant pays d'origine désigné (POD). Dans le cadre de cette politique, le gouvernement du Canada décide si le pays d'origine d'un réfugié est suffisamment dangereux pour être considéré comme un pays d'asile. Si le pays du demandeur d'asile est considéré comme sûr, le demandeur par conséquent n'est pas pris en compte et on leur renvoie au pays d'origine. De nombreux réfugiés qui s'étaient déjà installés au Canada ont été témoins de la réouverture de leurs dossiers et par la suite ont été déportés dans leur pays d'origine. La politique de l'OCS est devenue une grande partie du processus de détermination du statut de réfugié au Canada, que certains considéraient comme défectueux, inefficace et injuste. En 2019, l'OCS a été jugée inconstitutionnelle et violait la Charte canadienne des droits et libertés. Ahmed Hussen, ministre de l'Immigration, souhaitait créer un système d'asile considéré équitable et efficace. Bien qu'il soit important pour un demandeur d'asile de prouver qu'il est sincère, la politique de l'OCS représente la crainte des migrants au Canada. Cet article soutient que la politique de POD est un outil d'immigration discriminatoire utilisé pour "éliminer" ce que le gouvernement considère des faux migrants. Cette politique pourrait priver de protection internationale ceux qui sont réellement dans le besoin. La politique POD prouve que la nation a la réputation trompeuse d'être accueillante pour tous ceux qui viennent. La politique de POD menace les droits de la personne des demandeurs d'asile qui cherchent à se réfugier au Canada.

**Mots clés:** pays d'origine désigné, les études sur l'immigration, les réfugiés

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<sup>1</sup> Glendon College, York University

Immigration is an important aspect of Canadian politics and history. After all, our country prides itself on its diversity. Canada welcomes thousands of immigrants and refugees each year. In Canada, asylum seekers are able to make this country their new home. But what is the process Canada uses for refugees seeking asylum? Since 1976, Canada has used the Immigration Act. In 2012, Canada introduced the Designated Country of Origin (DCO) policy. This policy was an attempt to catch potential "fake" asylum seekers seeking refuge in Canada. However, what the policy resulted in was asylum seekers being denied international protection due to their countries being prematurely designated as "safe". Under the DCO, refugees from countries designated as "safe" could not seek asylum in Canada, they would instead be labeled as 'bogus' asylum seekers and sent back to their country of origin. The DCO was modeled after Europe's Safe Country of Origin policy (SCO), which is quite similar in motivation. The DCO then branched into another immigration policy: The Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA) with the United States, subjecting refugees to detainment, which is now in the process of abolishment. This paper will analyze how Canada used the DCO and STCA to inefficiently catch "fake" refugees and argue that these policies denied refugees their right to international protection.

To clarify, international protection is a means to protect a person who is outside their country of origin and unable to return due to dangers present in their home country. Dangers could be considered persecution, threats to life, armed conflict, or any type of national violence. Since 1921, the need for international protection and action has been recognized and is considered a part of human rights (Weiss, 1954, p. 194).

In order to discuss the impact of the DCO, it is important to dive into the history of the EU's SCO. Delving into the SCO's origin will help provide context and understanding since it is the groundwork that shaped Canada's DCO. In 2005, the EU created the Safe Country of Origin Policy (SCO) as a response to unwanted migration. Europe made a list of countries that were deemed as "safe" prohibiting any migrant native to those countries from seeking asylum (Euromed, 2016, 2). The EU feared fake refugees who would cheat the system and wanted to filter out any individuals who could potentially be suspects. Seven countries in Europe were deemed as safe in the draft regulation: Bosnia, Albania, Herzegovina, Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, and Turkey. Now, of course, countries can be added to the list as this is only

a draft (Euromed, 2016, 2). This does raise the question; how does the EU determine what country is safe?

The question of what makes a country safe in Europe dates back to the early 1990s after there was an increase in the number of refugee applications. Many were skeptical that these asylum seekers were faking their crisis so that they could easily move into Europe. This eventually led Europe to create the SCO. To determine if a country was safe, the country in question must not persecute its people and must provide basic human rights to its citizens (Euromed, 2016, 2). If the EU determines the state to fit this criterion, it is deemed safe. Therefore, migrants from the country in question cannot seek asylum despite their individual cases (Goodwin-Gill, 1992, 248).

It should be noted that a country can fall into two categories: A safe country of origin or a safe third country. A safe third country is a non-EU country that the migrant is currently inhabiting. The asylum application will not consider the migrants' country of origin, but the safe third country they are residing in (Euromed, 2016, 5). For example, if a Syrian refugee flees to Armenia but desires to seek asylum in the EU, the EU does not regard Armenia as a safe third country, which could allow the Syrian migrant to seek asylum in Europe. However, if a Syrian migrant flees to Turkey, which is more likely considering that Turkey has 3.6 million Syrian refugees living in camps, the migrant will be denied because Turkey is designated as "safe" under the SCO.

Now that the framework of the SCO has been stated, it is easier to explain how Canada adapted this policy and implemented it into the Designated Country of Origin (DCO) policy. After seeing the effect, the SCO had on European immigration, Prime Minister Stephen Harper deemed it to be an effective method at curbing 'illegal' immigration, and so the DCO was implemented. Before the DCO, Canada's immigration policy followed Pierre Trudeau's Immigration Act of 1976, which had been revised throughout the years to include same-sex relationships. The Immigration Act of 1976 was a major change in Canada's immigration policy. It opened Canada's doors to migrants from across the world. The Immigration Act also required the government to protect refugees and meet international requirements pertaining to asylum seekers. The DCO would completely change how we processed and accepted immigrants into Canada after the idea was introduced as part of legislation that revised the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and passed into law on June 28, 2012. Refugees who arrive through

DCO countries would be rushed through important procedures and were unable to seek reparations for any procedural injustices. When a person attempts to seek asylum in Canada, the basis of their pleas is assessed by the Refugee Protection Division of the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB). The IRB decides whether the asylum seeker meets the definition of a refugee set out in the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. However, if the asylum seeker arrives from a DCO, they must adhere to a fast-tracked process which cuts the time they have to prepare in half prior to their hearing before the IRB. A claimant from the DCO is also denied eligibility for certain procedural protections, such as an appeals process, which would allow them a chance to defend themselves (Belluz, 2012, 8).

The issues with the DCO lay in its potential to deny an asylum seeker international protection. While the intent is to remove any “fake” refugees, the result is to deny refugees international protection, whether intentional or not. The DCO was criticized for being unable to detect “fake” refugees which brought on significant backlash (Belluz, 2012, 8). For example, let’s take the case of a migrant from Turkey then attempting to seek refuge in Canada. Turkey was a designated “safe” country, so the migrant would not be allowed to seek asylum. But paradoxically would Turkey be considered safe for, a Kurdish person (Costello, 2005, 35)? The Kurdish people in Turkey have a history of persecution under the Turkish government, deeming the country unsafe for this group of people (Bruneissen, 1991, 1). Another example would be considering Israel a safe place to live according to the DCO, which could be the case for some Israeli residents but not for Palestinians. While most Palestinians are living in Gaza and the West Bank, there are 250,000 displaced Palestinians living on Israeli land. The Palestinians are subject to violence, discrimination, and having their land taken away by the Israeli government. The Palestinians are considered “aliens” to the Israeli government (Pappe, 2013, 2). Yet, a Palestinian cannot seek asylum in Canada due to the DCO. Clearly, the DCO was put together with a black and white framework, not acknowledging the many grey areas that shape the international realm. It was because of cases like these that the DCO failed to detect ‘bogus’ refugees, but also denied people international protection.

The result of the DCO is that there was a high risk of asylum seekers being sent back to their countries. Since the DCO severely limits refugee status, claimants would be sent back to persecution and

violence. There is also a relation between refugees and legal aid. The DCO affects the asylum seeker’s ability to receive legal aid and counsel. Without this representation, the likelihood of refugees successfully seeking asylum is lowered. Besides the DCO, Canada created a treaty with the United States of America (US) to control the number of refugees seeking asylum. If a non-US-born asylum seeker living in the US desires to come to Canada, only very few will be able to seek refuge. For example, a Syrian refugee living in America cannot seek asylum in Canada despite hostility towards Muslims and Arabs in the United States. In a letter signed by over 200 law professors across Canada, to The Minister of Immigration, an end to The Safe Third Country Agreement between Canada and the US was demanded (Osgoode Hall Law School, 2017).

After a negative reaction to the DCO and The Safe Third Country Agreement, the Canadian government put a halt to both policies deeming them as inefficient. On July 22nd, 2020, the Canadian federal government recognized the Safe Third Country Agreement as a violation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Specifically, the Agreement was a violation of section 7, the right to “life, liberty, and security.”

The DCO was deemed ineffective as of May 17th, 2019 under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s Liberal government. Besides the DCO being considered inefficient, the Canadian federal government also recognized it as a violation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, similar to The Safe Third Country Agreement. The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada declares that “the DCO policy did not fulfill its objective of discouraging misuse of the asylum system and of processing refugee claims from these countries faster. Additionally, several Federal Court decisions struck down certain provisions of the DCO policy, ruling that they did not comply with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2019). Although the policies have been removed from practice, it is still relevant and vital to Canada’s immigration history.

While Canada’s Immigration Act of 1976 shows its care towards refugees, the DCO and STCA policies still denied international protection to asylum seekers and was an inefficient means to eliminate “fake” refugees. It is vital to acknowledge Canada’s past immigration policies in order to hope for a better future and to continue making efforts to improve our immigration system.

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RAVEN LOVERING<sup>1</sup>

# Graphic Reminders: Confronting Colonialism in Canada through *Betty: The Helen Betty Osborne Story*

## Abstract

David Alexander Robertson's 2015 graphic novel *Betty: The Helen Betty Osborne Story* connects non-Indigenous Canadians to the racial realities of Canada's intentionally forgotten past. Robertson translates Helen Betty Osborne's biography into the accessible format of the graphic novel which allows for a wide range of readers to connect present day racial injustices to the past, generating new understandings surrounding violence against Indigenous peoples in Canada. Helen Betty Osborne, a young female Cree student was abducted and murdered in 1971, targeted for her race and gender. The horrors Betty experienced reveal the connection between her story and the contemporary narrative of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in Canada. *Betty: The Helen Betty Osborne Story* deconstructs Betty's life from the violence she is subjected to, personifying a historical figure. The graphic novel allows for a visual collision of past and present to express the cycle of colonial violence in Canada ignored by non-Indigenous Canadians despite its continued socio-economic and political impact on Indigenous peoples. As an Indigenous author, Robertson preserves the integrity of Indigenous voice and revives an integral gendered and racialized historical perspective that is necessary to teach. This close reading of *Betty: The Helen Betty Osborne Story* explores how Robertson uses the graphic novel to revive history and in doing so, demonstrates connections between past and present patterns of racial injustice against Indigenous women in Canada today.

**Keywords:** Colonialism, Canada, Graphic Novels, Indigenous Histories, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls; Racism

## Résumé

La bande dessinée romanesque de 2015 de David Alexander Robertson, *Betty : The Helen Betty Osborne Story* relie les Canadiens non autochtones aux réalités raciales intentionnellement oubliées. Robertson traduit la biographie de Helen Betty Osborne dans le format accessible d'une bande dessinée romanesque qui permet à un grand nombre de lecteurs de relier les injustices raciales actuelles au passé. De plus, elle génère de nouvelles compréhensions entourant la violence contre les peuples autochtones au Canada. Helen Betty Osborne, une jeune étudiante crie, a été enlevée et assassinée en 1971, en raison de sa race et de son sexe. Les horreurs que Betty a vécues révèlent le lien entre son histoire et le récit contemporain des femmes autochtones disparues et assassinées au Canada. *Betty : The Helen Betty Osborne Story* déconstruit la vie de Betty à partir de la violence qu'elle a subie, personnifiant ainsi une figure historique. La bande dessinée romanesque permet une collision visuelle entre le passé et le présent pour exprimer le cycle de la violence coloniale au Canada, ignoré par les Canadiens non autochtones malgré son impact socio-économique et politique continu sur les peuples autochtones. En tant qu'auteur indigène, Robertson préserve l'intégrité de la voix indigène et fait revivre une perspective historique intégrale, sexuée et racialisée, nécessaire à l'enseignement. Cette lecture attentive de *Betty : The Helen Betty Osborne Story* explore comment Robertson utilise le roman graphique pour faire revivre l'histoire et, ce faisant, démontre les liens entre les modèles passés et présents d'injustice raciale à l'égard des femmes autochtones au Canada aujourd'hui.

**Mots clés:** colonialisme, Canada, romans graphiques, histoires des indigènes, les femmes et les filles autochtones disparues et assassinées, le racisme

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<sup>1</sup> York University, Ontario.

David Alexander Robertson's 2015 graphic novel *Betty: The Helen Betty Osborne Story* connects non-Indigenous Canadians to the racial realities of their nation's neglected past and present through the revival of Helen Betty Osborne's illustrated biography. In 1971, Helen Betty Osborne, a nineteen-year-old female Cree student, was abducted and murdered outside of The Pas, Manitoba by four white men (Smulders, 2006). Sixteen years later, only "one of the four men who had abducted her, Dwane Johnston, was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment...of the other three, one was granted immunity in exchange for his testimony, one was acquitted, and one was never charged" (Smulders, 2006, p. 37). This judiciary negligence (Smulders, 2006) raised questions about the treatment of Indigenous peoples in Canada and the rampant racism-based violence that Indigenous peoples face from non-Indigenous Canadians (Smulders, 2006).

Today, Indigenous peoples in Canada continue to experience systemic racism which is enabled by colonial government legislation and socially determined segregation. According to the *National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*, an estimated 1,200 women and girls have been murdered or gone missing in Canada from 1980 to 2012 (National Inquiry, 2017). Despite this astonishing statistic, "no one knows for sure how many Indigenous women and girls have been murdered or gone missing in Canada" (National Inquiry, 2017, p. 7) as a result of incomplete and racially biased documentation from colonial police forces. Canonical Canadian literature privileges white authorship, neglecting the individual stories and lived experiences of Indigenous women. To have a complete understanding of the history of the land now known as Canada, it is integral to have historical perspectives representative of all peoples, especially intersectional identities that have intentionally and historically been excluded from being formally preserved. I honor the role of David Alexander Robertson, an Indigenous author of Cree heritage, sharing Betty Osborne's story. As a white settler author, I do not intend to speak for Indigenous women, and I acknowledge my inherent biases and privileged position in the close reading of this novel. I intend to examine how *Betty: The Helen Betty Osborne Story*, uses the format of a graphic novel to connect non-Indigenous Canadians to their intentionally forgotten past, to give a voice to a racialized and gendered historical perspective, and to visually demonstrate connections between past and present patterns of racial injustices against Indigenous women today.

The structure of graphic novels is integral in Robertson's deconstruction of linguistic and cultural barriers between readers and history. Henzi offers that, "this medium of storytelling makes [the] story accessible not only for youth, but for those who may not want to, or cannot, read at length about the history

of colonialism" (Henzi, 2016, p. 25). In addition to being a quicker read, the imagery within the graphic novel allows for emotions to be clearly depicted and provides a more attractive way to consume non-fiction literature than through traditional texts (Carleton, 2013). Henderson's black and white images are fitting in a novel depicting racial segregation creating a division through shading between Indigenous and non-Indigenous bodies, specifically in how hair is depicted. Betty's coloured position on the front cover situates her as the rightful protagonist of her own story, rewriting the details of a collective narrative. Details such as colour and images demonstrate racial segregation in a way only possible in a graphic novel.

Robertson's graphic novel revives Betty's historical perspective and translates her story into simple images and text that can be consumed by a wide audience. Panels with few, or without any words are able to convey an ambiance that spaces in non-graphical / non-fiction texts are unable to achieve. Many graphic novels can be consumed in an hour and the illustrations retain the attention of the reader, inviting them to invest themselves in the story and recognize themselves in the ambiguity of cartoon faces. This ambiguity invokes a stronger connection between readers and characters causing readers to be more likely to understand Betty as a person through the character Robertson creates. Emberley observes, the format of the graphic novel "is largely about re-creating a subject who has been lost to the archive of a collective history" (Emberley, 2014, p. 162). Selective memory is a consequence of colonialism that non-Indigenous Canadians choose when remembering the stories of Indigenous peoples. Time erodes the significance of individual stories, enabling them to blend and form a single narrative perpetuated by dominant ideologies. By translating Betty's historical story into the present, Robertson reminds non-Indigenous Canadians of the relevance of Indigenous stories regardless of their age. *Betty: The Helen Betty Osborne Story* re-creates how historical perspectives can be understood by using the medium of a graphic novel to allow Canadians to access the importance of individual stories, especially from the historical perspective of an Indigenous woman.

Literature's potential to incite political connections between the past and present is demonstrated when a young boy, in the present, uses the social media platform Facebook to access news articles about Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Both Facebook and graphic novels work to transform text and images into accessible visual stories that can be shared, often, on an international scale. Henderson's illustration shows an article about "Amanda Sinclair" (Robertson & Henderson, 2015, p. 1) originating from a page titled "Missing Manitoba Women" (Robertson & Henderson,

2015, p. 1). The article is shared by a user whose profile picture is an infinity symbol who comments on the Facebook post, "is it just me, or do these come up, like, every freaking day? What the heck?" (Robertson & Henderson, 2015, p. 1). A seemingly infinite cycle of colonial violence has been occurring against Indigenous women since the colonization of Canada; of which the consequences will continue until collective action and reconciliation are taken. The fourth panel powerfully reflects the face of Amanda Sinclair in the eye of the young boy, showing how history can be understood in the present through the connecting force of literature. Canadians that are not directly affected by issues concerning Indigenous populations are conditioned to ignore or dismiss these issues that they as non-Indigenous Canadians have a role in perpetuating.

By creating accessible content for youth to learn about the historical and present-day perspectives of Indigenous women, non-Indigenous Canadians can begin to deconstruct the important individual stories of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The stories of MMIWGT2S, their families, and loved ones are stories that must be honored, respected, and heard by non-Indigenous Canadians. Understanding Betty's biography through the graphic novel helps to challenge their understanding of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada, showing through Betty's experiences that violence against Indigenous women is both a historical and contemporary issue.

Collective and individual voices collide when the scope of Indigenous women differentially affected by violence is explored on page two as the boy clicks a website titled, "Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in Canada" (Robertson & Henderson, 2015, p. 2). The panel consumes an entire page and contains a collage of missing women, who are overwhelming in their number. The women's faces are contained inside individual squares within the panel beneath shadows that conceal their identities while Betty's face is clearly defined to stand out against the rest. As women who are doubly displaced by their race and gender, Indigenous women are often compartmentalized by non-Indigenous authors, categorized based on race and gender stereotypes that do not correlate with the complexity of their identities. As an Indigenous author himself, Robertson's own biases are necessary in preserving the integrity of Betty's story. The social and political issues surrounding the narrative of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada have been reduced to a single story, neglecting to honor the life and individuality of each woman affected. According to the *National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*, "Indigenous women are 12 times more likely to be murdered or missing than any other women in Canada, and 16 times more likely than Caucasian women" (National Inquiry,

2017, pp. 86-87). Over 1200 women have been abducted and or murdered in Canada (National Inquiry, 2017), yet their stories are underrepresented, historically ignored. By illustrating Betty's life before the violence which took her life, readers are invited to empathize and understand women as individuals as opposed to the statistic they are grouped into. The collage of women combines the importance of individual and collective voice, challenging readers to exchange their understanding of the numeric value of a socio-political issue for an empathetic visualization of the faces of the affected women.

Betty experiences several barriers to accessing education which are a result of historical and contemporary institutional racism in Canada. The 2017 *National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* states,

For over a century, the central goals of Canada's Aboriginal policy were to eliminate Aboriginal governments; ignore Aboriginal rights; terminate the Treaties; and, through a process of assimilation, cause Aboriginal peoples to cease to exist as distinct legal, social, cultural, religious, and racial entities in Canada. The establishment and operation of residential schools were a central element of this policy, which can best be described as 'cultural genocide' (p. 11).

Betty leaves home to attend "Guy Hill Residential School, 1971" (Robertson & Henderson, 2015, p. 8:1), and later high school in The Pas, to pursue her dream of becoming a teacher. In addition to the cultural genocide perpetrated by the residential school system in Canada, publicly funded schools in the second half of the twentieth century disproportionately discriminated against Indigenous students, increasing racial barriers and limiting opportunities for Indigenous peoples. Today, Canadian education systems showcase forms of "cultural imperialism" (Kelly, 2012, p. 139) in which white Anglo-settler ideologies are the cultural norms and values racialized students are expected to conform to. Educational frameworks within schools such as streaming racialized students into applied and workplace level courses, adultification of students, unequal disciplinary consequences, and the reproduction of white settler ideologies target Indigenous students. The community a school serves and operates within determines which students are physically able to access it. In order to attend further education, Betty must move to a foreign town where she is subject to both social isolation and cultural assimilation both of which prove to be dangerous but yet her only opportunity for further formal education. Before her departure, Betty says to her sister, "kids shouldn't have to leave home to go to school. When we're teachers, Eva, we'll come back here and make sure they never have to" (Robertson & Henderson,

2015, p. 5:2). Most white settler children grow up in close proximity to a publicly funded school where they see themselves represented in the staff. These students are not required to choose between accessing education and living in their community like many Indigenous students have to. During her time spent in The Pas, Betty is targeted by white males for being a young Indigenous female which leads to her abduction, assault, and murder. Betty addresses the potential for educational equity through her aspirations to return home as a teacher, to be the catalyst for educational opportunity in her community. In Canada, schools are institutions that reproduce accepted notions of settler colonialism, and actively discriminate against Indigenous and racialized students in their frameworks and relationships to communities. Historically, residential schools and publicly-funded Canadian schools have been sites of cultural genocide actively working against Indigenous populations, creating racial barriers and limiting opportunities for racialized people.

Unequal power positions illustrated between Betty and the white residents of The Pas are a direct result of cyclical colonial violence in Canada. Henzi argues that the story "provides a glimpse into the values and perspectives prevalent in Canada in the early seventies -insults, segregation, beatings, kidnappings, and rape -that inevitably led to Helen Betty's murder, and the lack of cooperation in pursuing justice" (Henzi, 2016, p. 34). The novel illustrates how gender and race determine social freedom when Betty experiences different liberties than her white male attackers. In the novel, this group of male assaulters consumes alcohol excessively in public spaces while Betty's alcohol consumption is controlled in private spaces, such as the home, by her host mother Mrs. Benson. On page 14, before the men encounter Betty, the men use force to break into a home, dissolving the physical boundaries that allow for safety, foreshadowing their violent tendencies which are accepted as a result of their race and gender. Betty moves between private and public spaces without being noticed by those around her while the men disrupt public spaces without consequence. The Aboriginal Justice Inquiry (AJI) concluded that "Aboriginal women and their children suffer tremendously as victims in contemporary Canadian society. They are the victims of racism, of sexism and unconscionable levels of domestic violence (1:475)" (as cited by Smulders, 2006, p. 37). Betty was murdered on November 13, 1971 (Smulders) by white Canadian men who targeted her on the basis of race and gender. The 2015 novel's revival of the past reminds readers that the violence Betty experiences is a cycle that continues to target Indigenous women today.

Historically, the English language has repeatedly been used as a colloquial tool to 'otherize'

cultural groups with mother tongues other than English, which is represented in *Betty* through the attitudes of Betty's attackers. On page 21, multiple voices exit from the car, but the speakers' faces are not shown to represent the power of a collective voice (Robertson & Henderson, 2015). According to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls of 2017, "the Canadian federal government imposed new colonial policies (particularly through the Indian Act) that fractured and displaced Indigenous Nations (National Inquiry, 2017, p. 18). Colonial use of English as a weapon threatens assimilation and the erasure of different nation's distinct cultures and languages. Legally, the Canadian government has used the Indian Act to displace and devalue Indigenous peoples in Canada which the attackers voices from the car parallel by using derogatory racial slurs to describe Indigenous females. The voices from the car say, "those Indians are always good for it" (Robertson & Henderson, 2015, p. 21:3). The National Inquiry also explains that "the term 'Indian' is generally considered to be offensive. However, it retains legal meaning within Canadian Legislation" (National Inquiry, 2017, p. 40). Legal language acts as a barrier for people who do not receive a legal education, and the continued acceptance of the Indian Act itself, which legally excuses the cultural genocide of Indigenous peoples, and provides power to the colonial Canadian government through the origins of the name of the Act. In unequal power dynamics, language is a tool weaponized to repress cultural groups based on social hierarchies determined by settler colonialism. The laws that segregate Indigenous peoples use the term "Indian", and this language which is in practice today can be traced to the past legislations put into place with the intent of erasing Indigenous peoples. The use of the term "Indian" today to name legislation concerning Indigenous populations allows the federal government to discriminate against Indigenous people on unceded land which illuminates the continued institutional racism that Canada upholds and refuses to change. Legally and socially, the language used by the men who murder Betty, and our Canadian government, actively work against Indigenous peoples.

*Betty: The Helen Betty Osborne Story* provides an accessible connection to the past that readers can use to understand present-day racial injustices in Canada. Carleton argues, "comic books that examine racism can play an important role in confronting Canada's racial amnesia and developing peoples' awareness about its harmful effects" (Carleton, 2013, p. 522). Betty's story challenges non-Indigenous Canadian's memory and understanding of racism, the graphic novel reminds them of the consequences of colonial violence that target Indigenous women. On page 30, the boy virtually shares the article he reads on Facebook about Missing and Murdered Indigenous

Women (Robertson & Henderson, 2015). Stories such as Betty's are agents of change and should be translated into accessible mediums such as graphic novels that allow for a broad audience to engage with history in a meaningful way. Empowering Indigenous voices and stories is integral in challenging Canada's racial amnesia and provides opportunities for understanding underrepresented historical perspectives. *Betty: The Helen Betty Osborne Story* is one of the thousands of individual stories of Indigenous women whose lives are taken because of the acceptance of racist Canadian attitudes and colonial patterns of violence. By illustrating Betty's life before her death, non-Indigenous readers are more likely to understand Betty as a person rather than a statistic that they have become desensitized to because of their privilege. Recognizing Canada's violent past is essential to understanding the identity of the nation that exists today and the experiences of Indigenous peoples who inhabited the land long before colonial settlers. To begin to understand this nation's present and hopeful future, we must look to the past to understand the patterns and consequences of racialized violence.

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JESSICA MARSELLA<sup>1</sup>

# Examining the Subjugation of Indigenous Women through Community Partnerships with Extractive Industries

## Abstract

Integration into the capitalist market creates an opportunity for Indigenous communities to relinquish interdependent relationships with the Canadian state by commodifying natural resources to subsidize funding. Corporate partnerships offer Indigenous communities an opportunity for economic development to help alleviate conditions of poverty; however, the potential benefits are not reaching all members of the communities equally. Rather, extractive developments on Indigenous territories are creating new and complex challenges for Indigenous women. This paper examines the current and historical legacies of colonization within Canada that have excluded and oppressed Indigenous women, and have made Indigenous communities dependent on colonial processes to improve socioeconomic disparities. The legacies of colonization, the patriarchal foundations of capitalism, and the transient nature of extractive developments disproportionately harm Indigenous women, making corporate partnerships an unsustainable option to maintain Indigenous independence from the Canadian State.

**Keywords:** Indigenous rights, Indigenous women, Resource extraction, Community development, Colonization, Capitalism

## Résumé

L'intégration au marché capitaliste offre aux communautés indigènes la possibilité de renoncer à leurs relations d'interdépendance avec le Canada en commercialisant les ressources naturelles pour subventionner le financement. Les partenariats d'entreprises offrent aux communautés indigènes une opportunité de développement économique pour aider à atténuer les conditions de pauvreté ; cependant, les bénéfices potentiels ne touchent pas tous les membres des communautés de manière égale. Au contraire, les développements extractifs sur les territoires indigènes créent des défis nouveaux et complexes pour les femmes indigènes. Cet article examine les héritages actuels et historiques de la colonisation au Canada, qui ont exclu et ont opprimé les femmes autochtones, et ont rendu les communautés autochtones dépendantes des processus coloniaux pour améliorer les disparités socio-économiques. L'héritage de la colonisation, les fondements patriarcaux du capitalisme et la nature transitoire des développements extractifs nuisent de manière disproportionnée aux femmes autochtones, faisant des partenariats d'entreprises une option non viable pour maintenir l'indépendance des autochtones vis-à-vis du Canada.

**Mots clés:** droits des autochtones, femmes autochtones, extraction des ressources, développement communautaire, colonisation, capitalisme, autonomie gouvernementale

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<sup>1</sup> York University, Ontario.

The author of this paper is a white settler residing on the traditional territories of the Mississauga's of the New Credit. This author recently completed their Bachelor of Social Work degree from York University, with research focused primarily on intersectional oppression as it relates to Indigenous Women in Canada. This article was written as a research paper, and is not intended to appropriate or critique the stories, challenges, or decisions of Indigenous Peoples and Communities.

The effects of corporate partnerships with Indigenous nations have been a longstanding point of contention within social and political landscapes. While certain discourse suggests corporate partnerships based upon resource extraction will help support the future of Indigenous self-government (Slowey, 2008, p. 17), and there are undoubtedly a number of opportunities for economic advancements, the consequences of large industries basing projects within Indigenous communities disproportionately harm the women who live and work there. Dawn Martin-Hill (2008) argues that Indigenous women have borne the brunt of colonialism in Canada as the patriarchal structures of colonial powers have disproportionately targeted women through violence, displacement, and the destruction of family and community similar to the current instances of extraction developments on Indigenous land (p. 121). The patriarchal nature of capitalism often excludes women from lucrative positions within the developments, while the transient workforces associated with extraction projects pose a direct threat to the physical safety of Indigenous women and girls living within the proximity of the worksites. Using examples from the Lubicon Cree and Qamani'tuaq Communities, along with current and historical examples of Canada's colonial legacy and social context, this paper will argue that corporate partnerships, specifically, those that seek to extract and commodify natural resources, mimic colonial relationships through patriarchal capitalism, offering unequal benefits and disproportionately harming women within the affected communities.

To gain a full understanding of the ways in which Indigenous women have historically and continue to be disproportionately affected by colonization, one must look at the history of colonial patriarchy within Canada. European colonizers brought ideas of male domination paired with the expectation of women as subservient and domestic to Indigenous Nations within Canada. Upon colonization, Europeans violently imposed these ideas onto Indigenous women despite the autonomous and sacred positions they took up within their own communities (Stevenson, 1999, p. 73). Furthermore, Anderson (2016) states that "through colonization and the work of missionaries, women were excluded and handed a marginal role" (p. 55).

Furthermore, Martin-Hill (2008, p. 126) argues that through the systemic removal of children from Indigenous communities, Indigenous women are robbed of their most basic rights. When examining historical and contemporary child apprehension methods, such as residential schooling which began at the time of confederacy and had operational federally funded schools until 1996, the Sixties Scoop, which occurred from the year 1960 into the early 1980's (Blackstock, 2009, pp. 29-30) and, the current overrepresentation of Indigenous children within

Canadian child welfare systems, it is clear the State disproportionately and strategically targets Indigenous families (Vowel, 2016, p. 182). According to 2016 Canadian census data, while Indigenous children make up only 7.7% of the national population of children under the age of fourteen, they account for 52.2% of Canadian children in foster care (Indigenous Services Canada, 2019). Blackstock (2007) explains that despite the shocking statistics, Indigenous children are far less likely to be reported to child welfare services for instances of sexual, emotional, or physical abuse than their non-indigenous counterparts. However, Indigenous families are twice as likely to be reported for poverty-related neglect, such as inadequate food and housing (p. 75). Based on these statistics, it is evident that Indigenous children are vastly overrepresented within child welfare not because they are at greater risk in their homes, but rather it is because their families are at greater risk of experiencing systemic racism and systems of poverty (Blackstock, 2007, p. 76). Martin-Hill (2008) argues that for Indigenous women, to be powerless is to be without your family (p. 124). The calculated dismantling of family and community has and continues to disproportionately affect women, stripping women of their important roles as mothers and caregivers (Martin-Hill, 2008, p. 122).

Capitalism constructs a new layer of intersectional oppression for Indigenous women. Werlhof, (2007) takes on the concept of patriarchal capitalism, and the ways in which capitalism undermines, undervalues, and oppresses women. Patriarchal capitalism accentuates the value put on physical labor and accumulation of capital, and the devaluing of social production and caregiver roles. Thus capitalism relies upon patriarchal social order and the systematic devaluing of women in order to succeed in maximizing profits. Additionally, capitalism reinforces colonial gender binaries and gender roles, where men are expected to work and make money in the public sector, and women are expected to work in the home with no monetary wages, empowering men in a system that values economy over all else.

The social and cultural impacts of major capitalist endeavors within Indigenous Nations are necessary to understand the disproportionate impact extractive industry partnerships have on the women in Indigenous communities. Rauna Kuokkanen (2011) states that neoliberalism fundamentally contradicts traditional Indigenous cultures and teachings by treating the land as a commodity rather than existing in relationship to the Earth (p. 289). When the relationship with the Earth is being broken down, it threatens the essence of Indigenous communities and cultures. In an interview with Sara Bernard, Melina Laboucan-Massimo, a member of the Lubicon Cree First Nation explains that when systems like capitalism

that are based upon power and dominance are favored within a community, it is a reflection of how people in the community are being treated (Laboucan-Massimo in Bernard, 2015). Laboucan-Massimo states "violence against the Earth begets violence against women" (2015, para. 3). Extractive practices break down sacred relationships between women and the land and put a strain on various communities and their respective cultures. In the instance of the Lubicon Cree, it is the women who suffer the most from the environmental damage brought on by resource extraction by industries like oil and lumber on their territories (Martin-Hill, 2008, p. 150). In 1992, the Lubicon Women's Circle made a public statement to express the anguish the environmental damage brought upon themselves and their communities (Martin-Hill, 2004, p. 317). The Lubicon Women's Circle explained that their children were sick from the poor air quality and water pollution. Consequently, fish and game populations were depleted, and the remaining animals for consumption were also sick and diseased - the bush that provided them their traditional way of life was destroyed (Martin-Hill, 2004, p. 319). These women testified that as living conditions became direr, families became broken, while violence and substance abuse increased. The families and cultures these women have worked so hard to nurture and protect were being dismantled by corporate greed.

In addition to the attack on culture, and the devastating environmental impacts, extractive developments often require the employment of transient workers, which poses a direct threat to Indigenous women and girls. *The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* (2014) includes a regional cumulative-effects assessment of hydroelectric development in Manitoba that linked the arrival of a largely male transient workforce to an influx of sexual abuse against Indigenous women; as well as a report by the Northern Health and Provincial Health Services Authority of British Columbia that identifies a relationship between crime rates and resource extracting, specifically including physical and sexual assaults against women (2014, p. 586). The inquiry suggests that the transient nature of the workforces associated with resource extraction developments poses a threat to the physical safety of Indigenous women and girls (2014, p. 585).

Extractive developments are posing new and complex threats to women in Indigenous communities. Similar to original colonial efforts, current practices destabilize women's traditional roles in their communities and pose an immediate threat to their physical safety (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2014, p. 585). In this regard, corporate expansion onto Indigenous territory is nothing less than a continuing colonial effort

performed under the guise of providing financial supports to Indigenous communities.

Given the patriarchal nature of capitalist structures, the opportunities for monetary profits from corporate partnerships are inequitably divided among the community, specifically between men and women. Extractive industries often offer women fewer skilled and high-paying positions than men, employing them in more gendered roles which offer significantly lower wages than the trade-oriented positions offered primarily to men (Manning, et al. 2018, pp. 5-6). This report titled *A Literature Synthesis Report on the Impacts of Resource Extraction for Indigenous Women* (2018) also includes a study of Inuit Women in Qamani'tuaq employed at the Meadowbank Gold Mine. This report found that women working for the mine were more likely to hold temporary and casual positions, while men primarily held full-time positions with the project (Manning, et al. 2018, pp. 5-8). They also found that the shift work, and 'fly in fly out' arrangements of the job kept women from their children and families for prolonged periods of time - which created an increase in family conflict and breakdowns in relationship. Additionally, the lack of childcare while working was one of the most common reasons women in Qamani'tuaq left their positions at Meadowbank Gold (Manning, et al. 2018, p. 6).

In addition to the lack of equitable and prosperous job opportunities for women, the 2018 study concludes that Indigenous women working at resource extraction sites in any capacity are often subjected to disproportionate rates of racialized and sexualized harassment and violence within the workplace (Manning, et al. 2018, p. 7). There are several distinct aspects that make Indigenous women particularly susceptible to this type of violence and harassment. First, the intersectional identities of Indigenous women paired with low-power positions within the workplace hierarchy makes these women especially vulnerable to men, specifically white men, who tend to maintain high-powered positions. Second, the report adds that in the instance of Qamani'tuaq Inuit Women working for Meadowbank Gold Mine, women working as cleaners or housekeepers are given tasks that require them to work within male sleeping quarters, placing them at a much greater risk for sexual harassment and assault (Manning, et al. 2018, p. 7). Violence and harassment are also common reasons for women leaving their jobs at Meadowbank Gold Mine.

The temporary nature of extraction developments also causes great distress for Indigenous women, who reported feeling anxious about what would happen to their families and communities once the projects they depend on for employment and income are shut down (Manning, et al. 2018, p. 9). Apart from the loss of income when the development is

complete, there are residual effects of the income-related inflation on necessities like food and housing even after the project is shut down. Many Indigenous women experience anxiety regarding the inflated cost of living and how this will affect their lives and well-being after projects are shut down and unemployment rates rise (Rixen and Blangy, 2016, pp. 297-312). While agreements between corporations and Indigenous communities promise to provide economic opportunities and solutions for the communities involved, a 2016 study on Inuit population movements and inequalities highlight the fact that pre-existing socioeconomic inequalities can leave many families within land claim areas in poorer living conditions than they had endured prior to agreements due to rising social costs, unmet expectations, inadequate social recourses and a rapidly changing social landscape (Dombrowski et al. 2016, p. 786) with women once again bearing the brunt of the damage caused. While Indigenous women who are employed by resource extraction development projects receive less opportunity for economic mobility and are often subjected to hostile and dangerous work environments created by their male co-workers, women who remain at home with partners and family members employed in resource extraction have to take on an increased caregiver burden within their families and communities (Manning, et al. 2018, p. 6). Evidently, Indigenous men and women are not being offered equal benefits through partnerships with resource extraction companies.

Certain scholarly discourse argues that corporate partnerships are a viable solution to provide Indigenous communities with economic benefits outside of the scope of the State (Craik, Gardner & McCarthy, 2017, p. 379), providing an opportunity to move beyond state dependency. These neoliberal pursuits offer Indigenous communities control over the profits they receive from extraction partnerships, which offer hope for economic mobility, and relief from impoverished conditions that are unfortunately common on Indigenous Reserves. However, many of the relationships are only offered through terms that mimic colonial models (Irlbacher-Fox, 2010, p. 3). There is an unequal power relationship between large corporations and the Indigenous communities from which they wish to extract resources. This aspect is similar to the way in which colonizers seized land for economic expansion through violence against Indigenous Peoples, forcing them off their territories using weaponry and means that Indigenous Peoples did not have access to (Cormier, 2017, p. 45). The extraction companies have unlimited funds and massive project budgets, yet they aim to profit off of Indigenous Communities with unstable economies and lack of basic resources and infrastructure. Although there is a consultation process when piloting projects, many Indigenous Peoples involved with the consults

feel there is a lack of mutual respect and meaningful collaboration, effectively undermining the communities' involvement in decision making while the corporations take on an overpowering paternalistic approach (Dylan, Smallboy & Lightman, 2014, p. 75).

Regardless, developments that ravish the land and radically alter and deplete the natural landscape are seen as one of the few realistic and attainable solutions to poverty and state dependency, as modern methods of self-government are often founded upon the capitalist market economy (Kuokkanen, 2011, p. 275). Although self-governance is an opportunity for Indigenous communities to operate independently from the Canadian State, many nations maintain this financial independence by integrating into the global market and commodifying their resources in order to subsidize their income, creating a situation of market-based self-government (Kuokkanen, p. 280). Irlbacher-Fox defines self-government as the extent to which the Canadian government is willing to grant Indigenous communities' authority over a range of areas that will determine their way of life and is circumscribed by Canadian law (Irlbacher-Fox, 2010, p. 7). Indigenous Peoples are forced to accommodate the rules and processes of the colonial state in order to achieve outcomes that do not represent their best interests (Salée and Lévesque, 2010, p. 104). Aside from the social detriments, market-based self-government -and extraction-based partnerships in general- shift dependency from the state into dependency on corporations. The temporary nature of extractive developments does not provide long-term economic relief, meaning communities will have to make multiple deals, which will further damage the land and intrinsically link the economic success of community members to corporate developments. Additionally, engaging in agreements with extractive industries is not only ecologically unsustainable, but these agreements also bring unequal opportunity and disproportionate harm to the women living within the community (Kuokkanen, 2011, p. 279).

The purpose of this essay is not to argue that corporate partnerships do not hold any value within Indigenous efforts towards self-government, nor is it to say that the communities who choose to engage with extraction developments are not acting in the best interest of their community. The purpose is however to argue that these relationships are born out of necessity created by the colonial state, and therefore, cannot be an act of decolonization, or even sovereignty over the land. The appropriation and destruction of land, and harm brought onto women in the community replicates the damage done by colonial efforts of the past and does not fully offer the benefits promised. Devaluing the land and undermining earth-based ideology is a type of forced assimilation, and resource extraction calls for communities to allow large corporations to

compromise their relationship with the Earth in order to receive financial gain (George, 2019, p. 76). Evidently, relationships between Indigenous communities and extractive industries are complex and multi-faceted, and no single solution will work for every community, however corporate partnerships formed out of economic necessity, that degrade the land and disproportionately harm Indigenous women do not appear to be an equitable, de-colonial solution for Indigenous communities striving for independent self-government.

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SIMON TOPP<sup>1</sup>

# Canada - A Long Way to Go: What Sparkles Does Not Always Shine

A Study of Segregation and Gentrification in the Neighbourhood of Runnymede-Bloor West Village as it Relates to the Wider City of Toronto

## Abstract

This paper is an ethnographic and sociological study of the neighborhood of Runnymede-Bloor West Village, identifying trends and drawing conclusions based on statistical data, academic theory, and notes taken during research trips. It is also worth noting that this study was conducted in January of 2020 before the Global pandemic was declared. Focusing on gentrification, segregation, and inequality, I identify that this neighborhood is part of a growing trend in Toronto of the increasing severity of all three of these issues. Runnymede-Bloor West Village is quickly becoming one of Toronto's wealthiest neighborhoods, with the average household income increasing substantially. While this will certainly make real estate agents happy and will probably provide the city with more property tax, it also has the effect of pushing less affluent people out, as increasing living costs make their continued residence in Runnymede-Bloor West Village unaffordable. It also influences the local businesses, as businesses that do not cater to the new influx of affluent residents go out of business, either because their customer base has left or because they can no longer afford to pay their rent. I also identify the increased segregation of the neighborhood, as the racialized character of income inequality in Toronto results in people of color being priced out. Finally, I recommend that the solution to much of this increased inequality is the building of more affordable housing and restrictions of the building of unaffordable housing. Much of this will require the actions of a progressive, engaged local government. Hopefully, these steps will be able to halt or even reverse the trend of an ever-increasing cost of living, provide the local businesses with customers who do not have to spend most of their income on housing costs, and provide a short term solution to the issue of income and ethnicity-based segregation in Toronto.

**Keywords:** Toronto, Gentrification, Segregation, Affordability, Runnymede-Bloor West Village

## Résumé

Cet article est une étude ethnographique et sociologique du quartier de Runnymede-Bloor West Village, à Toronto. Cet article souligne les tendances et tire les conclusions basées sur des données statistiques, sur les théories académiques et sur les notes prises lors de voyages de recherche. Il convient également de noter que cette étude a été menée en janvier 2020, avant que la pandémie de la COVID-19 ne soit déclarée. En mettant l'accent sur l'embourgeoisement, la ségrégation et l'inégalité, j'identifie la contribution de chaque quartier torontois à la croissante de ces trois problèmes. Runnymede-Bloor West Village, dont le revenu moyen des ménages augmentant considérablement, devient de plus en plus l'un des quartiers les plus riches de Toronto. Certes ça aidera des agents immobiliers et la ville elle-même, mais les personnes moins fortunées sont maintenant forcées à partir, car l'augmentation du coût de la vie rend leur résidence à Runnymede-Bloor West Village inabordable. Ce profit pécuniaire de la ville a également une influence sur les entreprises locales. Les entreprises qui ne peuvent pas répondre aux besoins du nouvel afflux de résidents aisés font faillite, soit parce que leur clientèle est partie, ou soit parce qu'elles n'ont plus les moyens de payer leur loyer. J'identifie également l'augmentation de la ségrégation dans le quartier, car le caractère racialisé de l'inégalité des revenus à Toronto entraîne l'éviction des personnes de couleur. Enfin, je recommande que la solution à une grande partie de cette inégalité accrue soit la construction de plus de logements à prix abordables et la restriction de la construction de logements à prix inabordables. Une grande partie de cette solution demandera les actions d'un gouvernement local progressiste et engagé. Espérons que ces mesures permettront d'arrêter, ou bien d'inverser la tendance à l'augmentation constante du coût de la vie, de fournir aux entreprises locales des clients qui n'ont pas à dépenser la majeure partie de leur revenu en frais de logement, et de fournir une solution à court terme au problème de la ségrégation fondée sur le revenu et l'origine ethnique à Toronto.

**Mots clés:** Toronto, gentrification, ségrégation, abordabilité, Runnymede-Bloor West Village

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<sup>1</sup> Glendon College, York University

### Introduction

When I first arrived at Runnymede-Bloor West village, I was greeted with the sights and sounds that are familiar to any resident of Toronto. As I walked east along Bloor street, shivering in the late January cold, I observed the many shops and restaurants that form the core of what is known as Bloor West Village. These businesses were as diverse as the city of Toronto prides itself on being. There were restaurants from all over the world: Japanese, Mexican, Indian, Thai, Italian, French. Many of the windows displayed advertisements for events that celebrate Toronto's multicultural identity: "Ukrainian cultural festival next month!", "Indian street food in a week!", "Irish dance lessons sign up today!". Walking north on Jane revealed a residential area that seemed to be the picture-perfect vision of the Toronto middle class lifestyle, with large houses, nice lawns, and a car in every driveway. At first glance, Runnymede-Bloor West Village appears to be everything that Toronto projects to the world: multicultural, affluent, and open for business.

However, closer inspection reveals that this image is only part of the story and that the reality is more complicated and less perfect for a magazine advertisement. In many ways, Runnymede-Bloor West Village is a microcosm of many of Toronto's problems. For every successful immigrant-owned business, there is a business that has failed and closed up shop. For every diverse local, there is an increasingly segregated neighbourhood. Everywhere the price of housing, food, and electricity climbs as the creeping effects of gentrification make themselves felt. In this paper, I will study the effects of the intersection of gentrification and segregation in the neighbourhood of Runnymede-Bloor West Village, compare it to trends in Toronto at large, and try to see if the neighbourhood follows the trend or is an exception to it. I will first walk through much of the literature on this topic and its related concepts, namely gentrification and segregation in Toronto. I will then use firsthand observations and publicly sourced data from Statistics Canada and Toronto's neighbourhood profiles tool, found on its website, to analyze Runnymede Bloor West Village and make conclusions. Finally, I will make recommendations based on my findings and the findings of experts.

### Literature Review

Gentrification is a prominent theme in the findings of this paper, and therefore, a review of the

material I collected on gentrification is in order. Of particular importance is that the definition of gentrification has been expanding. Gentrification scholarship has traditionally been focused on the neighbourhood, primarily analysing how the influx of affluent people has resulted in the local cost of living going up, displacing the less affluent population of the neighbourhood in the process (Billingham, 2015, p. 77). There is a belief that while this is certainly a worthy approach to the topic of gentrification, other avenues of research can also be justified, such as a more macro approach to the topic. This approach observes patterns of gentrification across an entire city or region, documenting patterns of 'supra-neighbourhood' gentrification. This is often due to the policies of regional and municipal governments, meaning that there is a need for gentrification scholars to study their policies in addition to the policies of neighbourhood officials (Billingham, 2015).

One of the key findings in regard to gentrification in Toronto is that the larger municipality is divided into three cities, split along income lines. City number 3 is where Toronto's less affluent live - primarily located in the suburbs, far from the downtown core. City number 1 is the opposite: much of the city's wealth is concentrated here, and it is located in or near the downtown core and Toronto's subway stations. City number 2 is between these two extremes, and it is where the middle-class lives (Hulchanski, 2011, pp. 3-5). There was a time when city number 2 was by far the largest area in Toronto, but recent research, documenting housing costs and income levels, has shown that as wealth pours into Toronto from the outside world and concentrates in certain areas, city number 2 has shrunk dramatically, being replaced by city number 1 in some cases but mostly by city number 3 (Hulchanski, 2011, pp. 3-5). This demonstrates that Toronto is experiencing an increase in income inequality and its subsequent polarization, as the city divides itself between clearly identifiable rich and poor areas and the middle class shrinks.

Research demonstrates this is due to a disinvestment in some areas, mostly the suburbs, and investment in others, mostly in the downtown area. Furthermore, the investment in the downtown area typically comes in the form of gentrification (Hwang & Lin, 2016, pp. 10-13). This dynamic has the effect of polarising the city even more, as the effect of gentrification force those with lower income to leave the downtown area for the cheaper suburbs, and higher property values and more amenities attract higher income people to the downtown area from the suburbs

(Lehrer & Wieditz, 2009, pp. 143). This begins a cycle: investors are attracted to the affluence of the downtown area and away from the suburbs, their investment adds to the gentrification of the downtown area, their disinvestment from the suburbs makes them poorer, and the richer and poorer population sort themselves accordingly (Walks, 2013, p.2).

There has also been research into segregation in Toronto. Toronto is rightly regarded as one of the most multicultural cities in the world, with 48 different ethnic groups containing more than 5000 members each (Qadeer, 2003, p. 27). Segregation in the city is not based on overtly discriminatory practices, as any form of explicitly discriminatory practices by landlords and realtors were made illegal in Canada by the adoption of the charter of rights and freedoms in the 1960s (Bloc & Galabuzi, 2011). Nevertheless, Toronto has a good deal of segregation that is driven by economic factors such as the more subtle forms of discrimination present in the job market.

Studies have shown that racialized workers only make 0.81 cents for every dollar earned to those who are not racialized. This number is even more pronounced for racialized women (Block & Galabuzi, 2011). Additionally, racialized immigrants were shown to make less than non-racialized immigrants, disproving the argument that this is simply newcomers struggling in a new country (Block & Galabuzi, 2011). This is likely related to findings that indicated racialized people in Toronto were far more likely to find work in insecure, low paying jobs than they were to find work in jobs that offered better pay and job security (Block & Galabuzi, 2011). This may be because of the biases held by many employers in Toronto. For example, a study found that employers were less likely to hire someone if their resumes had a non-English name and contained experience from outside the country. Employers justified this by citing concerns about language ability, with no evidence of such language issues in the resumes they were provided and not having conducted any interviews (Oreopoulos, 2011, pp. 157-158).

The result is that the patterns of gentrification take on a racial character. Since immigrants and racialized people have lower incomes on average due to the factors we have just discussed, they are subject to the pushes and pulls of Toronto's steadily increasing income-based polarisation, with those making less relegated to some parts of the city and the wealthy concentrating in others. Furthermore, the influx of affluent non-racialized people into diverse neighbourhoods that are classed as city number 2

causes gentrification. This dynamic makes the cost of living unaffordable for the generally less affluent racialized residents, forcing them to move to neighbourhoods in Toronto that are classified as city number 3. Therefore, as gentrification causes city number 2 to shrink, city number 3 is becoming more racialized, city number 1 is becoming increasingly non-racialized, and segregation grows.

### Methodology

Research for this paper was conducted in a few ways. The first was a trip to the neighbourhood of Runnymede-Bloor West Village on Sunday, January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020, to make observations and write down my initial interpretations. This method was important, as it is all too easy to get a distorted view of a place by just looking at statistics. For example, if one was to just look at statistical sources like Statistics Canada, one would not have known that the neighbourhood has a variety of businesses along Bloor and at major intersections. It was also a good way to get a spatial understanding of the area, observing what the buildings looked like, what kind of people were out and about at the time, and the kind of aesthetic those who make decisions for the neighbourhood wish to project to the world.

The main drawback of this method was weather related, as it was cold and rainy on the day of my study. This not only had an effect on my personal discomfort but also likely reduced the amount of people walking about on the street. This forced me to be a little more proactive, observing people through the windows of restaurants and other establishments. This required a bit of subtlety and probably altered my first impressions of the area. It is also entirely possible that the nature of physically observing an area was challenging as well. While I tried to cover an area that was diverse, I may have missed some areas that would have given me more insight.

The other method employed for this paper was the gathering of statistics from online sources, like Statistics Canada and the neighbourhood profiles on the City of Toronto's website. These sources of data were a fantastic way to either confirm or correct the impressions I got when I went to the neighbourhood. They also served as a way to reveal things that were not immediately obvious and to explain and give context to some of the observations. The data that was available online was excellent when describing the neighbourhood's demographics. There was a

cornucopia of data concerning statistics like income levels, housing costs, ethnicity, gender, and family structure. However, there was not a huge amount of data available that pertained to the businesses that cluster along Bloor Street and some of the major intersections. Some data can be tangentially linked to them, such as building rental prices which can be linked to their financial success, but there is little data to be found about them specifically. I found StatsCan to be of limited utility. I could not find a way to get data on the neighbourhood level and was only able to find data about the city of Toronto as a whole. It could therefore really only be used to compare the data found in the Neighbourhood demographics tool to the city in its totality.

Additional information and context were found by looking up the policies of the City of Toronto and their effects in academic journals. This provided the wider context needed to have a full understanding of what was happening in Runnymede-Bloor West village, showing what was happening at a city wide, macro scale. This context was important because it allowed me to get a fuller view of the city as a whole, instead of just observing the neighbourhood of Runnymede-Bloor West Village in a vacuum. It also served as a springboard, providing ideas for what to look for in the data I collected. The drawbacks of this were that the unconscious biases of the authors may have shaped my own understanding of the neighbourhood and city, as my own biases were shaped by the data they chose to highlight.

### Findings and Analysis

In some ways, Runnymede-Bloor West Village is quite different from the rest of Toronto. The principal example of this is the neighbourhood's diversity, though perhaps a better way to put it is the neighbourhood's lack of diversity. The vast majority of the residents are of European descent, specifically from the British Isles, and were born in Canada. This can be observed in a few ways.

The image below (Fig. 1) displays the percentage of people living in the neighbourhood who were born in Canada. The green bar signifies the population in the neighbourhood, the grey bar signifies

the number in the city of Toronto as a whole. We can see that a disproportionately large percentage of the population of the neighbourhood was born in Canada: 75% of the population of Runnymede-Bloor West Village was born in Canada, an outlier in a city where that is true for slightly less than half the population. In fact, this number appears to have grown slightly over the years, with the population of the neighbourhood that was born in Canada increasing by 3% between 2011 and 2016.

### **Immigration**



Fig. 1<sup>2</sup>

Evidence of the population's European descent can be seen on the map below (Fig. 2). We can see that the vast majority listed their ethnic origin as European.

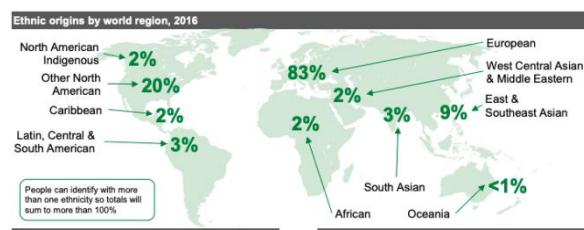


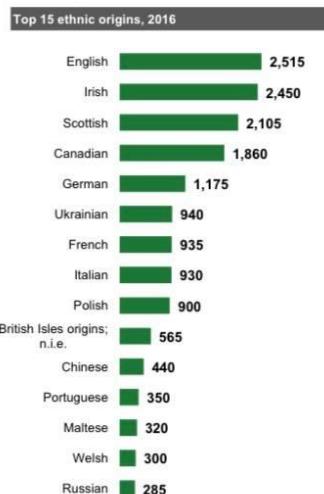
Fig. 2<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, we can see in the graphic below (Fig. 3) that the population is not only mostly ethnically European but also that a majority are ethnically from the British Isles. Around 79% of the residents listed their ethnic origins as either English, Scottish, Irish, Welsh, or British Isles origins n.i.e (see Fig. 3 for this category). This is not counting those who listed their ethnic origin as Canadian, though due to this area's history of colonization by the British it is likely that at least some of the residents who listed this as their ethnic origin are ethnically British as well. As well, the graph below (Fig. 4) demonstrates the residents'

<sup>2</sup> Number of people born in Canada living in Runnymede-Bloor West Village Compared in comparison to Toronto, 2016. Source: [City of Toronto's Neighbourhood Profiles tool](#)

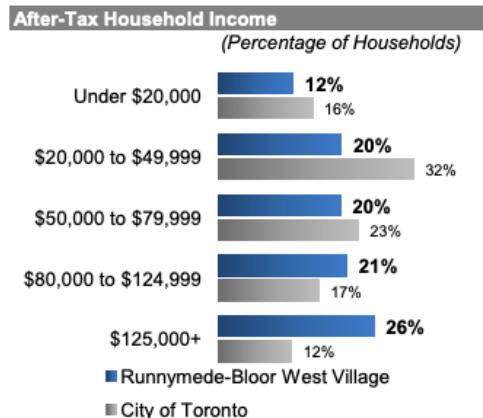
<sup>3</sup> Parts of the world residents of Runnymede Bloor-West Village have listed as their ethnic origin, 2016. Source: [City of Toronto's Neighbourhood Profiles tool](#)

mother tongue. The overwhelming majority's first language is English, and the percentage of people in Runnymede Bloor-West Village whose mother tongue is not English consists of only half of the percentage for the city, further suggesting that the majority of the residents of Runnymede Bloor-West Village were born in Canada or came from a place that spoke English.

Fig. 3<sup>4</sup>Fig. 4<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Top 15 ethnic origins in Runnymede Bloor-West Village, 2016. Source: [City of Toronto's Neighbourhood Profiles tool](#)

<sup>5</sup> Residence's listed mother tongue, 2016. Source: [City of Toronto's Neighbourhood Profiles tool](#)



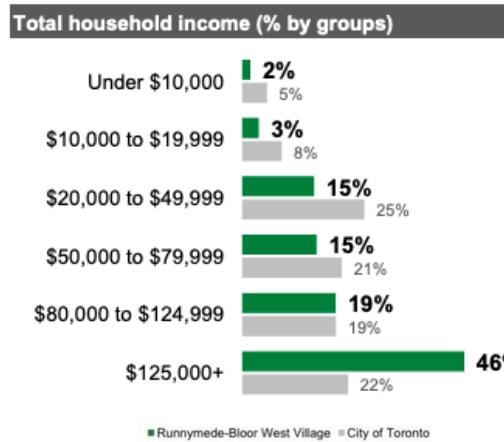
	Neighbourhood	City
Median After-Tax Household Income	\$74,729	\$52,149
Average After-Tax Household Income	\$95,119	\$70,945

Percent of Population in Low-Income (LIM-AT) **9%**

Fig. 5<sup>6</sup>

Runnymede-Bloor West Village is also a higher-than-average income area and is only becoming more so with time. The two images above, (Fig. 5) from 2011, and below (Fig. 6) from 2016, tells this story in the most obvious way. We can see that there are not very many low-income people living in the Runnymede Bloor West Village, and the number has more than halved between 2011 and 2016. Households making less than \$ 20,000, those living at or below the poverty line, went from 12% in 2011 to 5% in 2016. The middle class has also shrunk by a substantial degree, shrinking by 11%: The brackets of \$ 20,000 - \$ 48,000 and \$ 50,000 - \$ 79,000, or those who have enough to live comfortably but not luxuriously, both went from 20% in 2011 to 15% in 2016. Those doing a little better and able to afford larger houses, making \$ 80,000 to \$ 124,000, also went down a little, from 21% in 2011 to 19% in 2016. However, the most dramatic and telling statistic in these two graphs is the bracket of \$ 125,000+, people who are firmly in the upper income bracket and could consider themselves wealthy. The number of households making over \$ 125 000+ a year has ballooned from 26% in 2011 to 46% in 2016, an increase of 20 percentage points.

<sup>6</sup> Income levels in Runnymede Bloor-West Village, 2011. Source: [City of Toronto's Neighbourhood Profiles tool](#)

Fig. 6<sup>7</sup>

Despite these differences from the city of Toronto as a whole, the findings appear to show that the neighbourhood follows the trends that have been observed in Toronto, and it is the exception that proves the rule. While Runnymede Bloor-West Village is an outlier in Toronto in terms of diversity, it also shows that it is part of a trend in Toronto: increasing segregation. It is worth noting that there is no evidence that this is due to any overt policies of discrimination on behalf of the city government, property realtors, or local landlords. Instead, the neighbourhood appears to have been shaped by the racial character of income inequality that has formed in Toronto due to the biases, unconscious or otherwise, of employers. Racialized immigrants often struggle to find employment outside of low paying, insecure jobs in sectors like the service industry (Block & Galabuzi, 2011). This is despite the fact that almost all immigrants who arrived under the points system, roughly half of all immigrants to Canada, have post-secondary degrees. Studies show this is not a problem faced by non-racialized immigrants in anywhere near the same numbers (Block, Sheila & Galabuzi, 2011). This means that those with lower incomes tend to be racialized, while those with higher incomes tend not to be. This could be observed during my trip to the neighbourhood; the vast majority of those working in the restaurants and shops were racialized, while their patrons, those with enough disposable income to shop and eat out, generally were not. Therefore, as the neighbourhood gentrifies

dramatically, with people in the highest income bracket edging towards being the majority of residents, the neighbourhood becomes less diverse as well.

This data also shows that Runnymede-Bloor West Village is part of the trend of income polarisation that has been observed in Toronto. As mentioned earlier, the top income bracket, households making more than \$124 000 a year, was 46% of the neighbourhood's population in 2016. That income bracket was 26% in 2011, showing that it has been growing rapidly at the expense of all other income brackets. It is therefore likely that today, in 2021, that income bracket is either the majority of the households in the neighbourhood or is very close to becoming the majority. This means the wealth is concentrated in the area and pushes lower income brackets out as housing and living costs increase, transforming Runnymede-Bloor West village from city number 2 to city number 1.

The neighbourhood also displays the trends in gentrification that can be observed in the rest of the city. My trip to the neighbourhood revealed that "lower class" businesses, such as hardware stores and fast food restaurants, appeared to be struggling, while "higher class" businesses, such as more expensive restaurants and apparel stores, did not. Much of this could be attributed to the time of day, the weather, and the fact that my in-person survey was conducted on a Sunday. However, while this could explain the lack of customers in the lower-class businesses, the fact that many of the stores seem to have closed permanently suggests that the lack of customers is the norm, not the exception. The neighbourhood can therefore be seen as part of the trend of businesses in gentrified areas either changing to fit the new, higher class clientele or going out of business due to their earlier clientele leaving, because of an increase in building rental costs, or a combination of the two.

What is to be done, then? This paper has identified that as the neighbourhood gentrifies and the cost of owning or renting a house, apartment or building goes up and up, both residents and businesses will struggle to function as more and more of their income goes towards their primary residence or place of business. This has the effect of locking out those who cannot afford to be there, a bar that is getting steadily higher as time goes by. This also has the effect of increasingly segregating the neighbourhood, as

<sup>7</sup> Income levels in Runnymede Bloor-West Village, 2016. Source: [City of Toronto's Neighbourhood Profiles tool](#)

racialized people are locked out of the area due to the economic struggles they face.

In the short term, one of the best ways to deal with the issue of housing costs and racial segregation would be to ensure that affordable housing in Runnymede-Bloor West Village becomes the rule, not the exception. To achieve this, more affordable housing must be built. This would address the problem in two ways. As supply meets demand with housing that is affordable, the housing prices in the rest of the neighbourhood will, in theory, go down as well to compete. It also addresses the struggles of the local businesses. These places are perfectly situated to be the nucleus of a thriving community; there is a variety of restaurants and other places to gather such as clubs and bars, and there are stores of all kinds. They are all within walking distance of each other, and public transportation is close and accessible. All they lack is people. More affordable housing would not only introduce more people to the neighbourhood but would also introduce people who have enough disposable income to spend money shopping and eating out, instead of spending that disposable income on their rents and mortgages. That said, it may not be enough to simply build more housing. It may also be necessary to block the construction of housing designed for higher incomes, as well as block the conversion of affordable housing to unaffordable housing through either extensive renovation or through the simple raising of prices. This would be done to apply further downward pressure on housing prices. This halting of the rising costs of living may also result in an end to the increase in segregation that has been creeping into the neighbourhood at a steady pace. Keeping the cost of living low will act to stop the income based racial segregation that has become a trend in Toronto in the short term. This could act as an acceptable stop gap to address segregation until a more permanent, equitable solution to race-based income inequality can be found.

It is worth noting that this course of action requires the participation of local government, as much of this proposed solution would have to happen through tools like zoning laws to stop the building of, or conversion to, unaffordable housing. There will also be a need for government subsidies and other incentives to encourage developers to build this affordable housing. Alternatively, the local, provincial, or even federal government could develop the housing projects itself, as it was in business of doing until the early 2000s. It would therefore be necessary for the neighbourhood to organise politically and form alliances with other communities to get a government

elected that is willing to be an enthusiastic partner in this endeavor.

Such an approach has been shown to work in other neighbourhoods in Toronto. The Neighbourhood of South Riverdale is a place that, for a long time, was able to resist the gentrification that had radically altered the nearby area of North Riverdale. This was despite a constant media narrative that South Riverdale was economically ‘up and coming’ and referred to the diverse working-class people who lived there with condescension. There was also a sharp increase in real estate speculation (Walks and August, 2008, pp. 2613-2614). This was accomplished through a range of approaches, but one of the most decisive factors was the actions of the majority progressive city council that came into power in the early 1970s. This new city council ended several ‘urban renewal’ projects in the neighbourhood that threatened to price out its residents, instituted zoning laws that prevented the kind of development that led to gentrification, implemented rent controls, and opened the planning process to local participation (Walks and August, 2008, pp. 2613-2614). This allowed South Riverdale to remain an affordable place to live for much of the last few decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. South Riverdale is also an example of what can happen when such progressive policies are removed. In the mid-1990s, rent controls were removed for vacated properties. This incentivised landlords to evict low-income tenants, replacing them with tenants with increased rent prices. This has been a major contributing factor to homelessness in Toronto (Walks and August, 2008, pp. 2613-14). This example serves as a valuable lesson to Runnymede Bloor-West Village, showing what can be achieved and conversely, what can happen if nothing is done.

It is important to note that addressing the cost of housing is not a silver bullet that will address every issue that can be found in Runnymede-Bloor West Village. There are transformative solutions to the issues of income inequality and racial segregation that have been discussed, that range from attempts at cultural change to address the biases of employers to a guaranteed minimum income. However, these solutions are much grander in scope and require systemic changes that are too far reaching to properly address in this paper. The solution of more affordable housing supported by a progressive city government, on the other hand, is something that can be done relatively quickly and will have immediate, positive effects. Furthermore, it is far easier for people to make positive changes in their lives when they have an affordable place to live. Affordable housing, therefore, serves as a

foundation upon which further positive changes can be made.

**Conclusion and Recommendations for Further Study**

Runnymede-Bloor West Village is a neighbourhood that is being shaped by the forces of gentrification and segregation that effect the city of Toronto as whole, resulting in it transitioning from a middle-class neighbourhood to an upper class one, pushing out residents and businesses who do not keep up and adding to Toronto's racial segregation through the push and pull of Toronto's race-based income inequality. There is a need for more affordable housing to be part of the solution, at least in the short term. There is also a need to prevent the building of more unaffordable housing, as well as the conversion of affordable housing to housing whose price makes it out of reach of the neighbourhoods' current residents. The cooperation of the local government would be instrumental in achieving this, as the example of South Riverdale demonstrates. In theory, this would be a good solution to the problem of housing unaffordability in the area, and its effect of segregation. However, the effects of introducing affordable housing into an increasingly wealthy neighbourhood should be studied to see if this is indeed the case. It would also be worth looking at if there are social tensions that come with this introduction, or if local businesses will adapt to serve these new, lower income residents, or if they maintain their current practices, making them essentially unavailable to lower income people. This research would allow us to discover if this is in fact a way to address the problem, or if another solution must be found.

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*Alternative*



*Epistemologies*



## we're all in this together

Ontario's premier suggested things would "get back to normal" once COVID-19 vaccines are approved and mass-produced, as hot spots in the province entered lockdowns and Eastern Canada's Atlantic bubble was dismantled again in an effort to curb the spread of the virus. Doug Ford dangled the possibility of an end to the pandemic in announcing a retired Canadian Forces general would lead the province's vaccine distribution and vowed to support businesses struggling under stringent public health measures. Ford's comments came as urban centres in Ontario where

COVID-19 province's nightmare" monitor sh of several retailers w Friday, not only serve sacrifices b Tam, said and larger settings. "T

While there were no eggs, milk, or fresh produce, there were plenty of specialty gourmet items, including several kinds of high-end pasta and olive oils imported from Italy, and a number of varieties of salt favoured by chefs, including English Maldon sea salt — both regular and smoked — at \$11.99 for a 240-gram box.

Canadians at risk of life-threatening illness, cause serious disruptions to health services and present significant challenges for areas not adequately equipped to manage complex medical emergencies." The pandemic has exacerbated long-standing, systemic health inequities related to poverty, racism and other forms of discrimination that creates conditions for COVID-19 to spread and disproportionately impact Torontonians who are Indigenous, Black or racialized, precariously employed or live on a low income, live in multigenerational or crowded housing, or experience challenges taking time off from work when ill or to isolate from others.

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### Poem Statement

Job loss. Fear. Long line-ups. Supply chain disruptions. Empty store shelves. Transmission uncertainties. To mask or not to mask? Social isolation. Anxiety. Zoom-

class teaching and learning. Parodying Cat Stevens, the first pandemic wave cut deepest.

Constructed from found text in newspapers and City of Toronto press releases, this poem combines literary devices in ironic juxtaposition. The centred text content pulls out meanings and incongruities in relation to the

text below. Even the text shading and font size communicates disparity: the centred darker, larger text imposes upon and partially obliterates the lighter, smaller text on which it rests.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlights all-too-familiar inequities and disparities in the social fabric. We all suffer during this global health crisis, but some among us needlessly suffer more than others. We are not all in this together. Rather, we sail the same sea in different boats.

## Author's Bio

Puerto Rican-Canadian María Helena Auerbach Rykov lives and writes in Tkaronto. She is honoured to be the 2021 President's Creative Writing Award (poetry) recipient. Her first poetry collection, *Some Conditions Apply*, was published into pandemic chaos in 2020. More at <http://maryrykov.com>.



## Bio

La Portoricaine-Canadienne María Helena Auerbach Rykov vit et écrit à Tkaronto. Elle a l'honneur d'être la lauréate du Prix présidentiel de création littéraire (poésie) de 2021. Son premier recueil de poésie, *Some Conditions Apply*, a été publié dans un chaos pandémique en 2020. Plus d'informations sur <http://maryrykov.com>.

## Énoncé du poème

La perte d'emploi. La peur. Les longues files d'attente. Les magasins vides. Porter un masque ou ne pas porter un masque ? L'isolement social. L'anxiété. Assister à « l'école » virtuelle.

Construit à partir des journaux et des communiqués de presse trouvés ici à Toronto, ce poème combine des dispositifs littéraires d'une façon ironique. Le texte fait ressortir les significations et les incongruités par rapport au texte en dessous. Même l'ombrage et la taille de la police communiquent la disparité; le texte centré, plus sombre et plus grand, impose et oblitère le texte plus clair et plus petit sur lequel il repose.

La pandémie de COVID-19 met en évidence des inégalités et des disparités bien trop familières. Nous souffrons tous de cette crise sanitaire mondiale, mais certains d'entre nous souffrent inutilement plus que d'autres. Nous ne sommes pas logés à la même enseigne. Au contraire, c'est chacun pour soi.