

DIASPORIC SEXUALITIES IN CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN FICTION

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By
JOHN CORR, B.A., M.A.

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AUTHOR: John Corr, B.A., M.A. (McMaster University)

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Abstract

This dissertation studies representations of diaspora, sexuality and gender, and affect in Shani Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night* (1996), Wayson Choy's *The Jade Peony* (1995), Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy* (1994), and Dionne Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here* (1996). There is a notable absence of explicitly named sexual and gender identities in these novels. I argue that this absence is a function of diasporic doubleness: the identities are lost in the trauma of relocation and ongoing cultural translation; they have never been inscribed in collective memories about originary lands or have been inscribed only negatively; or they cannot be concretized in language because, under the disorienting conditions of diasporic mobility, nothing that matters is ever concrete.

Mootoo, Choy, Selvadurai, and Brand choose against assigning distinct sexual or gender identities to their characters in part because they refuse to reproduce the social, legal, psychological, and medical categories through which discursive power flows. This suspension of naming, however, is not only a matter of counter-discursive opposition. Considered in the context of collective displacement, this suspension also produces an opportunity for queer diasporans to strengthen communal bonds across the fragmentary prejudices and differences that are internal to diasporas. By focusing on emergent experiences of sex-gender desire, Mootoo, Choy, Selvadurai, and Brand create room for affiliation between characters—queer and not—who might otherwise remain separated by the power and politics that flow through language.

Whereas Western cultures are philosophically founded on binary separations of mind and body, human and animal, civilization and chaos, and thinking and feeling, affect theorists recognize that humans are first and foremost feeling entities, and that sensation is an integral part of any human experience. The key tenant of affect theory, that the economy of the physical body is a rich resource of agency, motivation, and hope, enables me to find common ground between the quite different interests of diaspora theory and queer theory in literary-cultural analysis.

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Introduction: Diasporic Sexualities, Affect & Performativity

The title of this project invites a preliminary question: just what is a “diasporic sexuality,” exactly? The short answer is that there is no such thing, at least not as a clearly-defined species of erotic identity. The term “diasporic sexualities” does not refer to a kind of sexuality that a person “has” or type that a person “is,” but names an experience of doubled exile that is represented in the novels *Cereus Blooms at Night*, *The Jade Peony*, *Funny Boy*, and *In Another Place, Not Here*. Each of these novels explores the convergence of diasporic pressures and sex-gender regulations on feeling bodies. Novelists Shani Mootoo, Wayson Choy, Shyam Selvadurai, and Dionne Brand represent the human capacity for feeling—a sense that is heightened through diasporic mobility and sex-gender pleasures—as a resource for producing social change and contesting forces that produce social hierarchies and alienation.

At one level, exclusions are produced in the tension between diasporas and nation-states, in the experience of sustained cultural collision that comes from transnational mobility or inherited cultural dislocation. At another level, exclusions can be produced by regulative discourses within the diasporic community itself. These writers’ narrative strategies invite readers to recognize that diasporic ideologies are capable of channelling power and reproducing social exclusions even though diasporic identities are often predicated on experiences of exile and dispossession. The novels emphasize that communities that define themselves through narratives of dispossession can obscure their own complicity with sex-gender ideologies that structure human relations unequally on a global scale. At the same time, the transnational perspectives of

these novels represent the diasporic desire for collective belonging. These novels imagine collective belonging in ways that denaturalize sexual prejudice in natal and destination cultures. The novels work through the questions, “what happens when the diasporic urge to remember ‘home’ or resist displacement is troubled by non-heteronormative practices of gender and sexuality?” and “how do experiences of sexual or gendered dislocation amplify or mute experiences of geo-cultural dislocation?”

In working through these questions, Mootoo, Choy, Selvadurai, and Brand do not pit queer identities against straight identities or diasporic identities against settled nationalist identities. By deferring or downplaying distinct sex-gender or diasporic identities, these novelists open up potential for collective belonging that is different from the assertion of sameness that defines identity categories. The novelists represent this potential by representing their characters’ capacity for affective feeling: depicting their characters’ affect, the novelists produce tangible, embodied hope. Although my analysis restricts itself to the politics of diaspora and discourses of sexuality and gender, the ideas do not only pertain to diasporic or queer contexts. I am drawn to the concept of diaspora because it allegorizes and embodies the idea of collectivity; I am drawn to discussions of sexuality and gender because they allow for politicized representations of raw affective feeling. The arguments that I make about the collective production of hope through the affective body are not limited to diasporic contexts or queer sexualities and genders, then, but offer a way of thinking about “being” that opposes dominant ideologies without restricting itself to a reactive posture.

Even as I admit that there are no “diasporic sexualities” by denying it as a specific

category of being, I am drawn to the idea of unsettled, non-normative genders and sexualities that it signifies. The diasporic body is subject to the stresses of mobility, feelings of dislocation, and conflicting demands for loyalty. Displaced, the diasporic body does not easily integrate with host populations that enjoy the benefits of settled belonging in a nation-state. These qualities also describe the genders and sexualities that I discuss throughout this dissertation. The characters' genders and sexualities likewise do not fit in with the norms that structure daily life. Mindful of this overlap, I hope "diasporic sexualities" evokes the plurality and non-conformity that is more often signified by the term "queer." Because the term "diasporic sexualities" might be misread as suggesting that the sex-gender queerness of the characters is caused exclusively by geo-cultural difference, I will not be using "diasporic sexualities" as a replacement for "queer" throughout this dissertation. However, this title should alert readers to the symbiotic influence that diasporic dislocation and sex-gender exile bear upon each other as they affect the characters' feeling bodies. The struggles of queer characters to come to terms with gender and sexuality are intensified because of the context of diasporic dislocation, and the value of their relationships in diaspora is increased, even when the diaspora is a source of sex-gender prejudice, because of the characters' racial or cultural differences from host populations.¹

I choose my words carefully when I write that the characters in these novels struggle to come to terms with sexual and gender queerness in diasporic contexts, though it would be even more precise to write that the novelists struggle *against* the terms of gender and sexuality, using a transnational imagination for critical leverage. Mootoo,

Choy, Selvadurai, and Brand refrain from using the terms that name specific queer identities in activism, academia, and daily life. Names that could describe their characters, like “gay,” “lesbian,” “man royale,” “zami,” “buller man,” or “drag queen,” invoke specific histories of exclusion and recuperative self-naming that suit the Canadian, Caribbean, or Sri Lankan settings of the novels even if, because of uneven globalization, some of these terms are common in several places and settings. However, the claiming of these names would indicate a kind of arrival at identity that is not experienced by Mootoo’s, Choy’s, Selvadurai’s, and Brand’s characters. In each of the novels, queer feeling is something that the protagonists enter into tentatively; none of the novels portrays same-sex or transgender desire as a pre-given characteristic. The characters’ choppy passages into queer feeling are, as in diasporic migration, passages without final, certain arrival. Whether the characters undergo exile from the open playfulness of childhood or from the oppressive fixity of heterosexual marriage, their emergence into queer feeling never culminates in firm identities whose borders are stabilized and protected by language. This is not to say that the characters are outside of discourse: they are not immune from slurs and accusations, and they grapple to find the right words as they struggle to understand their feelings and familial roles. The characters of *Cereus Blooms at Night*, *The Jade Peony*, *Funny Boy*, and *In Another Place, Not Here*, however, do not ultimately discover shelter and strength in claiming identity as does, for instance, Audre Lorde in the conclusion of her biomythography, *Zami: a New Spelling of My Name*. Instead, Mootoo, Choy, Selvadurai, and Brand offer resistance to sex-gender

exclusion and diasporic dislocation by representing the insufficiency of language to account for human feeling.

I argue throughout this project that the absence of explicitly named sex-gender identities from *Cereus Blooms at Night*, *The Jade Peony*, *Funny Boy*, and *In Another Place, Not Here* is in large part a function of diasporic doubleness: the identities are lost in the trauma of relocation and ongoing cultural translation; they have never been inscribed in collective memories about originary lands, or they have been inscribed negatively; or they cannot be concretized in language because, under the disorienting conditions of diasporic mobility, nothing that matters is ever concrete. One effect of this refusal to claim sex-gender identities is that the novels offer resistance to dominant discourses of gender and sexuality. Social, legal, psychological, medical, and national discourses specify all manner of sexualities and genders to create norms. In defining what is normative, acts of discursive specification assign lesser value to non-heteronormative genders and sexualities and, by extension, the people who bear them. Mootoo, Choy, Selvadurai, and Brand neglect to assign distinct identities to their characters in part because they refuse to reproduce the categories through which discursive power flows. This suspension of naming, however, is not only a matter of counter-discursive opposition. Considered in a diasporic context, this suspension also produces an opportunity for queer diasporans to strengthen communal bonds across the fragmentary prejudices and differences that are internal to diasporas. By focusing on liminal experiences of sex-gender desire, Mootoo, Choy, Selvadurai, and Brand create room for affiliation between characters—queer and not—who might otherwise remain separated

by the power and politics that flow through language. The privileging of feeling in these novels thus can be read as both a tactic for resisting discursive violence and a strategy for strengthening diasporic belonging.

My analysis of “feeling” in this dissertation does not represent a Romantic reclining in emotion as much as heightened attention to affect. The term “affect” refers to the tangible, embodied systems of sensation that are the most basic medium through which individuals are acted upon and through which individuals act upon their environment. Whereas Western cultures are philosophically founded on the binary separation of mind and body, human and animal, civilization and chaos, and thinking and feeling, widely divergent affect theorists from Benedictus de Spinoza to Brian Massumi and Silvan Tomkins recognize that humans are first and foremost feeling entities, and that sensation is an integral part of any human experience. I suggest that diaspora theorists and queer theorists both innately privilege affect in that they place considerable emphasis on human suffering and on the denial of agency that troubles diasporic or queer efforts from rectifying conditions of suffering. In these endeavours, both disciplines are predicated on the restrictions, freedoms, pains, and pleasures of the body. Because I depend on a diasporic concept of embodied nostalgia and a queer concept of performative gender identity throughout this dissertation, the key tenet in Massumi’s and Tomkins’ respective contributions to affect theory—that the economy of the physical body is a rich resource of agency, motivation, and hope—enables me to find a common denominator between the quite different disciplinary interests of diaspora theory and queer theory.

In an insight that resonates particularly well with diaspora theory, Massumi reasons in *Parables for the Virtual* that the human body is a perpetually mobile body. Though he does not write about the experiences of diaspora or sexuality that are foregrounded in *Cereus Blooms at Night*, *The Jade Peony*, *Funny Boy*, and *In Another Place, Not Here*, Massumi writes about the capacity for agency that is generated by the experience of incessant displacement. He describes the quality of indeterminacy that characterizes everybody even at “rest”: ever in transition from one position to the next, he theorizes, bodies constantly produce infinite possibilities for the future as they read their own signs and signal those feelings to the environment, and, in turn, feel the environment and signal those sensations to the body. Massumi theorizes that this circuit can be understood as producing infinite potential for the future because no body ever exhaustively occupies any moment. Always in affective transition to the next, the body exists, paradoxically, on both corporeal and incorporeal planes. “When a body is in motion,” Massumi writes, “it does not coincide with itself. It coincides with its own transition: its own variation” (4). This dimension of incorporeality is constantly refreshed as the body senses new possibilities for mobility. The human body is, therefore, simultaneously material and incorporeal because the flesh can never catch up to, or finally embody, the infinite, variable futures that the body knows to be possible (30-32). By theorizing feeling so that it is more than structured, distinct emotion, we can imagine affect as the body’s constant perception of potential for change, or, literally, the embodiment of hope.

Even when it mentions possibilities for social change, Massumi's writing often focuses on the minute mobilities of the individual body. His description of the potential generated by affective mobility, however, helps me to theorize the capacity for social change that is generated by diasporic collective mobilities. In contexts of transnational mobility, diasporans often define themselves through an orientation towards a distant homeland. This orientation, however, is not often understood as embodied feeling. Because my dissertation is a literary-cultural analysis, I consider diasporic orientation as produced in narrative. My project argues that Mootoo, Choy, Selvadurai, and Brand contest the ideological power that transfers through diasporic narratives of origin by experimenting with representation and transmission of affect in language. Affect is produced in small-scale instances of language use, as in perjorative or recuperative naming, and in large-scale narrative structures. Putting aside a discussion of discursive critique and narrative for the moment, however, I will stress that within diasporic narratives, orientation is often an intensely embodied experience.

Although we commonly think of physical feeling as touch—the mediation between outside world and inside body that takes place at the level of the skin—Massumi describes feeling as our innate sensory ability to orient ourselves in space. Massumi enlarges on his basic ideas of movement as freedom by borrowing the term “proprioception” from kinesiology. He disputes the commonsense notion that orientation is a function of vision by describing our self-reflexive capacity for navigating space. Proprioception, he explains, can be defined as “the sensibility proper to the muscles and ligaments as opposed to tactile sensibility (which is “exteroceptive”) and visceral

sensibility (which is “interoceptive”))” (179, 59). Our muscles and ligaments, Massumi suggests, “register as conditions of movement what the skin internalizes as qualities,” so that “the hardness of the floor underfoot as one looks into a mirror becomes a resistance enabling station and movement; the softness of a cat’s fur becomes a lubricant for the motion of the hand” (59). At the level of the individual body, this affective capacity allows us to create “lived diagrams based on already lived experience, revived to orient further experience” that are cross-referenced with visual cues, but that are much more powerful than visual maps (186-87). He reflects: “Lived and relived: *biograms* might be a better word for them than ‘diagrams’” (187). Biograms are created, in essence, as the body exercises its mental-physical capacity for translating spaces into places. When Massumi initially discusses the incessant mobility of the body, his explanation almost conveys a quality of randomness in its assertion of inevitable movement. In his discussion of biograms, however, Massumi’s description of the body’s incessant mobility emerges as an active sense, a living heuristic that can be understood as an innate source of agency. Massumi represents this agency at the level of the individual body, but the heightened desire for orientation is a salient characteristic in narratives of global migration. The novels analyzed in this dissertation prize the body for its biogrammatic agency and emphasize the role that the sexualized and gendered body can play in producing revised orientations.

Though Massumi’s concept of affect illuminates my reading of *Cereus Blooms at Night*, *The Jade Peony*, *Funny Boy*, and *In Another Place, Not Here*, its uses are limited in the context of my study. Because his representation of mobility is essentially a theory

of embodied hope, he figures mobility as a one-way trajectory in time, a constant movement into the future. In an effort to forever defer the certainty of the present, or at least, the sense that the present has been incontrovertibly foreordained, Massumi creates an optimistic vision of an empowered body that is always on its way to “the next”; his theory thus suggests that the potential generated by mobility is the experience of freedom. In *Cereus Blooms at Night*, *The Jade Peony*, *Funny Boy*, and *In Another Place, Not Here*, however, characters are acutely aware that their own bodies or their predecessors’ bodies have been someplace else. Even when the novelists do not directly represent their characters’ transnational travel, they represent the traces, effects, and affects of forced mobility on diasporic bodies. By attending to the past, *Cereus Blooms at Night*, *The Jade Peony*, *Funny Boy*, and *In Another Place, Not Here* allow us to envision instances where displacement is a collective experience and an opportunity for discursive struggle as well as an innate individual physical property. These novels emphasize that mobility, while potentially liberating, can also be a condition of captivity or an effect of terror. This point is foregrounded even in the title of Brand’s *In Another Place, Not Here*, a title that identifies the perpetual incorporeality of the present time and space. The contents of the novel suggest that this is the existential condition of being in the black diaspora: the “here” that is negated in the title is a shifting signifier in the text as, one after the other, multiple “here”s are overshadowed by “another place.” In Brand’s writing, diasporic incorporeality is as much curse as promise.

Brand, along with the other novelists, also asserts that bodies are sites of signification upon which the codes of racial, sexual, and gendered “otherness” are

inscribed. Massumi acknowledges, but downplays the effects of discourse on feeling bodies. His attention to affect in *Parables for the Virtual* is a deliberate shift away from thinking in the humanities that uses concepts of signification, reading, decoding, and resistance (1-2). While affective feeling is a precious resource in the production of hope that is not merely reactive hope *against* oppression, these novels attest to the fact that discursive power has binding, long-lasting effects on bodies across generations. The characters in these novels are affected by the physical and psychic marks of history even as they, like Massumi's theoretical bodies, generate hope for the future.

In analyzing the novelists' incorporation of the past into the affective diasporic body, I have developed a concept of critical nostalgic narrative. We often think of nostalgia as belonging to the realm of the mind, but C. Nadia Seremetakis uncovers the embodied etymology of "nostalgia" in "The Memory of the Senses, Part I: Marks of the Transitory." When spoken in Greek, "*nostalghía*" [νοσταλγία] evokes the words *nostó*, *nóstimos*, and *alghó*. The word signifies travel and return (*nostó*), hard-earned maturity (*nostó*), sensuous taste (*nóstimos*), and aching pain (*alghó*) (4). These connotative possibilities lay the foundation for my concept of nostalgic narrative by suggesting that exile can be an experience of maturation and that recollection-in-exile is liable to draw on multiple senses and deep sensualities.² Her emphasis on the sensing body and maturation also resonates with my reading of sexuality and gender in the novels which, as I described above, is less about concrete identity than the potential generated by the feeling body and difficult processes of emergence. In *Cereus Blooms at Night*, *The Jade Peony*, *Funny Boy*, and *In Another Place, Not Here*, narrators fuse diasporic and queer longing

by recalling childhood, early adolescence, and other liminal stages of life at which characters stumble into nascent sexualities and genders. Diasporic maturation in these novels is not the final step in a teleology of departure, dislocation, and eventual, identity-restoring return; instead, it is the painful process of negotiation in which relationships are gradually produced between queer characters as well as between queer and non-queer characters under disorienting conditions. These novels dwell on the in-between stages of maturation as characters learn to trust their own feelings, despite the crushing force of dominant discourses, and learn to co-ordinate their capacity for feeling with that of other characters around them. Maturation occurs as characters learn lessons about producing diasporic belonging through affective connections that take precedence over discrete, contained identities.

My extraction of theoretical leverage from the term “nostalgia” is not without its risks. I describe this reflective longing as a critical-imaginative enterprise, but in everyday English the word connotes seductive, self-indulgent sentimentality rather than tangible feeling and confrontational insight. One of the few places where the term enters cultural theory is in Frederic Jameson’s *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Jameson uses the word with great distaste as he describes the cannibalization of history that American popular culture performs in our postmodern age. Instead of representing history, he writes, nostalgia is a way of “approach[ing] the past through stylistic connotation, conveying ‘pastness’ by the glossy qualities of the image” and conveying “1930s-ness” or “1950s-ness” through opening-credit fonts or costume fashions (19). The diasporic condition and Canadian texts that I consider in this

dissertation are outside the context of American popular culture that is Jameson's focus, but I quote him here to signal my agreement that nostalgia can obfuscate historical and political realities. Though she does not discuss the potential or limitations of "nostalgia" as a term, Smaro Kamboureli emphasizes in *Scandalous Bodies: Diasporic Literature in English Canada* that diasporic narratives of origin can pose a distinct ideological threat. She writes that diasporans often think of ancestral countries as geographic places that hold the promise of restored selfhood; these imaginary homelands, however, often function as "allegor[ies] of values" that, in being narrativized, overwrite historical and political realities (135). Diasporans who allegorize the homeland through home-oriented mythologies obscure the fact that diasporas are, like all social collectives, constituted as much by random historical events, complex political structures, and internal, fragmentary difference as by a sense of destined return and preserved cultural traditions. When produced for ideological or even apolitical purposes, nostalgia is antithetical to the kind of critique that I argue is of central importance to *Cereus Blooms at Night*, *The Jade Peony*, *Funny Boy*, and *In Another Place, Not Here*. The critical nostalgia that I see at work in these novels, however, does not impose a numbing dissociation between the present and the past. It instead allows narrators to turn to the past for insight as they produce tangible hope for the future.³

My attention to diasporic home-orientation allows my work to enter broader conversations about collective identity in the field of diaspora studies. Many diaspora scholars, however, underestimate the creative-critical contribution that literary work can offer the field on the whole. Definitional uncertainties deliberately troubled diaspora

discourses in the early 1990's, and anxieties about postmodern thought have yet to be settled in some leading writers' work. William Safran, for instance, implicitly constructs a social sciences-humanities academic hierarchy when he jokes in his 2004 essay "Deconstructing and Comparing Diasporas," "Diaspora is a concept that is being used so widely that it has become an academic growth industry—not only in political science, but also in anthropology, sociology, psychology, religious studies, history, and *even literature*" (9 ital. mine). Representing a similar ethos in the same collection of essays, other efforts to re-focus diaspora studies—such as those by Hauke Dorsch in "Griots, Roots and Identity in the African Diaspora" and Waltraud Kokot, Khachig Tölölyan, and Carolin Alfonso in the introduction to *Diaspora, Identity and Religion*—call for a shift away from theorizing transnational mobility and a shift towards detailed ethnographic work.

Cereus Blooms at Night, *The Jade Peony*, *Funny Boy*, and *In Another Place, Not Here*, however, encourage readers to re-think the effects and affects of transnational displacement without claiming to offer exhaustively document ethnographic realities. These novels refuse the binary opposition between literary work and diasporic realities that is suggested in Safran's and, to a lesser degree, Dorsch's chapters. Such refusals are political acts, not least because the promise of scientific Western rationality was used to justify the practices of slavery, indentured labour, and other colonial impositions that Mootoo, Choy, Selvadurai, and Brand record on the body. In this sense, these novels have much in common with the diaspora theory of Paul Gilroy. His writing in *The Black Atlantic* aims to disrupt traditions of Western philosophy and aesthetic theory that

racialize black people to legitimize white cultural privilege. The bold affective pulse that is perceptible in these novelists' and Gilroy's writing insists that ontological studies of diaspora must include balanced attention to incorporeal, supraempirical affective experience as well as material history.

Mootoo, Choy, Selvadurai, and Brand rethink the common practice of listing mythologized territorial and cultural origins as a defining characteristic of the diasporic condition. Such narratives are often revered in displacement because diasporas lack the stable relationship to place that legitimizes the sovereignty of established nation-states and the identity of a "people." Identity-defining narratives of origin, however, rarely offer nuanced, factual accounts of migration and rarely promote tolerance of the differences that are internal to any collectivities. Mootoo, Choy, Selvadurai, and Brand direct attention to the damage that ideological origin myths can perpetuate when narratives of collective sameness authorize the violent exclusion of difference, such as when queer sexualities or genders as seen by diasporans as evidence of corrupting foreign influence or eroding tradition. Their literary texts expose the danger that diasporic origin myths pose, a danger that is often overlooked or underemphasized in diasporic scholarly works that confer power on myths of origin by treating them as the defining characteristic of diasporas. Safran's "Deconstructing and Comparing Diasporas," for instance, describes a collective longing for origins as the major distinguishing factor between diasporas and immigrant groups. Safran cites his own landmark essay from the inaugural issue of *Diaspora* (1991), Gerard Chaliand and Jean-Pierre Rageau's *The Penguin Atlas of*

Diasporas (1995), and Robin Cohen's influential *Global Diasporas* (1997) to conclude that people in diaspora:

have retained a memory of, a cultural connection with, and a general orientation toward their homelands; they have institutions reflecting something of a homeland culture and / or religion; they relate in some (symbolic or practical) way to their homeland; they harbour doubts about their full acceptance by the hostland; they are committed to their survival as a distinct community; and many of them have retained a myth of return. (10)

Safran and the scholars that he cites are no doubt accurate in their description of the themes through which many diasporans define themselves. And while not all diasporic narratives structure prejudice, these scholars—by representing the home-orienting quality as the very condition of diasporic existence—unwittingly lend credibility to attitudes of contempt that are reproduced in some narratives of displacement.⁴

The temptation to trust essentialist visions of identity that centre on the homeland is not unique to social scientists. Stuart Hall, even as he argues against essentialist models of diasporic identity, asks in “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”: “Who can ever forget, when once seen rising up out of that blue-green Caribbean, those islands of enchantment[?] Who has not known, at this moment, the surge of an overwhelming nostalgia for lost origins, for ‘times past’?” (402). At the same time, Hall stresses, we must always remain aware of the seductive danger that such myths pose. Likewise, the novels under study here encourage readers to pay attention to the potential ideological effects of mythologized origins. In *The Jade Peony*, Choy treats traditional Chinese

mythology not as pure culture artifact that must be preserved intact, but as an adaptable resource for survival strategies that allows Chinese-Canadian elders to help their Canadian-born grandchildren cope with racist gender ideologies and uncertain sexual desires. In her non-fiction text *A Map to the Door of No Return*, Brand acknowledges that a reclamation of origins is tempting, but interrupts herself as she drifts towards this idea. She asks, “Why do I slip into the easy-enough metaphor of Africa as body, as mother? Is it because the Door [the historical rupture of black slavery] induces sentimentality? The idea of a return presumes the certainty of love and healing, redemption and comfort. But this is not return. I am not going anywhere I’ve been, except in the collective imagination” (90). In *In Another Place, Not Here* Brand represents the point of rupture between African origin and New World destination in the character Adela, one protagonist’s great-great-great grandmother. The character is violently torn from Africa, and Brand complements Adela’s loss of origin with a negation of arrival: “when [Adela] done calculate the heart of this place, that it could not yield to her grief, she decide that this place was not nowhere and is so she call it. Nowhere” (18). In Brand’s representation of the black diaspora, myths of return are purely imaginary: the trajectory from origin to destination cannot be reversed because enslaved arrival was as powerful a negation of place as enslaving departure.

Like Safran and other social scientists, Gilroy recognizes the centrifugal, binding effect of diasporic origin myths in *The Black Atlantic*. Like Brand and other fiction writers, however, he rejects rhetorical strategies and political philosophies that naturalize “home” territories as a crucial element of “the continuing aspiration to acquire a

supposedly authentic, natural, and stable ‘rooted’ identity” (30-31). Gilroy decries myths of “pure and homogenous culture,” where racialized identities are constituted through imagined “connection[s] with other kindred souls” and envisioned as destined for nationhood (32, 31). It is in the context of this argument that he expresses the need for “routed and re-rooted” utopic cultural production over stultifying narratives of “roots” that serve nation-building enterprises (33). Although Gilroy analyzes the black diaspora in this text, his efforts to rethink diaspora as a vantage point for supranational critique offer a vocabulary for studies of other displaced peoples, too. My use of critical nostalgia in this dissertation does not reproduce Gilroy’s figuring of diaspora and nation as oppositional terms, but my sense of critical nostalgia is enlightened by the critique of root identities that Gilroy associates with nationalist thought. The importance of this contribution to the field of diaspora studies is evidenced by the recent publication of “Rooting and Routing Caribbean-Canadian Writing,” the introduction to a 2005 special issue of *The Journal of West Indian Literature* that bears the same title. In their introduction to the issue, Michael Bucknor and Daniel Coleman work through the multiple ways that these twinned terms have been textured and reworked from *The Black Atlantic* to offer a “detour from [. . .], rather than an outright rejection of, the nation and its narratives” (vi-vii). The multiple reworkings of these homonyms remind readers that the terms do not operate in a binary relationship structured by positive and negative values. Adding nuance to the relationship between diaspora and nation, these writers point out that rooted narratives and routed narratives have the capacity to redirect power as a challenge to normative ideologies or to fortify those ideologies. For instance, collective

identities organized around different narratives of origin can be blended through creolization to produce postcolonial agency; but the idea of such negotiated difference can also shape national ideologies of multiculturalism in a way that disguises structural inequalities with narratives of pluralism.

My introduction so far has concentrated on affective mobilities and global displacements, but my analysis of diasporic narrative and the feeling body is also heavily influenced by the work of queer theory scholars Michel Foucault and Judith Butler. I have already begun to discuss how detailed portrayals of physical feeling allow readers to conceptualize the affective body as a source of innate agency. Following the lead of Foucault and Butler, however, my project also looks at gender and sexuality as abstract domains of language, knowledge, and power. Even as the characters in *Cereus Blooms at Night*, *The Jade Peony*, *Funny Boy*, and *In Another Place, Not Here* experience desire as natural, private sensation, they find themselves subjected to public mechanisms of power that discipline their bodies and impose identities on them through the regulative grammar of social norms. Public discourses that explicitly target gender and sexuality—and also those that implicitly reproduce their normative codes—implore the characters to behave in certain ways by only recognizing humanity in gendered beings that have clearly perceptible sexes and discernable sexual orientations. The ontologies that are produced are not neutral catalogues of identity with variously combinable parts: they assign value to humans differentially, organizing bodies in ways that sustain hierarchical relations of domination and subordination and that effect inclusion and exclusion.

Studies of the relationship between sex-gender norms and institutional power

must begin with Foucault's *The History of Sexuality*. This text theorizes that in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Western Europe, a broad cultural shift transpired wherein medical, legal, and educational institutions developed a common centripetal focus on the monogamous, reproductive heterosexual couple. This explosion of discourses created powerful sex-gender norms by enshrining patriarchal family logic in the natural sciences and by imposing forceful pressures that defined what was permissible and what was perverse behaviour. Analyzing the sudden proliferation of discourses and practices that defined what were appropriate desires and acts, Foucault describes how social institutions rapidly evolved to function as nodal points in vast, flexible networks of power. Whereas power prior to the eighteenth century had been primarily flexed in the interests of the monarchy or the Christian church, power after this discursive boom was directed in the interests of population management and mass-scale productivity. Foucault writes: "this was the first time that a society had affirmed, in a constant way, that its future and its fortune were tied [. . .] to the manner in which each individual made use of his sex" (26). This power flowed primarily through institutions that translated the new epistemologies and ontologies into internalized codes of behaviour for feeling bodies, a process that Foucault terms "bio-power"; he further subdivides this concept into "anatomo-politics," or the means by which bodies were disciplined, and "bio-politics," the means by which populations were managed (140-41). In studying sexuality as a matter of affective discipline and population management, Foucault specifies the precise—and relatively recent—historical moment at which heterosexual acts were translated into heteronormative social structures, and exposes the public production of

heterosexuality as obligatory, natural, and private.⁵

Butler's work in such texts as *Gender Trouble* and *Undoing Gender* is akin to Foucault's work in that she also denaturalizes heteronormative ideologies of gender and sexuality. Whereas Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* studies the historical emergence of sexual epistemologies, Butler's writing focuses on the semiotics of gender codes that structure even the smallest details of everyday life. The keystone of Butler's theory is her adaptation of J. L. Austin's "performative," a concept that describes instances where language is not simply a window onto reality, but a medium in which reality is constituted.⁶ Butler extracts the idea that language does not just reflect reality, but creates it under the authority of signifying acts. She queers this idea from its original context by dramatically enlarging its scope and by deploying it as a theory of identity that disputes the notion that sexes and genders are coherent human properties that people naturally "have." Butler points out that when we faithfully recite the norms that uphold dominant ideologies, our identities appear to be inherently natural and seem to add up to a coherent whole subject. This subjectivity receives assuring confirmation when we comply with the multiple, mutually reinforcing ideologies that treat normative genders and sexualities as prerequisites for membership in categories of family, nation, and global humanity. Constant injunctions to perform gender according to a heteronormative script often convince us that gender is an elemental expression of who we "really" are inside. Butler's core argument, however, is that the identities that are signified by sex, gender, and sexuality are not stable or fixed at all. Rather, they are the cumulative effect of constant—albeit often unconscious—representations, recitations, and performances.

Because the coherence of our identity is conditional upon the credibility of our performative signs, that identity is perpetually at risk of expiring when our recitals of gender scripts fall short of the ideal.

Diasporic perspectives throw into relief the performativity of gender and sexual identities, moreover, with an emphasis that differs from the kind of radical subversion that characterizes much of queer theory. Daniel Coleman asks in *Masculine Migrations: Reading the Postcolonial Male in 'New Canadian' Narratives*, “what are the consequences when a mis-performance of gender or sexuality is not strategic, but unintentional?” and “What are the implications when a person imports cultural codes from one place that just don’t seem to signify the right way in a new place?” Coleman draws attention to the American focus of Butler’s early text *Gender Trouble*, pointing out that her idealization of playful drag as exemplary of gender performativity does not account for the kinds gendered misperformances that happen in transnational migration (33). Butler describes situations where those who are secure in their identities are threatened by the practices of others who take pleasure in exploiting the elasticity of gender; but narratives of transnational migration, Coleman writes, emphasize situations where people are suddenly confronted by the illegitimacy of their own gender identities. People in migration are subject to competing cultural demands that call into question the norms of a new place, the norms of a left-behind place, and the norms of improvised, negotiated pockets of culture that characterize diasporic dislocation. The slip-ups that inevitably occur as people switch between these codes emphasize that gender cannot be

bifurcated into categories of masculinity and femininity because masculinities and femininities are so inconsistent from place to place.

The experience of rejected refugee applicant Fernando Enrique Rivera dramatizes how the experience of transnational migration can play out through—or be stunted by—ill-conceived notions of gender and sexuality. Rivera applied for refugee status in Canada, citing his gay sexuality as the reason for his need for asylum from Mexico. Rivera's application, however, was denied by the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB). On the front page of the May 4, 2004 issue of *The Globe & Mail*, journalist Marina Jimenez explains that in a confused interpretation of gender codes, sexual feelings, and social risk, the IRB rejected Rivera's application because Rivera was simply not feminine enough to seem gay. "If he were indeed visibly effeminate," Board member Milagros Eustaquio reasoned, "I do not think it is likely he would have been able to easily land a job [where he previously worked] with the 'macho' police force of Puerto Vallarta" (Jimenez A1). The IRB maintained this position despite Rivera's protest that he had suffered extortion at the hands of police officers and that a co-worker had been fired from a similar position when her lesbian relationship was made public (Jimenez A1). Blinded by its own prejudices, the IRB failed to see the risks that Rivera faced in Mexico.

The terms of Rivera's rejection are a reminder of how frequently misunderstood are the relationships between sexual feeling and gender performativity. It is possible that the IRB did not doubt the authenticity of Rivera's gay sexuality as much as the danger that accompanies a gay identity in Mexico. Either way, the IRB's decision hinged on what it believed to be a necessarily-intrinsic-yet-outwardly-detectable quality of sex-

gender queerness. In this heterosexist assumption, gender is mistakenly interpreted as the necessary biological evidence of sexual orientation. “Effeminate gestures come naturally and unconsciously [to gay men],” IRB member Eustaquio asserted in her written decision, and Rivera, with his short haircut, sport shirt, and jeans, simply looked too much like a man (A1). This story gives insight into the workings of sex-gender prejudice, but it also identifies the opportunities for agency or freedom that are made possible by the performative quality of gender and sexuality. If arbitrary-but-predictable gender codes can be used to refuse access to symbolic or material rights and privileges, the same codes can be manipulated to bypass exclusion and gain entry into symbolically or literally guarded zones. Indeed, Rivera’s friends had anticipated that the IRB would interpret the signs of gender as signs of sexuality and had urged Rivera to wear lipstick and other transgender accoutrements to his interview (A1). Rivera thought this logic was ridiculous, however, and refused to strategically misperform his identity. While he was correct about the illogical quality of sex-gender identity production, Rivera underestimated the illogical quality of—or, at least, the prevalence of prejudice in—the IRB’s reasoning process, and was subsequently expelled from Canada.

The novels that I analyze in this dissertation likewise reveal that identity is an effect of language and social convention that disregards affective feeling. This is especially clear in Selvadurai’s *Funny Boy* where the protagonist, Arjie Chelvaratnam, is repeatedly accused of being queer, or “funny,” as he inadvertently “mis-performs” his gender while growing from age seven to fourteen. Arjie’s confusion at the category of “funniness” increases as the accusations seem mismatched to his desires. The term is

used to describe not only his childhood game of “bride-bride” and his adolescent same-sex desire, but also asexual acts like reading. The repetition of the accusation throughout the novel does not name an evolving inherent queerness in the character, but throws into relief the fallacious reasoning that forms continuities between the acts that are supposedly identified by this label. Though he does not understand it in these terms, Arjie experiences the codes of gender and sexuality as a technology of disciplining power that constructs and orders, rather than describes, his behaviour. Once he realizes that other characters’ realities are contingent upon his willingness to perform his identity normatively, he recognizes his capacity for channelling power by deliberately misperforming his ascribed roles.

I mentioned earlier in this introduction that Massumi’s affective work explicitly defines itself against performative strategies of resistance that examine the flow of discursive power through norms. He argues throughout *Parables for the Virtual* that these theories inhibit the production of hope by thinking of agency only in terms of negative critique that “debunk[s]” ideology rather than “foster[ing]” potential (12-13). Massumi argues that because these theories are derived from linguistics, their strategies of reading, decoding, and resignifying only work within already-constituted grids of power, so they cannot imagine lasting social change (7, 2). When Massumi is not writing polemically against other humanities scholars but discussing actual affective processes, however, he leaves room for the role of language in expressing affect. “The relationship between affect and language,” Massumi writes, is “not one of conformity or correspondence but rather of resonance or interference, amplification or dampening. Linguistic expression

can resonate with and amplify intensity at the price of making itself functionally redundant” (25-26). Even as he acknowledges that language can intensify or weaken feeling, however, Massumi adds that—whether produced “linguistically, logically, narratologically, ideologically, or [as] all of these in combination”—actual feeling is sacrificed to structure when it is taken up in the predetermined systems of language (27).

There is, of course, a fundamental contradiction in Massumi’s argument. If his theory of affect is only communicable by language, is it not inherently bound by the same restrictions that bind other theorists and every person who puts feeling into language, whether they do so “linguistically, logically, narratologically, ideologically, or [through] all of these in combination”? (27). On the one hand, Massumi’s work does not derive its critical leverage from theories of signification like the theorists from whom he distances himself; on the other hand, he is adamant that language and affect operate on separate planes and that linguistic utterances are always restricted by the totalizing, reductive structures that produce them. So how can his words channel the affective potential about which he writes? And if they, like all language, cannot, then what is the value of affect to cultural theory?

Massumi’s rejection of critique that builds on linguistic theory is too hasty. He is right that the embodied experience of affect is a more direct and less structured experience of the world than experience that is mediated by language. He is also right that theory about signifying bodies that *produce* sense has caused many of us to overlook the body’s ability to sense (2). And his writing is very convincing in its central argument that the self-referential affective body evidences a realm of potential that can be theorized

to create opportunities for social change. As a literary-cultural scholar, however, I must disagree with his fundamental separation of language and affect. While there are different biological processes at work in these different systems of experiencing the world, the multisensory experience of language, whether spoken, heard, written, or read, is itself invariably affective. This is true at a physical level, where meaning is never an abstract, neutral play of signifiers and signifieds. Braille signification, for instance, is directly mediated by touch, texture, and movement. In conventional text, paragraph length conventions of are shaped by our breathing rhythms. And studies of subvocalization reveal that even when reading in total silence, our vocal muscles shape the words we are reading inaudibly. This flexing of muscles is so slight that we often cannot detect it ourselves, according to NASA researchers, but it produces nervous system signals that are powerful enough for the unspoken words to be read by skin-surface sensors and translated into computer commands that can drive a car or Mars rover simulator.⁷

At a more abstract level, I question Massumi's implicit suggestion that theory in the humanities is somehow not affective because it pays more explicit attention to language than affect. Silvan Tomkins explains in "The Quest for Primary Motives: Biography and Autobiography of an Idea" that he began theorizing affect in the 1940s as the most basic system of bodily urges that motivates us to maintain or improve the quality of our situations at any given moment. He writes with a disarming simplicity in "Modifications in the Theory—1978" that embodied feeling is the most basic source of human motivation because it amplifies and doubles sensation in a way that "either makes good things better or bad worse" (88). Tomkins' work, more so than Massumi's,

articulates well with theories of language because his description of affect is that of a system by which we discover and signify the need, to others and to ourselves, that our situations need to be maintained or urgently interrupted and improved.⁸ While he also stresses that affect is sub-linguistic, Tomkins' writing allows us to recognize that critical theory carries out an affective project at an abstract level.

Although I read both Massumi and Tomkins as producing a theory of feeling that translates into embodied hope, Tomkins' core insight aims for descriptive realism where Massumi's work is deliberately slanted towards prescriptive optimism. Massumi creates a false binary when he states that theorists must choose to either "Foster or debunk." (13). For Massumi, fostering hope means not critiquing. In reading Tomkins, however, we are reminded that affect will amplify negative feeling just as readily as positive feeling in the interests of improving a situation.⁹ Only by acknowledging the need to address negative forces can we acknowledge the need for hope. The idea that we are intrinsically "wired" to monitor and seek improvement for ourselves through affect is particularly salient for diasporic and queer politics, where bodies violently collide with dominant discourses and the agents who enforce them; it also, at a more general level, identifies the point at which concept-rich cultural theory and feeling-rich literary fiction converge as critical enterprises.

In fact, despite Massumi's overt distancing of his work from other humanities scholars' work, his theory of affective potential and Butler's theory of performativity have more in common than their different rhetorical styles might suggest. This is clearest in Massumi's example—or as he describes, it, parable—of the soccer game. Massumi

uses the idea of a soccer team to demonstrate the collective production of potential in the context of stern regulation. Describing a coordinated play, his example identifies the real impact of unrealized potential in a field of relations. He writes that a successful play does not occur when a single player manages the soccer ball skillfully, but when a team collectively organizes itself around the unrealized potential that is generated by the ball's movement. The ball's movement "attracts and arrays the players" even when they are not touching it because most players do not play the ball, but its potential movement; the effect is that the ball defines "the overall state of the game" and thus turns the players into its object rather than the other way around (73). While the play will eventually manifest itself into a direct effort to accomplish a specific goal—that of scoring—most of the game occurs in the realm of constantly-redefined potential that is distinct from the few goal-directed possibilities. The core of *Parables for the Virtual* is represented by Massumi's claim that "The field of potential is exterior to the elements or terms in play, but it is not inside something other than the potential it is. [. . .] It is the immanence of the substantial elements of the mix to their own continual modulation. The field of immanence is not the elements in mixture. It is their becoming. In becoming is belonging" (76). This necessarily ambiguous field of potential that Massumi sees in the soccer field is the same ambiguous field of potential that I argue is manifest in Mootoo's, Choy's, Selvadurai's, and Brand's representations of uncertain, nascent sexualities and genders. The collective emergence permitted by that potential which Massumi senses in the soccer team is the the same collective emergence across different identities that I perceive in these writers' representations of diasporic collectivity. Whereas my analysis

of affective coordination also takes into account the formative dimension of regulative discourses, however, Massumi's parable of the soccer game figures regulative power in the form of the soccer referee.

When Massumi tries to theorize regulative power, he inadvertently reveals why his theory of affect must be considered in conjunction with performative theories of resistance. The necessity of this pairing is evident when he explains the practical value of immanent potential in the soccer parable. Because of infinite potential, players can produce variations in play that exceed the limitations of the game's rules without actually violating the rules, therefore converting intangible potential into goal-directed possibility. He writes:

Even in a codified and regulated sport, there is an opening for [creating change]. It is called style. [. . .] Technical perfection merely makes a player most competent. To technical perfection the star adds something extra. Perhaps a way of catching the eye of players on the opposite team to make them self-conscious and throw them off their own game. Perhaps a feint added to every kick. Or an imperceptible spin. Little extras. Small but effective ways of skewing the potential movements composing the field. [. . .] A star's style is always a provocation to the referee, who must scrutinize and judge barely tangible extras that amount to very little separately but, as disproportionately effective channelings of potential, add up to an advantage. If the provocation goes too far, new rules need to be invented to subsume the modulation devices. (77)

Massumi's description of "style" as he shifts from a discussion of immanent potential to actual possibility is not as significant a philosophical departure from Butler's writing about strategies of performativity as *Parables for the Virtual* would suggest. Butler writes that gender codes can be manipulated because contrary to popular belief, gender is, ontologically speaking, nothing more than an effect of style. Like Massumi, Butler writes about the "little extras" that seem to be within the rules of gender identity but that "catch people's eye" and "throw them off their game" precisely because they reveal gender to be nothing more than style.¹⁰

None of these criticisms undermine the real value of Massumi's work which is, he explains, to assert the real, affirmative existence of potential for social change that is made present through affective feeling. Nor do they discredit his objection that many leading humanities theorists do not account for the processes of feeling that necessitated their critique and made possible the kinds of empathetic connections that could dislodge norms. In *Undoing Gender*, a text published after Massumi's *Parables for the Virtual*, Butler attempts to remedy this omission by revisiting and explaining the context in which she wrote her earlier, more radical *Gender Trouble*. She explains her motivation by describing the relationship between her embodied experience of the world and the potential that her non-normative body offered for rethinking politicized ontologies of sex, gender, and sexuality. In the final chapter of this text, "The Question of Social Transformation," she implicitly blends her work on the body's discursive signifying potential with attention to embodied affect. Butler does not take up the term "affect," but she explains how a resignification of sex-gender norms can result in felt social

transformation and how it is necessary for embodied survival (213, 217). This brief emphasis on personal feeling passes as Butler returns to problematizing the idea of “norms” and categories of “the human” to trouble the ways that intelligibility is produced (221-222). However, the section of *Undoing Gender* that offers an apologia for the rhetorical density and theoretical complexity of *Gender Trouble* does not ascribe affect to her earlier writing as much as it reveals the ways in which it is already implicit in that writing.

If this passage in Butler’s text clarifies how affective potential is implicit in critique, an exhibit called “Queer Covers” recorded how it has also been transmitted through fiction. At the Gay and Lesbian Visitors Center in Atlanta, Georgia in 1993, the Lesbian Herstory Archives presented “Queer Covers,” an exhibit featuring cover art from American pulp fiction published between 1939 and 1965. The highly stylized covers of texts like *Women’s Barracks*, *Women Without Men*, and *Warped Women* depicted women in fantasy scenarios: carrying whips, changing into tight army uniforms, and stretching out together in dark caves. The “Queer Covers” website that publishes information from the original exhibit explains that, while the dimestore novels were printed primarily for heterosexual men, they were read by and shared between women. The passing along of cheap paperbacks was a clandestine way to share the sexual pleasure that could be achieved through the tawdry books, but it was also a vital way for queer women to share in affective potential and generate a sense of collective becoming. For this reason, Joan Nestle, co-founder of “the Lesbian Herstory Archives” calls such books “survival literature” (“Queer Covers”). The authors of the “Queer Covers” website explain that the

pulp novels “helped form many a fledgling lesbian's idea of what life might be like [with other women]” and point out that “perhaps miraculously for that time and environment, [the books provided] happy endings” that could not be found elsewhere. While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to gather data on whether *Funny Boy*, *The Jade Peony*, *Cereus Blooms at Night*, and *In Another Place, Not Here* are read in similar ways by diasporic audiences, my ensuing chapters will show how these novels have the capacity to produce the same hope as the texts that “Queer Covers” describes as “survival literature.”

Queer Nostalgia and Unnatural Disgust in Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night*

*Relation contaminates, sweetens, as a principle, or as
flower dust.*

Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*

Cereus Blooms at Night is set in a Caribbean paradise that is lush and beautiful, but that is also, as a result of colonial corruption, deeply rotten. Written in Canada by Trinidadian-Canadian writer Shani Mootoo, this novel uses a diasporic perspective that critiques the violence of both heterosexist prejudice and imposed imperial civility, two separate but mutually reinforcing discourses. Mootoo creates a Caribbean island, Lantanacamara, to challenge racial, sexual, and gender oppressions that thrive in Canada just as they thrive in the Caribbean. Through its diasporic perspective, *Cereus Blooms at Night* signifies as a source of hope for queer diasporic subjects by intervening in the articulated prejudices that exist in both Caribbean and Canadian cultures. With its vivid imagery and fluid temporality, *Cereus Blooms at Night* does not trace out logical arguments about sexual prejudice or racism that appeal to the reader's reason as much as it uses a highly poetic narrative style to ask, how are certain identities naturalized? How and why are others produced as unnatural? Blending images of sexual and ecological "nature," Mootoo's novel asserts the natural quality of all longing while emphasizing that sexual and gender identities are an effect of scientific, legal, and social discourses. Mootoo's novel asserts that things natural can be a source of extreme pleasure, but also of extreme disgust, and that nature's products are far too messy to justify a pseudo-Darwinist argument for the singular cultural dominance of one type of sexual identity at the expense of all others.¹¹

My reading of Mootoo's text as a diasporic narrative comes, in part, from my understanding of the geo-cultural influences that have shaped Mootoo's life, that shape the lives of the characters, and that shape the narrative premise of the text. Born in Ireland, Mootoo moved with her family to Trinidad at three months of age, and continued to live there until she was eighteen years old. Though raised in Trinidad, Mootoo never became a citizen. Instead, she moved to Canada before exchanging her Irish citizenship for the citizenship of another country. *Cereus Blooms at Night* was originally published in Canada, but Mootoo's Trinidadian upbringing is evident in the novel's setting, the imaginary Caribbean village of Paradise, Lantanacamara. As in Trinidad, the culture of this fictive island is formed out of converging global mobilities. Mootoo depicts the effects of converging diasporas by describing the waves of Indian indentured labourers and white Christian missionaries who arrived at an island already populated by European colonizers and African slaves. Diasporic qualities also structure the novel at the level of narrative strategy. In a metafictional moment, the text announces itself to be a dislocated transnational artifact. Though the narrating character Tyler makes it clear early in the novel that he is telling the life story of another character, Mala, he explains in the novel's concluding pages that his textual transcription of the events has been sent out into the world in hopes that it will find Mala's estranged younger sister who had escaped from the violence of the island at a young age. His decision to send the text out is inspired by a series of discovered letters that function as the novel's epilogue; the letters that had arrived at the Lantanacamaran post office from Mala's sister were never delivered. They name Canada as the place to which Mala's sister had gone and from which she tried to

reconnect with her older sister. This structuring device underscores the tension between an idyllic-poisoned homeland and an exilic-liberating destination land. In the context of these many layers, I read the novel as offering a diasporic perspective through which Mootoo writes back to and imaginatively from within the place where she grew up.

The novel's imaginary town of Paradise on the imaginary island of Lantanacamara harbours a history of "unnatural" characters who are queered by experiences of incestuous sexual abuse, lesbian romance, and transgender self-discovery. The common element linking their stories is the shared experience of being queered, contained in identities that are constructed as "naturally" disgusting by dominant segments of culture. As M. Jacqui Alexander explains in "Not Just (Any) Body Can Be a Citizen: The Politics of Law, Sexuality, and Postcoloniality in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas," the naturalization of heterosexual behaviour in certain Caribbean legal codes depends on vague, disconnected ideas of the "unnatural." Alexander writes that "heterosexual practices carry the weight of the natural [. . .] only in [their] power to designate as unnatural those practices which disrupt marriage and certain dominant notions of conjugal family" (10). Mootoo's novel draws attention to the disparity of practices and identities that are constructed as unnatural by exploring the relationships between differently queered characters. Setting their experiences against intensely sensuous ecological imagery—at times beautiful and at times pungently foul—Mootoo explores the disgust and contempt to which the differently queered characters are all subjected. The relationship at the heart of the novel is between Mala, the elderly "village witch" with a childhood history of sexual abuse, and her nurse, Tyler, who pieces

together her life story. Both are ostracized in the Paradise Alms House where she is a patient and where he works: Mala, because of her village stigma, and Tyler, because he is excessively feminine. Their relationship is tentative at first, as the two characters do not seem to share much except for their common experience of being queered by everyone else. Tyler explains, however, that a mutual recognition of each other's queerness creates the opportunity for life-saving trust and support.

Even as *Cereus Blooms at Night* explores subversive resistance to systems of regulated identity, the novel's most powerful source of resistance against contempt is the characters' affective relationships with each other. Mootoo's sensitivity to the interdependence of differently exiled identities has much in common with the notion of relational identity developed by Edouard Glissant in his collection of essays, *Poetics of Relation*. Though Glissant focuses on the structure of national/regional identity (Martinique/the Caribbean) in an era of increasing globalization, his work brings into focus the rejection of conventional nostalgia for origins that is performed by Mootoo's fiction. Because Mootoo's rejection of distinct identities depends on a re-writing of Caribbean origins, Glissant's anti-nostalgic work on Caribbean identity offers a helpful vocabulary for describing the novel's imaginative structure. In the chapter "Distancing, Determining" in *Poetics of Relation*, Glissant explains the difference between inflammatory, short-sighted "Root Identity" and enabling, politically charged "Relational Identity." Glissant is not a queer theorist, but his contrast between rigid identities and allied identities parallels Mootoo's rejection of distinct queer identities in favour of affective relationships that displace feelings of social exclusion. Nor is Glissant a

diaspora theorist, but his rejection of “root identity” articulates with a major paradigm in diaspora studies—created by Paul Gilroy and popularized by James Clifford—that emphasizes diasporic “routes” and practices of “re-rooting” over essentialized “roots.” Because Gilroy’s argument is focused intensely on the black diaspora in *The Black Atlantic* and Clifford’s generalized treatment of diaspora does not leave much room for other axes of experience, however, I borrow from Glissant’s work in this chapter to discuss Mootoo’s merging of different exilic experiences. Glissant’s theoretical and practical commitment to the Caribbean landscape also articulates well with Mootoo’s work. His attention to place in thinking through collectivity amplifies Mootoo’s own attention to ecology as a defining factor in her characters’ relationships and histories. Mootoo’s detailed nature imagery in *Cereus Blooms at Night* is always as much about sexual prejudice and histories of colonial exploitation as it is about plants, insects, and flowers.

Mootoo implicitly critiques what can be understood as “root” identity by celebrating what can be described as “relational” identities. Glissant’s theory is particularly valuable to an analysis of Mootoo’s text because it also describes the politics of nostalgia that suffuse *Cereus Blooms at Night*. Though his work is grounded in the specific history and conditions of Martinique, Glissant envisions a united Caribbean as he develops his notion of *antillanité*, or “Caribbeanness.” He writes that the purely sovereign “root” identity:

—is founded on the distant past in a vision, a myth of the creation of the world;

—is sanctified by the hidden violence of a [heteronormative] filiation that strictly follows from this founding episode;

—is ratified by a claim to legitimacy that allows a community to proclaim its entitlement to the possession of a land, which thus becomes a territory
(143)

My insertion of “heteronormative” into Glissant’s text emphasizes what I believe to be implicit in, or at least, consistent with, his writing. His key inclusion of “filiation,” or a sacred brotherly bond from which social structures are formed, highlights his critique of racial purity, privileged masculinity, and the secrecy of elitist power.

Glissant’s description of root identity not only addresses claims to home territory, but it also accounts for the tenacity with which some members of diasporas urgently cling to the desire for heteronormative reproduction. Critical texts such as Georgina Tsolidis’ *Schooling, Diaspora, and Gender* explore the pressures in diasporic communities, particularly on mothers and children, to faithfully reproduce the signs and customs of a distant nation in the dislocated, transplanted culture. The efforts to reproduce the signs and customs of Glissant’s root identity—made all the more desperate when claims to legitimacy and territoriality are ruptured—depend on kinship structures and heavily regulated social codes that enforce heteronormative patterns. By deriving a critique of heteronormative sexual prejudice from Glissant’s theory of Caribbean identity, readers can broaden the scope of his already-progressive view to include a new politics that further counters the bullying heart of “root” identity. Glissant contrasts “root identity” with “relational identity” when he writes that the latter:

- is linked not to a creation of the world but to the conscious and contradictory experience of contacts among cultures;
 - is produced in the chaotic network of Relation and not in the hidden violence of filiation;
 - does not devise any legitimacy as its guarantee of entitlement, but circulates, newly extended;
 - does not think of a land as a territory from which to project toward other territories but as a place where one gives-on-and-with rather than grasps.
- (144)

Glissant's concept of root and relational identities reflects an understanding of the different ways that narratives about place structure overarching ideologies about human relationships. His conceptual categories resonate with Mootoo's effort to queer a transnational memory of origins. As I will explain in greater detail later in this chapter, Mootoo's representation of place allows differently queered characters to overcome their common social exclusion. Because the novel's setting is crucial to this project, however, Mootoo's writing also signifies as a postcolonial reclamation of place that defies "root" narratives of paradisaal origins.

Glissant's notion of relationality also calls to mind work on affective belonging that is developed by Brian Massumi in *Parables of the Virtual*. Like Glissant, Massumi is less interested in defining specific identities than he is in describing the conditions under which belonging is produced in spite of regulative forces that would restrict, erase, or punish variations on the norm. In other chapters of this dissertation, I focus on Massumi's

description of the affective potential in the individual mobile body. Here, however, I draw on Massumi's chapter "The Political Economy of Belonging and the Logic of Relation"; this chapter offers a theory of "collective becoming" and social change that transcends the fixity of "already-constituted bodies, things, and signs" (77). Massumi's writing lacks the attention to Caribbean place and origins that makes Glissant's theory a valuable resource for my work, but his writing allows me to emphasize Mootoo's attention to feeling. He argues that affect produces a potential for collective becoming that exceeds the value of any specific identities, even though fixed identities are often considered a precondition for belonging. In Massumi's writing, affective potential is not a predecessor to an actualized identity; potential is, in and of itself, the level at which "coordinated becoming" takes place. He argues, "It is the event-dimension of potential—not the system of language and the operations of reflection it enables—that is the effective dimension of the inter-relating of elements" (76). This insight into affective belonging, the description of potential in becoming that is not bound by some final state of being, helps me understand the full significance of relationships between characters in *Cereus Blooms at Night* who develop a feeling of community without producing or relying on a distinctly identifiable category of personhood. In Mootoo's novel, the principle of affective collectivity guides the emergence of a united relationship between characters Tyler, Mala, Otoh, and Ambrose. Though these characters are each excluded from the culture of Paradise for different reasons, they generate a collective sense of potential for becoming that does not depend on the specific terms of their individual experiences of exclusion. Their relationships develop out of common queerness in a way

that ultimately conveys a sense of general potential without conveying fulfilled goal. Like other novels studied in this dissertation, then, *Cereus Blooms at Night* leaves the reader with an open sense of potential for social change.

Mala and Tyler come out of divergent life experiences. She is of the same generation as his grandmother, and, as the village madwoman, is a largely unwelcome “guest” at the Paradise Alms House. Her situation results from a lifetime of crises: after being abandoned by her mother, abandoned by her younger sister, and suffering years of sexual abuse at the hands of her alcoholic father, Mala is driven to madness when her only love, Ambrose Mohanty, deserts her in a moment of apparent cowardice. After growing old in a house that is slowly swallowed up by the surrounding foliage, insects, and animals, Mala is shipped to the Paradise Alms House by order of the local court. Before Tyler—the only male nurse at the Alms House and the only nurse who is willing to accommodate Mala—begins collecting and transcribing the narrative scraps that account for Mala’s past, he has an intuitive sense of their shared queerness.

Mootoo weaves a relationship between the characters that is based not on the sameness of their identities, but on their common experience of exclusion. Tyler is assigned to the incoherent Mala because every other nurse treats her with contempt and fear. Touched by Mala’s frailty, Tyler embraces the challenge. As he chides Mala to eat her dasheen soup and covertly loosens the leather straps that bind her to her bed, Tyler tentatively begins to relate to Mala. His interest in her is based, simply, on the “glint of stubborn independence” that he detects in the mute elderly woman as he “fanc[ies] that she and he [share] a common reception from the rest of the world” (21). At the same

time, Tyler admits that his sympathy may be no more than the product of his desire to share the isolation he suffers at the hands of his aggressive, mocking co-workers. He admits that his sense of connection to the nearly mute Mala may be “nothing more than recalcitrant yearning” (21).

Tyler later reveals that his imagined relation to Mala has a much longer past than Mala could know. He explains to the reader that his childhood understanding of his nascent sexual queerness had been defined in relation to the shaming gossip that circulated about Mala’s childhood sexual abuse. As a child, Tyler listened as his Cigarette Smoking Nana struggled to answer his random musings about whether a nephew could ever also be a father to his uncle, whether a person’s sister could also be his brother, or whether a person’s pappy could also be his granpappy at the same time (26). Though Cigarette Smoking Nana’s answer was interrupted by the intrusion of Tyler’s mother, the ominous hints about a taboo sexual relationship between Mala and her father stay with Tyler and serve as the only model of transgression that is available to him. By considering the possibility of a father forcibly taking a young daughter for a lover, Tyler begins to struggle with the ethics and ontology of his own differentness: “Over the years I pondered the gender and sex roles that seemed available to people,” he explains, “and the rules that went with them” (51). As he grows into adolescence, Tyler’s own queerness causes him to feel so dislocated at home that he eventually leaves Paradise for the Shivering Northern Wetlands, an imaginary land that, like England, is the centre of a colonial empire. By moving, he seeks to mask his sexual difference with what he hopes will be a less shameful ethnic difference. He recalls his motivation, explaining that

his decision to leave Lantanacamara “had much to do with wanting to study abroad, but far more with wanting to be somewhere where [his] ‘perversion’ [. . .] might be either invisible or of no consequence to people to whom [his] foreignness was what would be strange” (51).

Tyler was never sexually abused as a child, but the rumors that implicate Mala in a shameful, forbidden sexual activity are his only reference point as he struggles with his sexual desires. He explains, “Chandin Ramchandin played a part in confusing me about these roles, for it was a long time before I could distinguish between his perversion and what others called mine” (51). Mootoo’s novel does not represent same-sex and transgender desire as comparable to pedophilia or incest in *Cereus Blooms at Night*. To the contrary, Mootoo’s text carefully distinguishes between queerness and sexual violence to counter prejudices that would blur all non-heteronormative acts into one overarching category of perversity. This act of distinguishing, however, does not proceed through a process of categorical specification of difference: *Cereus Blooms at Night* distinguishes between same-sex desire and pedophilia without constructing definitive portrayals of “the homosexual” and “the pedophile.” As Foucault argues in *The History of Sexuality*, the clinical specification of perversity in 18th and 19th century western European cultures created social technologies of power that translated sexual and gender differences into matters of internalized feeling and self-regulation. Relations of power are established when distinct identities are ascribed to people who participate in non-heteronormative acts and desires; the identities are substantiated by affect, as feelings of shame are instituted in the bodies that do not bear the signs of normative identity.

Mootoo's text counters these manifestations of power at the level of the affective body without reifying the identities that transmit negative affect. There is a risk of confusion, Mootoo shows through the narrator Tyler, as people with different non-normative "perversities" are levelled by a common contempt. At the same time, Mootoo shows through the evolution of the characters' relationships, this contempt can be overcome in the "event-dimension" of affective potential.

Even though she does not identify with either his same-sex or his transgender desire, Mala produces affective potential by reciprocating Tyler's attention and affirming his queer longing. When cracks finally begin to appear in Mala's post-traumatic psychological barriers, she shows her affection for Tyler by presenting him with a female nurse's uniform stolen from the garden clothes-line. Tyler is stunned that the still largely incoherent Mala has recognized his queer "nature," but he dons the clothes and shyly presents himself to her. He is initially disappointed that she barely reacts, but then realizes that her lack of reaction is itself a sign of affirmation. He senses that "The reason Miss Ramchandin paid me no attention was that, to her mind, the outfit was not something to either congratulate or scorn—it simply was. She was not one to manacle nature, and [. . .] she was permitting mine its freedom" (83). Despite his initial disappointment in this episode, Tyler realizes that her inattention satisfies his longing for human interaction that is not defined by a dialectic of contempt and defiance. He concludes this section of the novel by stating: "It had been a day and an evening to treasure. I had never felt so extremely ordinary, and I quite loved it" (84). The feeling of peace that is so unexpected for Tyler is not produced by his ability to perform

transgender femininity either authentically or resistantly, but by the capacity for potential that the two characters generate. As Massumi writes, “Belonging is [always] under way, never already-constituted. It is the openness of bodies to each other and to what they are not—the incorporeality of the event” (76). Tyler’s embodied performance of femininity feels natural, but his feeling of “ordinariness” is a function of incorporeal affective potential rather than actualized transgender identity.

Mootoo underscores how rare the experience of “ordinariness” is for Tyler in an episode where the unexpected openness of potential appears in a conversation between him and a visiting doctor. Tyler’s sense of exclusion in Paradise is so thorough that when ordinary people speak to him normally, he can’t respond in kind. Unlike the community of nurses that only treats Tyler with hostility, the doctor, despite the evident signs of Tyler’s queerness, simply addresses him as a professional. As in the earlier-described episode of transgender performance, this episode strikes Tyler not because he has successfully attained a specific identity—in this case, that of a nurse—but because there is an absence of disbelieving contempt. This absence of contempt represents an openness to potential, a willingness to sustain possibility that does not exist for Tyler at this point in the novel in any other interactions except those with Mala. Tyler explains, “I was so accustomed to being seen as [a curiosity] that when treated like a regular fellow, I fumbled and blushed. And became aware of how desperately I want to be—and be treated as—nothing more than ordinary” (24). As his character evolves, Tyler stops expressing the desire to “shake” his “perversion” (51). Instead, he describes the desire to participate in a world where he neither has to submit to regulative sexual and gender

norms nor mediate his natural feelings through a defensive position of embattled resistance.

Tyler's relationship with Mala is premised on affective potential that allows for his sexual and gender queerness even though their relationship is not defined by a common experience of same-sex or transgender desires. The same is true of the romantic relationship that Tyler develops with another character, Otoh. As in Tyler's relationship with Mala, Tyler's relationship with Otoh represents an opportunity to think through emergent potential instead of working towards identities that the characters can claim to own. The relationship between Tyler and Otoh is, strictly speaking, heterosexual, but is thoroughly non-heteronormative. It is characterized by transgenderism, transsexualism, and embodied pleasure.

If the standards of biological heterosexuality are applied to Tyler and Otoh, this queerest of relationships is heterosexual. Tyler has the anatomy of a man, Otoh the anatomy of a woman. Illustrating that the regulative power of sexual social norms depends on binary definitions of gender and biological sex, Tyler and Otoh manage to break most of the rules about desire, gender identification, and sexual practice that constitute those norms. Tyler is a man who is attracted to other men. Tyler's preference is never a secret, but he reveals it to the reader gradually and almost coyly, as if he is struggling to come to terms with the idea himself. A few overt statements about his tentativeness and shame emphasize that his telling of Mala's story is partly a vehicle for his own revelation. He also discovers, when Mala steals the nurse's outfit for him, that he finds pleasure and fulfillment in dressing in women's clothes, a detail anticipated by the

care he takes in wearing a “kerchief” with his nursing uniform (15). Like Tyler, Otoh refuses to conform to the constraints of his gender. Whereas Tyler’s experiments with transgenderism are tentative, Otoh’s commitment to masculine behaviour is so absolute that her body begins to signify “maleness.” Born a girl, Otoh performs the codes of masculinity so convincingly from such an early age that the narrator speculates that even his parents must have simply forgotten he was born a girl. Tyler describes how Otoh, born Ambrosia, changed over time: “The transformation was flawless. Hours of mind-dulling exercise streamlined Ambrosia into an angular, hard-bodied creature and tampered with the flow of whatever hormonal juices defined him. So flawless was the transformation that even the nurse and doctor who attended the birth, on seeing him later, marvelled at their carelessness in having declared him a girl” (118). Though Tyler describes Otoh as “he (she)” in this explanatory section, he refers to Otoh as “he” for the rest of the novel; readers could almost forget that Otoh was, at one point in his life, defined as female. Mootoo ensures that the reader cannot quite forget, however, by protecting this quality of unrealized potential. Though others in Paradise are not aware of his transition from female-ness, there is an ironic undertone to the nickname by which they call him. His name “Otoh-boto” comes from the island’s vernacular for “on the one hand [. . .] but on the other” (118). For other characters, the name simply refers to his contemplative, indecisive character in daily life.¹² At a more abstract level, however, the name signifies a condition of ambiguity that, in my reading, evokes Massumi’s ideas about affect. Otoh-boto exemplifies the unrealized potential that is produced by the body, and this permanent deferral of certain identity is the condition of his belonging.

Mootoo represents Otoh's sexuality as deeply affective in that he is only concerned with the body's capacity for feeling. Repeated episodes in the text suggest that Otoh's sexuality emerges from his experience of embodied pleasure rather than from the pleasure of connecting sexually with masculinity or femininity, or male or female sexual anatomies. Despite Otoh's aloof attitude toward both genders, he is so beautiful that he is constantly courted by men and women alike. In a few episodes he accepts dates with women for the sake of social conformity. He recalls fooling around with a girl as a teenager, but, as Tyler explains, "The sensation of his body being played with was far more arresting and pleasurable to him than was the woman" (119). Tyler says that Otoh almost gives in to this moment of intense pleasure with the woman "[i]n spite of himself" (119). When he finally becomes attracted to Tyler, it is not because Tyler fits any particular sex-gender category. Even though Tyler always phrases his perception of his own sexual and gender preferences in the language of "nature"—a point to which I will return later in this chapter—his relationship with Otoh defies all parameters of heteronormative expectation even as, paradoxically, it fulfills that fundamental heterosexual standard of connection between a biological man and biological woman. In Tyler's relationship with Mala, Mootoo renders the need for clear sexual or gender identities unnecessary to stress the need for affective, relational potential. She creates a similar sense of affective, relational potential in Tyler's relationship with Otoh by representing such an over-abundant inter-mixture of sex-gender-sexual categories in the combination of these characters that clear identities are not just unnecessary, they are inconceivable.

So far my textual analysis has emphasized exclusion as a matter of sexual and gender queerness, but *Cereus Blooms at Night*'s representation of sexual and gender queerness is articulated with a Caribbean diasporic consciousness. Mootoo queers diasporic nostalgia by centring her narrative on a long-lost, irrecoverable home that was once idyllic, but that became a site of violence and unbearable pain. Diasporans often define their collectivity through nostalgic myths that characterize abandoned home spaces as potentially paradisaic but irrevocably contaminated or traumatized. This trope is especially relevant for discussion of Caribbean diaspora because narratives of the exotic "Caribbean paradise" also have a centuries-old history that is the construction of colonizers and contemporary tourists as well as of diasporic vision. Lloyd W. Brown takes up literary engagements with this myth in *El Dorado and Paradise: Canada and the Caribbean in Austin Clarke's Fiction*. In his analysis of several of Clarke's works, Brown consistently reminds readers that "the image [of a Caribbean paradise] is simply a fantasy, encouraged by separation and distance, in the minds of arriving tourists, or in the mixed responses of departing locals" (108). Representations of paradise in Clarke's work, Brown argues, are always of "a Paradise that never was" (48), and always draw attention to "social decay" (55), "corrupt, and corrupting [. . .] colonial system[s]" (128), and deep "human failures" (120). While Mootoo's representation of paradise is likewise critical of colonial legacies, her text queers nostalgia to offer a vision of hope and strength that is intimately related to the Caribbean landscape.

The critical nostalgia of Mootoo's writing is entirely different from the passive, watered-down emotion that people expect "nostalgia" to mean in everyday English. As I

explain in my introduction to this dissertation, the term generally connotes bland sentimentalism. C. Nadia Seremetakis theorizes the potential of such critical nostalgia by breaking down the term it into its etymological building blocks so that it “evokes the sensory dimension of memory in exile and estrangement; it mixes bodily and emotional pain and ties painful experiences of spiritual and somatic exile to the notion of maturation and ripening” (4). The core function of such a narrative mode in diasporic consciousness is emphasized by anthropology, cultural studies, and sociology scholars James Clifford, Stuart Hall, and Robin Cohen. Clifford’s essay “Diasporas” does not muster critical energy from the specific term “nostalgia,” but the essay’s argument relies heavily on the idea of “diasporic forms of longing, memory, and (dis)identification” in its case for the diasporic capacity for critiquing injustices that are normalized in the everyday business of the nation-state (247). Clifford does not pinpoint a particularly literary diasporic narrative mode, but his ideas set the stage for one when he writes that diasporic communities “must be strong enough to resist erasure through the normalizing processes of forgetting, assimilating, and distancing” and that they must “articulate” and “express” alternative public spheres as “interpretive communities” (255, 261). As he strives to elude the seductive lures of nostalgic recollection, Stuart Hall asserts in “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” that diasporic identity does not rally around a “simple, factual ‘past,’” but is “always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative, and myth” (226). Hall’s emphasis in this piece is on cinematic production, but his argument about diasporic identity holds for literary production when he cites Benedict Anderson’s notion that communities “are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in

which they are imagined” (237). These representations of diaspora as presenting opportunity for critical imagination—even as they seek to avoid the dangerous illusions that are often produced by “nostalgia”—resonate with Mootoo’s self-reflexive representation of origins in *Cereus Blooms at Night* in which she merges fantasy and memory to enable social critique.

Mootoo’s artistic strategy queers dislocated consciousness even as, crucially, she retains the shape of a diasporic nostalgic mode. “Nature”—ecological and human—functions as the most powerful trope that Mootoo adapts to effect this queer reorientation in *Paradise*. Earlier, I described how the narrator Tyler inevitably views his sexuality and gender as a function of nature. When he is young, he sees his same-sex preferences as a perversion of natural heterosexuality; when he generates potential for becoming through Mala and Otoh at the Paradise Alms House, however, he feels that he has finally come to discover his true nature.

Tyler’s repeated invocation of the term “nature” in these moments of self-scrutiny calls attention to Mootoo’s poetic ecological imagery in *Cereus Blooms at Night*. Descriptions of flowers, insects, plants, and animals appear in the opening lines, closing scene, and climactic and sub-climactic moments of the novel. In a novel without any numbered chapters, classic entomology-like illustrations of insects mark narrative breaks, signaling significant shifts in time, place, or character perspective. Mala, the gravitational centre for all other characters, is always defined—from childhood, through adolescence, in isolated madness, and in the Paradise Alms House—by her relationship to nature. In Mootoo’s gifted hands, nature is revealed as utterly enchanting and intoxicating at one

moment, and gut-wrenchingly revolting the next. Through these variations Mootoo queers paradisaal visions of Caribbean landscapes.

It is one of the text's central ironies that Mala's mid-life descent into total isolation in nature seems to confirm the villagers' opinion that she is most unnatural. Throughout the text, Mala does not merely exist alongside nature: she reveres it, protects it, ingests it, and speaks its language, eventually to the exclusion of human language. Her bodily harmony with nature defines her to Tyler even before he knows her full history. Long before he can coax out traces of Mala's personality, Tyler describes her odour: "She did not have the sweet yet sour smell I had come to expect whenever close to an old person," Tyler explains when he first approaches her at the Alms House; "Instead, an aroma resembling rich vegetable compost escaped from under the sheet" (12). Using a telling word that quickly amasses a bundle of connotations through his musings on queerness and perversion, Tyler describes Mala's scent as "a curiously natural smell" (12). As she gradually comes to trust Tyler, Mala reaches out to him by revealing her ability to blend her voice with the oft-overlooked, non-human occupants of her environment. As time passes, he is surprised as he hears her emulate parrots, crickets, frogs, and birds flawlessly (25). Through this blending, before the traumas of her past resurface, the Alms House quickly takes on an almost idyllic sheen for Tyler as "Days passed with her calling out, only loud enough for me to hear, perfect imitations of all the species of birds that congregated in the garden and dotted the tropical Lantanacamaran sky" (25). The bond between the two characters, coded in nature's language, asserts their ability to overcome their common exclusion and is a preliminary but lasting

acknowledgement of their shared presence in the Caribbean landscape. This sense of belonging is troubled by the narrative of Mala's lifelong descent into madness, but is eventually restored and elaborated when Mala and Tyler welcome Otoh and his father, Ambrose, into their fold.

Tyler introduces the story of Mala's tortured deterioration with a description of her early memories of a paradisaal home that signifies as a familial myth of origin. In this pivotal scene, Mootoo's precise representation of the home's garden coincides with her representation of a secretive same-sex relationship between Mala's mother and her white lover, the adult daughter of Paradise's first colonizing family, the Thoroughlys. The only blight on the arrangement is Mala's father, Chandin Ramchandin, who does not know about the same-sex relationship. The relationship represents a significant betrayal to Chandin, less because his wife is defying their marriage than because her lover once rejected a marriage proposal from him.

In Tyler's narration of Mala's nostalgia, the Ramchandin family garden is the foundation of a dream. The idyllic family of women is formed by the relationship of the two mother/lover figures, the women's unconditional love for Mala and her little sister Asha, and their deeply involved relationship with the surrounding ecology. This blissful era is a defining moment in Mala's development and becomes crystallized in her memory. Lavinia Thoroughly, Sarah Ramchandin's lover, initiates this phase in Mala's life when she returns to Lantanacamara from abroad and arrives at the house with a gift "of cactus plants, one each for Pohpoh [Mala] and Asha" (57). The planting of the cereus—the flower that appears in the text's title, opening line, and closing scene—

signifies the establishment of a new and special network of relationships between the girls, their mother's lover, and their environment:

Cereus, [Aunt Lavinia] called them, pronounced like the bright, fuzzy star, a climbing succulent whose leaves and trunk were ragged and unsightly until they bloomed.

“Only once a year,” she said. “The flowers will offer their exquisite elegance for one short, precious night.” She took them out into the yard and made a production of choosing the best planting spot. (57-58)

In the paradisaical scenes that follow, the conventional model of the patriarchal nuclear family is replaced with a family headed by same-sex lovers. Though Mala vaguely realizes that Lavinia and Sarah's same-sex relationship demands discretion, it never strikes her as unnatural or inappropriate. To the contrary, her memory of their relationship constitutes a childhood ideal.

The period that begins with the cereus plant's arrival and ends with the discovery of the women by Chandin marks the only happiness in Mala's childhood. The fact that this phase is anchored by a forbidden same-sex relationship is only a minor detail for the young Mala who, sensing the secrecy and potential danger of the relationship, intuitively develops small strategies to preserve its secrecy and prolong its ecstasy. The cultivation of the rebellious garden by the queer, all-female family and its subsequent violent destruction become the definitive moments of diasporic rupture and longing from which the rest of the narrative radiates.

Chandin's discovery of the women's relationship to each other and the children is

a scene of rage. He discovers the relationships just as the women are boarding a wagon to permanently escape the threat of his abuse. In the confusion of the moment, Mala and her sister Asha run back to the house and, inadvertently, to Chandin, who holds them down as his wife and her lover flee. Before too long, Chandin, in a permanent alcoholic daze, begins to sexually assault his daughter Mala. Mala and her sister quickly become alienated from the other children in Paradise who threaten to “cut they ass” and taunt them for being “cut from the same cloth” as their mother because of her love for Lavinia (93). Like their mother, the girls are queered, constructed as unnatural. According to the children’s ringleader, they are simply not good enough to play in the same park as “good, decent people” and are chased away (93). Though the girls are too young to have expressed any sexual desires for girls or boys, their mother’s same-sex relationship and their father’s abuse become grounds for generalized accusations of perversity.

Cereus Blooms at Night naturalizes queer genders and sexualities by associating them with Paradise’s ecological environment, but it also denaturalizes sexual prejudice by confronting readers with the differences between disgust and contempt. Mootoo does not explicitly name these two categories of experience, but her work makes it possible to distinguish embodied disgust from ideological contempt and this distinction calls attention to sexual prejudice. In advancing this argument I am not reinscribing the body-mind duality that my dissertation challenges in its attention to affect theory: disgust is not purely a function of the body and ideology is not only a function of the mind. *Cereus Blooms at Night*, however, makes it clear that embodied disgust is different from the kind of discursive contempt that structures societies, and this shift in emphasis denaturalizes

sexual prejudice. My distinction here is motivated by Tomkins' work on the development of cultural norms from personal affect. In early studies of affect, such as "Role of the Specific Affects," Tomkins described disgust as a natural physical response, the gagging rejection of something repellent that has somehow been ingested. Though it can be suppressed with practice, Tomkins pointed out, the disgust response is an important self-defense mechanism that the body uses to prevent contamination. In his initial work, Tomkins believed this response was more than just a metaphor for the ideological attitude of contempt: contempt, he argued, emerged from the the body's self-protective mechanism and could, thus, be understood as the means by which a society attempted to avoid internalizing that which would damage it (84). When thought of in these terms, sexual prejudice figures queer people as threatening elements that must be excluded from the social body. In his much later "Revisions in Script Theory—1990," however, Tomkins argues that contempt is distinct from the embodied response of disgust. He writes:

I made a huge mistake in *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness* in conceiving of contempt as the other part of disgust. It is not.[. . .] [The contemptuous person] means to hurt and he means to reject. That is what contempt is. It degrades the other. It is meant to. It is used in severely hierarchical relationships, when the one who has the power judges that the other is not only weak and can be abused but deserves to be, merits it, and asks for it. [. . .] The other is judged as less than human. (394-95)

In this passage, Tomkins' description of contempt resonates with the work of Foucault

and Butler. This definition makes it clear that sexual prejudice is less about the rejection of something distasteful or threatening than about the power that is wielded in hierarchical relationships. Though not a queer theorist, Tomkins' theory anticipates the work that Mootoo undertakes in her fiction, the work of interrogating contempt. This work is still necessary because—just as Tomkins initially mistook contempt for an extension of a natural psychological reaction—sexual prejudice is still commonly misunderstood in popular discourse. This misunderstanding is evident in the term “homophobia,” a term which suggests that “homophobic” people are afraid of queer people the way claustrophobics are afraid of closed spaces, arachnophobics of spiders, or triskaidekaphobics of the number thirteen.¹³

Sexual prejudice is not a function of disgust any more than it is a function of fear; it is a function of contempt. Because contempt works through the production of degrading, hierarchical relationships rather than the rejection of threatening bodies, victims of sexual abuse in the novel are also queered. Young Mala and Asha experience such contempt at the hands of cruel children, and the effects of these experiences are reinforced by the feelings of shame and degradation that they experience after abuse at home. This queering, being publicly branded as unnatural, ultimately results in Mala's total seclusion from the village. Staying with her father even after her sister runs away, Mala eventually blockades herself in the Ramchandin family home. What had once been a private garden paradise becomes, in Mala's traumatized state, a prison characterized by total decay. Mala's adult retreat into her garden-home space is like a mad descent into nature. She decides that, in an environment without other humans, language becomes

“unnecessary translation” for the affects of joy, surprise, and sadness that flit across her mind in response to nature’s stimuli (136).

Tyler’s ability to narrate this totally secluded phase of Mala’s life evidences the intimacy that the two characters eventually achieve, even though his descriptions of their discussions never detail this level of interaction. Retelling her experiences from a position that transcends nurse-like compassion, he describes her heightened affective sensitivity to her surroundings. Mootoo’s depiction of this phase in Mala’s life introduces a paradox in the relationship between affect and language that raises major questions that are relevant throughout all of this dissertation. Can affect be considered apart from language? Is embodied feeling somehow outside of discourse? On one level, Mootoo’s representation of Mala’s retreat answers “yes” to both questions. Tyler’s description of Mala’s retreat emphasizes that her loss of language indicates her increased ability to harmonize with nature and her heightened capacity for experiencing affective intensities. Tyler’s description suggests that the human capacity for embodied feeling offers a purer, more natural experience of the world than that which is permitted by the human capacity for language. He explains: “Every muscle of her body swelled, tingled, cringed or went numb in response to her surroundings—every fibre was sensitized in a way that words were unable to match or enhance” (136). Not only are affective experiences purer than experiences that are mediated through language in *Cereus Blooms at Night*, but they are more, not less, human. Mala does not choose to barricade herself in her family’s home as much as she is driven there by years of slurs that tell her she is, to borrow from Tomkins’ description of contempt, “judged as less than human” (395). Her loss of language is not

inhuman; the language-use that drove her there was. Though she gradually loses her ability to express herself in human language, her submersion in nature represents a return to fundamental human-ness and a reduced vulnerability to the regulative, queering social norms that work through language.

This aspect of Mootoo's text resonates with Massumi's treatment of the tension between affect and language throughout *Parables of the Virtual*. Massumi explains in the earliest pages of the introduction that his work on affect could replace what he perceives as stale or limited trends of thought in the humanities. He writes that there is too much emphasis on theories of social change that over-emphasize the determining power of normative discourses, the fixity of subject positions, and the subversive possibilities of hybridity or performativity that only reinforce already-constituted elements (69). *Parables for the Virtual* argues that because these theories are derived from linguistics, they are inherently limited in their strategies of reading, decoding, and resignifying because they always work within already-constituted grids of power (7, 2). When Massumi is not writing polemics against other humanities scholars but discussing actual affective processes, however, he leaves room for the role of language in expressing affect. "The relationship between affect and language," Massumi writes, is "not one of conformity or correspondence but rather of resonance or interference, amplification or dampening. Linguistic expression can resonate with and amplify intensity at the price of making itself functionally redundant" (25-26). Even as he acknowledges that language can intensify or weaken feeling, however, Massumi adds that—whether produced "linguistically, logically, narratologically, ideologically, or [as] all of these in

combination”—actual feeling is sacrificed to structure when it is taken up in the predetermined systems of language (27).

Insofar as they valorize affect at the expense of language, the novelist Mootoo and the theorist Massumi share a problem. For Mootoo, this is a problem at the narrative level. If Mala is reduced to a state of utter language-less-ness, a state from which we do not see her fully recover even by the novel's end, to what degree can we trust the narrator Tyler? Even if Mala develops human language skills after years of total loss, is it conceivable that she is able to describe her experiences at the level of intimate, precise detail that Tyler offers? For Massumi, this poses a similar, but more significant problem. How can we derive value from his theory to the degree that he claims it deserves? If his theory of affect is only communicable by language, is it not inherently bound by the same restrictions that bind other theorists and every person who puts feeling into language, whether “linguistically, logically, narratologically, ideologically, or [as] all of these in combination”? (27). On the one hand, Massumi's work does not function by explicitly taking up the rhetoric of signification like the other theorists he criticizes; on the other hand, he is adamant that language and affect operate on separate planes and that the linguistic will always be folded back into a totalizing, reductive structure. So how can his words approach the affective new that he claims to offer? And if they, like all language, cannot, then what is the value of affect to cultural theory?

The point of these questions is not to dismiss Massumi's theory any more than I dismiss the performative theories of resistance that are used more rigorously in other chapters of this dissertation. One possible answer to these questions, which is elaborated

in other sections of this text, is that literature has the capacity to represent feeling mimetically and also to inspire feeling. As Mootoo describes Mala's retreat into the house in greater detail, she displays a self-reflexive awareness that different registers of language produce different kinds of feeling, and she manipulates these possibilities to incite feeling in the reader in such a way that it plays a role in her overarching project of denaturalizing sexual prejudice.

As Tyler continues his description of Mala's descent into madness, we are not left with a choice between affect and language, but with a sense that language has, as Massumi briefly suggests, the potential to amplify or dampen affect. Mootoo also attacks normative discourses that claim natural-ness as a virtue by representing the disgusting side of nature. Though Mala slowly divorced herself from human language in isolation, Tyler pays heightened attention to his own language as he describes her transition. His shifts in diction emphasize that affect is shared between humans at the level of discourse. He briefly invokes the formal language of scientific classification to describe how "At first Aves, Hexapoda, Gastropoda and Reptilia burrowed instinctively" away from Mala until they realized that they had no reason to hide (137). This invocation of scientific nomenclature dramatizes his description of how removed from "civilized culture" Mala becomes as she blends with her surroundings. The stairs in the house turn to green-black slime as rain water freely runs in through the roof and, as she delightedly pins dead insects to the already-corpse-layered walls, she walks on "a vibrating carpet of moths, centipedes, millipedes, cockroaches and unnamed insects" that feed on the corpses falling from the wall (139-40). She feeds herself on an oozing, fermented ground-pepper mush

that blisters her mouth, causing the top layer of skin on her tongue to shrivel and curl back “like rose petals dipped in acid” (143). In a text that continually plays with the overlaps and inconsistencies of what is considered natural and unnatural, these extended, excessive descriptions of Mala’s fetid isolation force readers to confront the very idea of how disgust is constructed in various discourses.

Mootoo experiments with disgust at these points by interspersing the most vivid descriptions of Mala’s adult experience amidst dried-up insects, rotting plants, and foul stench with descriptions of her foul childhood sexual abuse. Tyler’s sexuality and transgenderism are not narrated in this section of the novel, but the intensity of Mootoo’s writing encourages the reader to reflect on how the sensation of disgust is produced through language and representation. By cultivating extreme disgust in this particular account of nature, Mootoo’s narrator puts readers in a position to reflect on how a similar response could shape an attitude to something like a sexual preference. The reader is encouraged, at the deep levels of connotative meaning, to juxtapose uneven but connected representations of same-sex sexuality, transgenderism, sexual abuse, nature, and discourses of the unnatural in sexual prejudice.

Tyler guides readers to precisely this sort of deliberation in the sequence of events that lead up to the townspeople’s uprooting and extraction of Mala from her home and their depositing of her at the Paradise Alms House. Mala is firmly established as the village’s madwoman when the police devise an excuse to invade her house. Retching, they fight their way past the various stench and rotten obstacles until they find a dried specimen of a body tucked into a bed. Its decayed skin is pulled tautly over its skull, and

in the dim light its thin purplish tongue seems to flicker out over blackened gums “as though attempting to lick its lips every few seconds” (197). Mala identifies it for the police as the remains of her father, Chandin. When the police chief disbelievingly asks her if it is the same Chandin Ramchandin who disappeared many years ago, she says simply that he became tired one day and never recovered. She claims to have performed the loyal daughter’s duty by never leaving his side. The police attempt to lift the dusty sheet that covers him, but it comes alive in their fingers. Tyler explains, “Thousands of tiny white moths had so tightly packed themselves side by side that the tiny hooks on the edges of their wings had locked together, linking them to form a heavy sheet that was slowly devouring the corpse underneath” (198). Mootoo’s narrator moves from describing the long-decayed corpse to a sudden description of the intense violence that transpired when Mala killed her father many decades before. Mala had been a teenager when her father confronted her secret lover, Ambrose. When he was threatened by her father, Mala had finally fought back against Chandin while Ambrose ran for help. Thinking that Ambrose had deserted her, Mala knocked her father unconscious and then repeatedly slammed the door while his skull lay between door and jamb. By the time Ambrose had returned moments later, however, Mala had become unreachable, having retreated to the mental space of the idyllic memories when her mother, sister, and “Aunt” Lavinia filled the house (247). Following their discovery decades later, the police arrest Mala. Ambrose, amidst the throng of village spectators, does what little he can to make amends for his desertion so many years before. Borrowing a match from his son, Otoh—Tyler’s eventual lover—Ambrose burns down the house and the evidence it holds so that

Mala could not be tried for murder.

Mootoo's representations of paradisaical and grotesque nature in *Cereus Blooms at Night* signify in the register of a post-colonial politics as well as of a queer politics. The colonial aspect of Mootoo's representations of nature are dealt with in fine detail in Sarah Casteel's "New World Pastoral: The Caribbean Garden and Emplacement in Gisèle Pineau and Shani Mootoo." Casteel considers not only the colonial history of the European garden on Caribbean soil, but also its counter-parts, the blurred scientific, ethnographic, entomological expedition and the plantation. In attending to the ways Mootoo works through these linked colonial projects, Casteel offers perceptive and provocative interpretations. Focused as she is on the scientific-colonial aspects of the novel, however, Casteel does not emphasize Mootoo's critique of colonial Christianity. Casteel mentions the Garden of Eden with its attendant mythology of "exile and displacement" as a minor but persistent reference point in her analysis of *Cereus Blooms at Night*, but because of her emphasis on other aspects of the text, she does not discuss Mootoo's pointed variations on the myth (14).

A discussion of the quasi-Edenic space in *Cereus Blooms at Night* must explore how Mootoo's representation queers the archetypal Christian narrative of Eden. Such an exploration is necessary because Mootoo's use of garden imagery is a key part of her blended criticism of colonialism and sexual prejudice. The Christian missionary family, the Thoroughlys, plants a garden in Paradise as they start a seminary, but they bear none of the traits of a joyful Edenic family. Through hypocrisy and elitism, they impart the ills of colonial civilizing enterprise. They raise Mala's father Chandin as one of their own

children after his Indian labouring parents convert to Christianity from Hinduism, but they ultimately reject him because of his race.

The real Edenic garden at the centre of *Cereus Blooms at Night* is not populated by a modern Adam and Eve with their two sons, but by Sarah Ramchandin and Lavinia Thoroughly with their two daughters. When Lavinia appears to plant the cereus plant for the first time, an episode noted earlier in this chapter, the Thoroughly family's colonial imposition of the ordered, "civilized" garden onto the "wild" Caribbean landscape is reversed. The cereus accrues a level of symbolism that seems particularly coded for sex-queerness in this text, but a crucial quality of this symbol is that it is queered away from a colonial source: the "clippings and whole plants" that make up a full garden at the Ramchandin house are all "ripped from the well-ordered, colour-coordinated beds" belonging to Lavinia's mother, the reverend's wife (57). The "fresh, rich dirt" is still "under [Lavinia's] fingernails" as she rushes the cereus and, eventually, other plants, to the women's garden (57). Unlike the Thoroughlys, the would-be family of Sarah, Lavinia, Mala, and Asha is characterized by a period of peace, innocence, and love until they are exiled from their tranquil, paradisaal garden. The idea of garden-as-haven is also queered later in Mala's adult life when she lives in an isolated state of trauma. Before being forcibly evicted and institutionalized, she retreats so completely into the same garden that it becomes, paradoxically, both a demonic space and a safe haven from the harsh world.

When, after much labour on Tyler's part, Mala is finally ready to engage again with the world at the Paradise Alms House, her return is carried out through the planting

of a new cereus plant, the first plant in a new garden at the facility. Though chronologically this event takes place one year after Mala is committed to the Alms House, it represents the starting point of the novel and the point to which Tyler brings the reader at the end of the novel. The garden, planted by Tyler, Tyler's lover Otoh, and Mala's former lover Ambrose, represents the fruition of relational identities that find strength and support across significant differences. Casteel, who reads the garden in Mootoo's work as participating in the biblical Edenic archetype, refers to this trajectory as "the recovery of a prelapsarian identity" (16). In my reading, however, Mala's recuperation within a natural paradise—a paradise originally germinated by her mother's same-sex lover and recreated in her union with Tyler, Ambrose, and Otoh—is a uniquely post-exilic development.

This garden facilitates the healing and empowerment experienced by both Mala and Tyler and provides a sense of familiar return. However, in this diasporic narrative there is no possibility for a restoration of the innocence and purity present in Mala's memory of the original paradisaal space. The promise of this garden is that it enables healing rather than asserting particular identity. As in Glissant's notion of Caribbean relationality, these characters do "not think of a land as a territory [. . .] but as a place where one gives-on-and-with rather than grasps" (144). Only by struggling to relate to each other across their individual "unnatural" histories can these characters create a hopeful space where affective potential replaces the effects of damaging or exclusionary identities.

In *Global Diasporas*, Robin Cohen writes that diasporic nostalgia, in providing a

claim to cultural legitimacy based on an originary myth, can perform a negative function. His description of that function resonates with the description of root identity provided by Glissant. Cohen writes that “The more ancient and venerable the myth [of origin], the more useful it is as a form of social distancing from other ethnic groups and a means of affecting an air of superiority, even in the teeth of dispossession and discrimination” (185). Whereas Cohen seems wary of this kind of nostalgic myth, Clifford describes such feelings of superiority as generally harmless. He writes that “such discourses are the weapons of the (relatively) weak” because diasporic populations generally do not have access to the “armies, schools, police, and mass media” that are needed to enforce diasporic-nationalist agendas that may be violent or chauvinist (251). Even if he is only referring to those diasporic groups that are in a fragile state of displacement, Clifford under-estimates the threats that emerge from diasporic self-policing, the capacity of diasporic authority figures, who may be powerless in relation to a host society, for wielding such discursive “weapons” within their own ranks. The topic of diasporic self-policing is discussed at length by Georgina Tsolidis in *Schooling, Diaspora, and Gender*. Such deeply influential and potentially oppressive power is exercised by church council members over congregations, by parents over children, and by peers over other peers. Though Clifford is focusing on nationalisms without state powers when he dismisses diasporas’ rhetoric as essentially non-threatening, writers such as Mootoo draw attention to the desperate need for myths of origin that counter regulated, heteronormative, and nationalistic root identities.

While household and community leaders in fragile diasporas may not have the

power to enable an armed revolution against a host country, they do have the power to mythologize heteronormative sexual and gender identities as both natural and necessary for future cultural survival. Crichlow's *Buller Men and Batty Bwoys* surveys a wide array of prominent members of the public intelligentsia and the entertainment industry who circulate ideas about black nationalism, masculinity, and progress that depend on the vilification of same-sex practices and identities. Crichlow cites an array of artists and leaders—including Toni Morrison, Buju Banton, Louis Farrakhan, Molefi Asante, and Haki Madhubuti, among others—to demonstrate the prevalence of variations on the argument that queer sexuality is a white disease, and that black people who “give in” to same-sex practices and identities are succumbing to historical traditions of European decadence or contemporary racial oppression and sabotage (133-40).

Mootoo uses a diasporic perspective to address sexual prejudice, publishing a novel in Canada that is set in an imaginary Caribbean island. Chin describes Caribbean novels that perform similar work, writing that although “Caribbean literary production has traditionally maintained a conspicuous silence around issues of gay and lesbian sexuality,” more recent writers have broken this silence (16). He describes a variety of strategies used by readers and writers to attack heterosexist prejudice. As a comparison with my other chapters can illustrate, the anti-heterosexist interpretations that he offers are not unique to Caribbean literary production or cultural contexts; however, his work performs the necessary task of situating these strategies in the particular history of Caribbean writing. That these issues are increasingly being recognized is evidenced by the fact that Chin's article is but one selection from a special issue of *Small Axe: A*

Journal of Criticism entitled “Genders and Sexualities” (2000). Michael Bucknor and Daniel Coleman’s “Rooting and Routing Caribbean-Canadian Writing” identifies this special issue of *Small Axe* as marking a significant development in queer Caribbean-Canadian studies, and contextualizes it in terms of the broader inclusion of queer writers “on conference programmes and on booklists for literature and theory courses at the University of West Indies” (xxx).

The concerns of Mootoo’s novel also resonate with a host of Caribbean-Canadian and Caribbean-American anthologies published in the mid- to late-1990s. These anthologies collectively create a clear picture of heterosexist practices and discourses as they are encoded in the Caribbean and in Caribbean diasporas. The editors of the texts blend the artistic with the theoretical and the autobiographical, creating cultural testimonials that witness the familial, communal, religious, and state pressures that define queer Caribbean and diasporic living. These include *does your mama know? An Anthology of Black Lesbian Coming Out Stories*, edited by Lisa C. Moore; *Tongues on Fire: Caribbean Lesbian Lives and Stories*, edited by Rosamund Elwin; *Má-ka: Diasporic Juks, Contemporary Writing by Queers of African Descent*, edited by Debbie Douglas, Courtney McFarlane, Makeda Silvera, and Douglas Stewart; and *Piece of My Heart: a Lesbian of Colour Anthology*, edited by Makeda Silvera. Not all of these texts are exclusively dedicated to queer Caribbean diasporic issues, but all of them represent such issues in some measure. Each of the collections gives voice to professional and amateur writers who write in every short genre about every queer topic imaginable. The blurb of *Má-ka: Diasporic Juks*, for instance, promises “Contemporary prose, poetry;

love, sex and laughter; more sex. Politics, discourse and desire.” This diverse plurality, both within and across the texts, produces a collective confidence and strength as well as decimating any stereotypes about queerness, race, or ethnicity.

The most influential essay in these collections is Silvera’s “Man Royals and Sodomites: Some Thoughts on the Invisibility of Afro-Caribbean Lesbians.” The essay was originally published in *Piece of My Heart* but also reprinted in *does your mama know?* and *Tongues on Fire*. Running only twelve pages, Silvera’s essay is written in an informal, friendly tone that does not seem radically political or overtly theoretical. Nevertheless, Silvera writes with such efficiency and artistry that the essay’s length and tone belie the power of her highly persuasive anti-heterosexist rhetorical strategies. With great simplicity she defamiliarizes two pejorative names for queer women. She writes that, “In Jamaica, the words used to describe many of these women would be ‘Man Royal’ and/or ‘Sodomite.’ Dread words. So dread that women dare not use these words to name themselves. They were names given to women by men to describe aspects of our lives that men neither understood nor approved” (15). She elaborates on this project of discursive defamiliarization by explaining the biblical roots of the term “sodomite” and by walking her reader plainly through the local acts of contempt that are typically enacted on queer women by both men and straight women. Like Mootoo, Silvera layers multiple voices in her writing. Organizing the whole essay around memories of three conversations—one with a friend of her mother’s, another with her grandmother, and the last with her mother—Silvera effectively invites the reader to join in the often uncomfortable discussions about what it means to be sexualized, gendered, and, in

moving to Canada, racialized. My analysis of *Cereus Blooms at Night* emphasizes that Mootoo chooses against representing the terms such as Man Royal or Sodomite through which discursive power is exercised, instead opting to represent unrealized, affective hope; Silvera's work, however, provides a necessary complement to this strategy by illustrating that the negative affect that Mootoo resists can never be finally separated from the discursive technologies of power that produce it.

On December 7, 2006, Canada's Members of Parliament voted on whether or not to revisit the question of same-sex marriage. According to Gloria Galloway writing for the December 8, 2006 issue of the *Globe and Mail*, not only did the MPs vote against "restoring" the "traditional" definition of marriage, but the margin by which the MPs confirmed the legitimacy of same-sex marriage was greater than when the definition of marriage was originally changed in 2005 (A1).¹⁴ The debates that led up to this poll and that continue in its aftermath, however, evidence the need for texts such as *Cereus Blooms at Night*. Mootoo's novel reminds readers that sexual and gender prejudices are not private eccentric phobias of individuals that affect only a few non-conformists, but broad systems of contempt that are deeply rooted in public discourses about what counts as nature and what constitutes the human. Though Crichlow focuses explicitly on Caribbean-Canadian culture and black nationalism in his analysis, my work in other chapters cites examples of different diasporas that frame same-sex sexuality as symptomatic of corrupt white culture or North American liberal indulgence. By creating a queer myth of origin that is firmly planted in a Caribbean landscape and committed to a post-colonial politics, *Cereus Blooms at Night* disarms such myths and offers hope to

queer diasporans suffering multiple exiles.

Diasporic Love: Violent Masculinity & Desire in *The Jade Peony*

The central section of Wayson Choy's *The Jade Peony* employs a queer perspective to take on questions of exile, alienation, and improvised kinship for diasporic Chinese Canadian characters in mid-twentieth century Canada. Set in the late 1930s and early 1940s, roughly fifteen to twenty years after Canada implemented its 1923 Chinese Exclusion Act, the novel explores the limitations on mobility and the obstacles to home-making that were imposed on immigrant and Canadian-born Chinese Canadians. Each of *The Jade Peony*'s three sections is narrated by a different child from the Chen family. This literary structure, described as "polyphonic" by Eleanor Ty in *The Politics of the Visible*, suggests that collective diasporic narratives are an important resource for community survival (118). Not all of the children in the Chen family, however, serve the text as narrators. Choy mutes the voice of the only sibling born in China. The dampening of this character's authority signals that diasporic community in this novel is not carried intact from one place to another, but is produced in displacement as a quality of relational, collective difference from the settled population. Choy's selective muting of Kiam-Kim, First Brother also signals to readers that even though the narrators' family positions are noted in the novel's section titles, traditional Confucian patriarchal logic does not contain the events that constitute the text. The novel's negotiation of racist discourses and impossible gender norms requires the flexibility of a diasporic perspective that draws upon, but is not bound by, transplanted tradition. Jung-Sum's section is particularly relevant to the interests of this dissertation because it, much more so than

“Jook-Liang, Only Sister” and “Sek-Lung, Third Brother,” foregrounds the racialized, gendered, and sexualized body as both site of crisis and site of hope for diasporans.

In the first chapter of “Jung-Sum, Second Brother,” Jung-Sum is a carefree twelve-year-old boy who plays in the dirt, keeps a stinky pet turtle, and, generally speaking, has a normative gender. As the section progresses, however, the cracks in Jung-Sum’s identity begin to show. His narrative struggles to reconcile a Chinese Canadian racial identity with a powerful vision of masculinity, and also struggles to balance the possibility of same-sex desire with normative gender in a diasporic context. When Jung-Sum recalls the earliest years of his life, he remembers that others’ demand for a strong masculinity set the terms of his diasporic belonging. The narrator’s anxiety about these demands can be read as a response to the emasculating discourses that have defined Asian American manhood in popular culture throughout the twentieth century. Jung-Sum’s tortured entry into childhood masculinity and the over-dramatized performance of violent masculinity that characterizes his pre-adolescent and early adolescent years suggest an unspoken awareness of and deep unease with the racialized gender codes that circulate in mainstream white culture. Jung-Sum’s unease with his gender also evidences the novel’s resistance against discourses of sexual prejudice that frame queer sexual longing as feminine. Ultimately, Choy does not resolve Jung-Sum’s articulated crises of sexuality, gender, and race through a satisfying representation of sexual fulfillment or through a final authentication of Jung-Sum’s ultra-masculinity. Instead, Choy depicts the character as confronting internalized contempt when he faces off against, and tries to kill, an older teenager who is the mirror image of himself. Jung-Sum’s section, like *The Jade*

Peony on the whole and the other novels in this dissertation, concludes with a liminal character who does not attain total closure in his process of diasporic maturation, but who achieves a feeling of diasporic love that displaces his doubled exclusion from racialized white culture and heterosexualized diasporic culture.

Unlike his adoptive First Brother Kiam-Kim, Jung-Sum's presence in Canada is not the result of a transnational journey from China to Canada. Born in Kamloops, British Columbia and raised in Vancouver, British Columbia, the narrator's "transmunicipal" travel hardly seems to qualify him as a diasporic character. Nonetheless, his story signifies as a diasporic, critical nostalgic narrative in that *The Jade Peony* focuses on the condition of sustained exile from home and the means by which collective survival was negotiated by Chinese Canadians in the early to mid-twentieth century. Despite the small scale of his mobility, moreover, Jung-Sum's past is defined by the signs of an unmoored life: not only is he, like all Chinese Canadians of that era, classified as a resident alien in his country of birth, but his earliest memories recall the devastation of his home and his subsequent transience. When Jung-Sum is four years old, his alcoholic, physically abusive father kills his mother and then commits suicide, leaving Jung-Sum cold and alone on his mother's corpse. After suffering this trauma, Jung-Sum is shunted unpredictably from household to household. As he remembers this time in his life from the novel's present when he is on the verge of adolescence, Jung-Sum recalls: "A week [after the murder-suicide], I was taken from one strange home to another. I spent a month or two in one place, a few weeks in another, finally traveling on a train to *Hahm-si-fauh*, Salt Water City [Vancouver]. A Chinese man wearing thick glasses, with a white band

for a collar, said to me over and over again. ‘No use to cry. Big boys don’t need to cry’” (90). This event is not the first plot event that Jung-Sum narrates in his section, but it is, following his memory of awakening to the corpses, the earliest memory he recounts. Describing Jung-Sum’s expulsion from a collapsed home, the forced mobility that he subsequently endures, and the gendered injunction to suppress his feeling, Choy portrays this boy’s life as one defined by abandonment, alienation, and dislocation. Although the character enters a stable home when adopted by the Chen family, these feelings haunt him throughout his childhood and into adolescence and are the root of his eventual near-destruction.

My work in this chapter focuses on the Canadian historical context that Choy represents in his novel, but my analysis also draws on Asian American writing for its debates about the ideological codes that have produced a racialized, weakened Asian American masculinity. My attention to American debates in this analysis of Canadian writing is not meant to distort the specificities of different national or literary histories, but hopes to recognize transnational patterns of gendered racism that exist as a result of comparable Canadian and American histories of Chinese immigration, restrictions on labour and mobility, and anti-Asiatic sentiment. The American texts are also salient in this analysis because the movies and television shows that constitute American visual culture—unquestionably the primary forum in which racist images are circulated—are a ubiquitous presence on Canada movie and television screens. The pervasive influence of American culture on Chinese Canadian identity is even emphasized in the first section of *The Jade Peony*, “Jook-Liang, Only Sister.” This section foregrounds Jook-Liang’s

negotiation of her place in the world as she tries to incorporate three sets of cultural codes: the complex Confucian social structures that order relationships in the diaspora, the traditional Chinese fables and myths that form the foundation of her imagination, and the American movies that she begins to consume on a weekly basis with a community elder. Jook-Liang's desire to embody the signs of white beauty set by *Tarzan's* "Jane" and Shirley Temple—and the racial impediments that guarantee her failure—foreshadows Jung-Sum's efforts to secure social acceptance as he embodies the signs of black, violent American masculinity that are epitomized by the professional boxer Joe Louis.¹⁵

Discussions of Asian masculinity, sexuality, and race must begin with the Asian American literary-cultural criticism of Frank Chin and Jeffrey Paul Chan's "Racist Love." Gendered and sexualized racism towards Asian Americans had long taken root by the time Chin and Chan published their vitriolic analysis of the subject in 1972, but their essay is generally recognized as the earliest critique of these imbricated discourses.¹⁶ The core of Chin and Chan's argument in "Racist Love" holds that, whereas white stereotypes of black, First Nations, and Latino men produce racial difference by attributing qualities of powerful masculinity and threatening heterosexuality to these minorities, white stereotypes of Asian men produce racial difference by attributing qualities of docile effeminacy and sinister homosexuality. Chin and Chan assert:

The white stereotype of the Asian is unique in that it is the only racial stereotype completely devoid of manhood. Our nobility is that of an efficient housewife. At our worst we are contemptible because we are womanly, effeminate, devoid of all

the traditionally masculine qualities of originality, daring, physical courage, creativity. We're neither straight talkin' or straight shootin' (68).

Their rhetoric in this passage makes a dangerous substitution when it describes the characteristic of insufficient masculinity that has been assigned to Asian American men as “womanly.” Where is the value for Asian American women in an anti-racist polemic that positions femininity as the absence of “originality, daring, physical courage, [and] creativity”? And how can Chin and Chan, in the final line of this quotation, represent sexual queerness as synonymous with emasculated or even feminized manhood? The key to understanding this slippage is that Chin and Chan’s argument describes a white racist ideology that frames Asian Americans as reluctant to challenge the status quo, and therefore worthy of love. Chin and Chan write that “The difference between [other racialized groups] and the Chinese was that the Christians, taking Chinese hospitality for timidity and docility, weren’t afraid of us as they were of other races. They loved us, protected us. Love conquered” (68). And if the dominant power in America is white and masculine, Chin and Chan figure, the racialized subject who receives its love must be feminine or queer. In *Writing Manhood in Black and Yellow*, Daniel Y. Kim formalizes the slippage between misogyny and sexual prejudice in Chin and Chan’s argument by dividing it into what he calls “the Feminization Thesis” and “the Homosexualization Thesis.” His division is helpful in my analysis because Chin and Chan’s blurring of gender and sexuality represents the kind of misogynist and sexually prejudiced thinking against which Choy’s novel firmly protests, even if his novel represents comparable anxieties about the viability of a strong Chinese Canadian masculinity. By extracting and

provisionally separating “the Feminization Thesis” and “the Homosexualization Thesis,” Kim’s text answers the call of queer theory scholars like Butler who insist that the heteronormative production of causal links between sex, gender, and sexuality must be denaturalized at every opportunity. Because my analysis of *The Jade Peony* attends to both the gendered and sexualized politics of Jung-Sum’s diasporic belonging, I will replicate Kim’s provisional separation as I first discuss Choy’s conflicted representation of racialized Chinese Canadian manhood and then, later in this chapter, the related crises of queer sexuality, gender identity, and diasporic belonging.

Despite the misogyny and sexual prejudice in their paradigm of “racist love,” Chin and Chan’s writing has critical purchase. Their claim that Asian American manhood had been thoroughly emasculated in mainstream white culture continues to shape scholars’ perceptions of the limited agency of Asian American men in the first half of the twentieth century. The idea that Asian Canadian and Asian American manhood has been persistently emasculated appears in several literary and historical descriptions of early-to-mid twentieth century “bachelor societies,” male-dominated populations whose gender demographics were managed by racist labour and immigration policies in Canada and the United States. King-Kok Cheung, for instance, though she criticizes “Racist Love” for its “buttressing [of] patriarchy” (177), describes Chinese bachelor societies as sites of “painful ‘emasculat[i]on’” where many Chinese men did hard manual labour but “were better known to the American public” as launderers, restaurant cooks, and waiters, jobs “traditionally considered ‘women’s work’” (175). The distinction that Cheung implies between the affective feeling of emasculation and the racialized gendering of

feminization is not always apparent in critical work. David L. Eng, in *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America*, offers an incisive reading of Asian American masculinity, but refers to the men's laundry, restaurant, and tailor shop work as "low-wage, feminized jobs" (17). *The Jade Peony*, as I argue in more detail later in this chapter, complicates Chin and Chan's theory by implying that a distinction between feminization and emasculation must be recognized.

In the Canadian context, Peter S. Li's *The Chinese in Canada* describes the labour of laundering as one of the few areas of employment in which Chinese men were legally permitted to work in the era of the Exclusion Act. Li describes the sharp rise of the Chinese-Canadian service industry in the gender-neutral language of "survival adaptation," pointing out that "in 1885 the proportion of Chinese engaged in laundry and restaurant work was less than 5 percent [. . .] and by 1931, 40 percent" (53). Li's text represents service industry work as a matter of necessity, shaped as it was by the need for economic survival in an increasingly hostile nation, but it also recognizes that the work seemed to reinforce a racialized lapse in masculinity and class status that had been ascribed to earlier forms of labour that had also been undertaken out of economic necessity. He writes: "In many ways, the low-cost services delivered by the Chinese in the laundry and restaurant businesses were similar to the services they once provided to Canadian households as domestic servants; both types of service were seen as women's work, undesirable to male white workers because of the poor pay and low social standing associated with them" (53). These critics' texts, describing both Canadian and American histories, validate the anxieties about masculinity that Chin and Chan represent in "Racist

Love,” though they legitimize the anxieties without offering humiliating comparisons of Asian American manhood to housewives and queer men. Instead, they seem to suggest that the feeling of emasculation was a legitimate effect of racialized labour laws that forced Asian American men to participate in low-class, gendered labour in disproportionate numbers, and also an effect of white discourses that interpreted these patterns of forced labour as evidence of a naturally inferior masculinity.

Deep unease about Chinese Canadian masculinity was also produced by the shortage of opportunities for men to prove their worth to their community and to themselves by participating in traditional or adapted family roles. During the period of the Chinese Exclusion Act from 1923 to 1947, almost no Chinese men and absolutely no Chinese women were allowed to migrate to Canada. David Chuenyen Lai states in *Chinatowns: Towns within Cities in Canada* that although certain classes of Chinese people were technically admissible, including “consular officials, children born in Canada, merchants, and students” only twelve people were actually permitted to enter as immigrants in that twenty-four year span (56, 58). This mobility-halting measure not only prevented new opportunities for family life, but it froze in place the unevenly gendered demographics of Chinese Canadian communities that existed prior to the onset of the Exclusion Act. When the demographics did change, they only added to the imbalance: Chinese Canadians were allowed, and encouraged, to leave Canada, and deaths were occurring without new births to replenish the communities. Before the moratorium on Canadian-bound travel was set in place, Chinese migration into Canada was largely undertaken by men alone. Factors that included escalating head taxes, hard labour

demands, and intense, organized racism from Canadian citizens often meant that Chinese men would migrate to Canada without their families in hopes of either rejoining them in China or of being reunited with them in Canada under prosperous circumstances. Lai writes that in 1921, two years before the advent of the Exclusion Act, Chinese men in Canada outnumbered Chinese women 37,163 to 2,424, or, roughly 15:1 (60). Peter S. Li reports that by 1931, the men outnumbered the women 46,519 to 1,241, or 37:1 (67). Li's figures point out that the effects of this period on Chinese Canadian populations were long-lasting: men and women did not achieve a ratio of 1:1 until 1991, almost seventy years after the Exclusion Act was passed and more than forty years after it was rescinded (67). Reviewing the data from this period, it is clear that Chinese Canadian masculinity and sexuality was managed, and starkly devalued, by the Canadian state. White racist culture not only extinguished possibilities for Chinese Canadian economic success, personal mobility, and family reunification in early to mid-twentieth century Canada, but it also created a climate for stereotypes targeting Asian Canadian masculinities, stereotypes that linger in popular culture today.

Set as it is in the period when Chinese Canadian populations were being depleted through emasculating restrictions on employment and transnational mobilities, *The Jade Peony* must be read as resisting dominant ideologies in its portrayal of a strong Chinese Canadian manhood. Jung-Sum's over-enthusiastic masculinity in particular signifies as a non-compliant response to gendered discourses of racism that prevailed in the 1930s and 1940s. His powerful masculinity is a consistent presence in *The Jade Peony* as Choy naturalizes, publicizes, and valorizes this as Jung-Sum's defining trait in others'

perceptions. This technique not only works as a characterization device, however; by consistently portraying Jung-Sum's rugged behaviour through other characters' eyes, Choy establishes a dominant Chinese Canadian masculinity as a focal point for collective diasporic pride. Representing Jung-Sum's strength through family members' eyes, Choy writes a strong Chinese Canadian masculinity into Canadian history that embodies and even threatens to exceed the codes of white mainstream manliness. Insofar as he signifies defiance against Canadian legal and cultural norms of the early to mid-twentieth century, Jung-Sum is at the centre of the novel's critical nostalgic perspective. The novel does not represent a diasporic longing for Chinese origins, but it recalls the social and legal exile of Chinese Canadians within Canada while disputing the dominant, racialized ideologies that reigned in that era by celebrating the communities' strengths.

The Jade Peony substantiates the value of heroic Chinese Canadian masculinity by portraying this quality through other characters' perceptions of Jung-Sum. Although I will later focus on the doubts that Jung-Sum harbours about the authenticity of his own identity, I maintain that these doubts complicate, rather than disqualify, Choy's depiction of Jung-Sum as aggressive in other sections of the novel. Jung-Sum's self-doubts cut deeply, but they are contained to his section and are recognized by only two other characters within that section. Whatever his own anxieties, his identity channels collective diasporic feeling for other characters both before and after Jung-Sum reveals the limitations of his ultra-masculine identity. Consequently, I argue that Choy asks readers to suspend this knowledge in other sections of the novel for the purpose of accepting the character's dominant masculinity at surface value. Jook-Liang's and Sek-

Lung's descriptions of their adoptive brother naturalize his rambunctious personality as part of the daily life of the Chen family. Even though Jung-Sum's own, introspective middle section would seem to problematize, if not contradict this depiction, Choy makes it clear that this identity is a stable, consistent reality in the other characters' lives, and therefore has lasting meaning that transcends Jung-Sum's own insecurities. When the narrative focalizes through narrators Jook-Liang and Sek-Lung as well as other family members, Jung-Sum is strong, protective, and defiant in the face of bullies and oppressors, be they symbolic or real.

Choy's first introduction of Jung-Sum in "Jook-Liang, Only Sister" portrays him as swearing, stabbing, and slashing at paper heads in the game "Enemies of Free China" (14, 19). Jung-Sum's violent masculinity is disruptive, but is integrated into the cozy familial atmosphere of this kitchen scene. The narration and others' dialogue is periodically punctured by the "*Whack!*" of his sword against warlord, Communist soldier, and Japanese general paper targets (14-19). This peripheral introduction to Jung-Sum's character establishes the legitimacy of his masculinity by representing it as his singular, defining characteristic in the text. Even to his younger sister, Jook-Liang, Jung-Sum's aggressive play is more annoying than threatening because it is a natural part of the bustling Chen family dynamic. Though Choy does not flesh out Jung-Sum's character in this setting, he uses Jung-Sum's wild boyishness as the embodiment of the family's stance on Chinese politics. What could have been merely the sketching of a flat character Choy turns into an opportunity for defining the family's diasporic identity. Jook-Liang explains that Jung-Sum's game is produced in Hong Kong and sold to raise funds from

Chinese diasporans for a Free China (20). The family's stance on these politics is asserted when the children's grandmother, Poh-Poh, "happily step[s]" over the paper heads that litter the floor as she walks to retrieve chopsticks, "proud of her warrior grandsons" and commanding Jung-Sum, simply, "Kill more" (15). Jung-Sum's heartfelt decapitation of Tojo gives embodied life to the Chen family's feelings following Father's logical explanation that "Tojo, a Japanese, was in command of the plot to enslave China for the Japanese" (20). Legitimized by Father's calm commentary and spurred on by Poh-Poh's exhortation, Jung-Sum's courageous play-violence evidences a heroic diasporic masculinity that is the focal point for and physical expression of the family's collective affect.

Jung-Sum's play-killing merges diasporic politics and familial love in Jook-Liang's section, and this valiant hostility expresses itself as a willingness to actually fight in the final section, "Sek-Lung, Third Brother." Mirroring his representation of Jung-Sum in the first section, Choy uses the character in the third section to represent a physically powerful Chinese Canadian masculinity that is forced by white racist culture to distinguish itself from Japanese Canadian identity in the context of World War II. Sek-Lung's section works through the nuanced tensions between Chinese Canadians and Japanese Canadians as each group struggled against differently racialized infrastructures erected by the nation-state and sustained by white culture at large. While Sek-Lung's section describes the tragic love of a Chinese Canadian girl and a Japanese Canadian boy who defy diasporic and nationalist prejudices, Choy uses Jung-Sum's voice to represent an uncompromising Chinese Canadian manhood that threatens positive negotiations of

ethnic difference. The strength of his character's protective masculinity erupts when Sek-Lung describes Jung-Sum pounding the table as he tutors his younger brother and later viciously kick-boxing the air, threatening to "beat the fuckin' shit out of [anyone]" who mistakes his siblings for their Japanese enemies (155, 218). Jung-Sum's eagerness to fight implies that he has polarized attitudes against Japanese and British Canadian identities, but his wrath in this statement is not targeted at Japanese or British Canadians. Instead, Jung-Sum sets his sights on the bullies who would rely on sloppy identity categories as an excuse to exercise violent power over Chinese Canadians. Jung-Sum's explosive anger is valiant: not only does it not voice a desire to attack the racialized other, it does not even describe a desire to defend the self. Jung-Sum's ferocity anticipates the revenge he will seek on anyone who attacks the vulnerable members of his family. Though we do not witness Jung-Sum fulfilling this vow, we also never see Jung-Sum's fury subside or any negative consequences ensue from his embodied resistance against oppressive forces. His willingness to fight is portrayed as less than ideal, perhaps even intimidating, but it is not portrayed as unreasonable. As in the first section, then, Choy's dramatization of Jung-Sum's gendered body signifies as the affective glue that enables collective belonging. Taken together, these episodes create a cumulative vision of a boy who is noble, brave, and uncompromising in his willingness to protect those around him.¹⁷ Choy uses other characters' narratives to authenticate this character's masculinity as genuinely powerful and respectable, if at times overly-enthusiastic.

But is Choy's representation of aggressive masculinity entirely redemptive of Chinese Canadian manhood? Insofar as it signifies this quality sincerely, Jung-Sum's

character presents a similar literary-ideological solution to emasculating racisms identified by Frank Chin and his colleagues in *The Big Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian American Writers*. King-Kok Cheung explains that in this collection, the editors “attempt to revive an Asian heroic tradition, celebrating Chinese and Japanese classics [. . .] and honoring the renowned heroes and outlaws featured therein” (177). Even in her title, “The Woman Warrior versus The Chinaman Pacific: Must a Chinese American Critic Choose between Feminism and Heroism?”, however, Cheung expresses grave reservations about this strategy. She remains critical of their choice to organize their values under the rubric of “selected maxims, purportedly derived from Chinese epics and war manuals,” phrases that include “‘I am the law,’ ‘life is war,’ [and] ‘personal integrity and honor is the highest value’” (177). Ultimately, the editors produce a model of Asian American masculinity that—like Jung-Sum’s character—is driven by an “ethic of private revenge” (177). But what, Cheung asks, are the consequences of such a model? She reiterates the question posed in the title of her article: “Is it not possible for Chinese American men to recover a cultural space without denigrating or erasing ‘the feminine’?” (180).

The Jade Peony’s answer to Cheung’s question is conflicted. Through the character Jung-Sum, *The Jade Peony* evidences a racialized Chinese Canadian masculinity in crisis. By remaining intensely aware of its own contradictions, the novel works through, but does not attempt to contain, the multiple forces that constitute the crisis. On the one hand, other characters’ perspectives unanimously normalize Jung-Sum’s behaviour as an admirable, albeit extreme, quality of heroic masculinity. On the

other hand, Jung-Sum's own narrative persistently suggests that there is slippage between the courage that others perceive as natural to his personality, the hostility that is the legacy of his father's abuse and neglect, and others' injunctions to perform a decidedly anti-feminine masculinity. In "Jung-Sum, Second Brother," it is clear that while Jung-Sum's gender identity is not "fake," nor is it exactly "natural."

My reading of this aspect of the novel is indebted to the notion of "performativity" as it is developed by Judith Butler in such texts as *Gender Trouble* and *Undoing Gender*. Butler draws on J. L. Austen's concept of "the performative," a linguistic category that describes utterances that impose a binding effect on reality. She queers this concept to argue that gender is not a natural, inherent quality, but a performative practice, an effect of constantly recited norms that can never fully or finally inhabit the ideological ideals of masculinity or femininity. This insight illuminates my reading of Jung-Sum's efforts to inhabit his body and a position in the diaspora, first as a normative boy and then as an impressive adolescent. Butler concentrates on the inevitable failure of any man who tries to embody masculinity, but her writing also equips readers to see how racialized ideologies actually produce specific obstacles to gender normativity for non-white people. Butler's efforts "to understand how the terms of gender are instituted, naturalized, and established as presuppositional" to the category of "the human" throws into relief the determination of the Canadian state and white culture to systematically produce Asian masculinity as distinctly inferior to white masculinity (*Undoing Gender* 216). The concept of gender performativity also lends strength to my argument that Choy's fiction poses a challenge to other writers' efforts to recuperate

Asian American masculinity. Whereas Chin and his colleagues' writing seeks to establish an essentialized model of hardened Asian American masculinity through angry rhetoric and the invocation of literary, mythological, and historical precedents, Choy's writing both records the strength of Asian Canadian men and queries the urge to express that strength through acts of violence and domination.

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, the earliest memories that Jung-Sum recounts are of neglect, abuse, abandonment, and forced mobility. He eventually entered into a stable environment with the Chen family, but in being circulated around the random other places, he was firmly subjected to gender codes that regulated what were "appropriate" feelings and behaviours for boys. The adults who dealt with Jung-Sum after his parents' violent death, including the neighbour who found him clinging to his mother's body and the man from the Benevolent Association who eventually brought him to the Chens, demanded that he dominate his affect by instructing him, "No use to cry. Big boys don't need cry" (90). Even after entering the loving home of the Chen family, Jung-Sum faced the threat of being feminized and rejected by his older brother if he could not perform a minimum degree of masculine toughness. Left alone together for the first time in what had become "their" bedroom, Kiam-Kim suddenly punched Jung-Sum "to see if [he] could take it," and then warned him, "Don't cry, sissy [. . .] or we'll throw you under the Georgia Viaduct with the bums and dead people" (86). For his part, Jung-Sum proved his masculine worth by refusing to cry. Though Kiam-Kim was satisfied at Jung-Sum's ability to dominate his feeling and the embodied expression of that feeling, he became even more impressed when Jung-Sum took off his shirt to reveal the scars that

were the legacy of his father's belt buckle. Jung-Sum proudly remembers that Kiam-Kim taunted him again later that night as they fell asleep, but that he "gripped his pillow and not one tear fell from his eyes" (88). Though Choy does not make the connection, Jung-Sum's capacity to master his affective system is certainly an outcome of the beatings he endured at the hands of his father, the traces of which Kiam-Kim respects so much.

At the level of plot where Jung-Sum is on the brink of adolescence, these memories are not narrated as a plea for sympathy but as an effort to reassure himself that he has always exceeded others' ever-present demands that he be tough by mastering his feelings and the embodied signs of those feelings. However, considered in the context of critical debates from the 1970s till the present day concerning the need for representations of aggressive Asian American masculinity, these memories signify as a message of caution. Choy's depiction of Jung-Sum's memories establishes that even strong masculine gender is an effect of a constant demand for recitation, not a natural essence of manhood. By representing the adults' disciplining admonishments and Kiam-Kim's cruelty in close proximity, Choy points out that there is a connection between common standards of masculinity, such as when the adults instruct Jung-Sum not to cry, and horrifying extremes, such as when Kiam-Kim interprets the scars beaten into Jung-Sum's body as both a sign of gender credibility and evidence of human worth. This cautionary message is a warning that the emasculation of Asian Canadian men cannot be corrected simply through an intensified production of hyper-masculine figures. Even though passing characterizations of Jung-Sum in other sections can be interpreted in such a light, Choy limits the value of such representations by illustrating that "redemptive"

hyper-masculine gender representations have as much potential for destroying as for healing the boys and men they are supposed to save.

The dehumanizing aspects of normative masculinity that Choy represents in Jung-Sum's early childhood are downplayed in the following episode when Jung-Sum undergoes a rite of passage into pseudo-military, adolescent masculinity. Jung-Sum is between his twelfth and his thirteenth birthdays when he receives the gift of a second-hand topcoat from an older boy, Frank Yuen. Frank is an important foil for Jung-Sum throughout *The Jade Peony*: Choy creates so many similarities between Frank and Jung-Sum that the former signifies as an older—more damaged—version of the latter. Just as Jung-Sum is in the confusing transitory period between childhood and adolescence, Frank is in the blurry period between adolescence and adulthood; just as Jung-Sum's father was an abusive alcoholic, so too was Frank's father, Old Yuen, and just as Jung-Sum invests his energy in boxing to the point of near exhaustion, Frank boxes, carries a knife, and has a dangerous reputation as a street fighter. While I will discuss the doppelganger relationship of these two characters in more depth later in this chapter, I mention it now in passing to establish that the gift of the topcoat to Jung-Sum from Frank is both an acknowledgement and a production of a special bond between two characters, one who feels like an outcast and one who, having felt the same way when he was young, chooses to live as an outlaw.

Though Jung-Sum's childhood memories underscore the potentially dehumanizing effects of "strong masculinity," the military-like coat episode suggests that the performative nature of gender codes can be treated as an opportunity for

improvisation. Specifically, by coordinating their efforts, a group of Chinese Canadian elders led by Poh-Poh capitalize on the performative quality of identity to help Jung-Sum attain a feeling of mature masculinity and diasporic solidarity. The coat smells badly after having been worn for so long by Old Yuen, but Choy cancels out the influence of Old Yuen's failed masculinity on Jung-Sum by introducing another type of Chinese Canadian masculinity into Jung-Sum's narrative. Choy fills out the character Gee Sook, a cheery tailor-laundrerer whom Jung-Sum knows from afternoon visits with Poh-Poh. A clean-cut older man, the bachelor Gee Sook is instrumental in helping Jung-Sum to feel he is becoming a man as he approaches adolescence.

Even though the coat is ragged by the time Jung-Sum receives it, he is happily aware that the original purchase of the garment represented a rare moment of racialized class transgression for Old Yuen. Jung-Sum explains:

During the Depression and the opening of the war years, you could only buy such a classic coat on Granville Street, in one of those men's stores where a salesman in a black suit sniffed at Chinamen who asked for the *bess-ee*—the best—and who proudly pulled out a thick roll of folding money. It was money earned from a labour camp's honest sweat or won from gambling, or from playing a longshot at the Hasting Park races, but it was enough money to have the salesman go to the back room and pull out his best stock (93).

Jung-Sum begs his grandmother to turn it into an army coat, and Poh-Poh spends two days studying pictures of "military men" ripped out of old American magazines before she begins altering it (94). The restoration effort begins to swell as Jung-Sum's adoptive

step-mother washes the coat twice and his adoptive father brings home “military-looking brass buttons”; Poh-Poh soon recruits the neighbour Mrs. Lim to help with the alterations, and another friend Mrs. Chin lends her sewing machine and her supervision of Poh-Poh’s pumping foot for a week (93-94). Though Jung-Sum and Kiam-Kim don’t have the skills to work on the coat, they work together performing chores for Mrs. Chin in exchange for the loan of the machine (93-94). Even this collective effort, however, is unable to produce a coat that suffices: Jung-Sum tries on the coat, but to his utter disappointment does not look “anything like a champion or army captain” (94). As a final measure, the limp coat is brought to the tailor and dry cleaner Gee Sook. Once the brass buttons are polished and the wool is stiffened by intense steam-cleaning, Gee Sook pulls the coat from the steam and swings it around Jung-Sum’s shoulders (101). The gendered respect he receives is immediate and unanimous:

“Jung looks like the young Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek,” Mrs. Lim said, clapping her hands. “We should take a picture.”

“This is a man’s coat,” Gee Sook grandly announced. “All of you women stand back.”

I felt intense heat embrace my shoulders, then curve over my back and drop upon my chest. I felt like a young warrior receiving the gift of his bright armour, a steely-grey coat born from fire and steam. (101).

This scene, following Choy’s attention to the dehumanizing power of gender norms, is clearly problematic. The fusion of the militaristic, the mythic, the medieval, and the masculine that constitutes Jung-Sum’s pre-adolescent feeling in this moment of

emergence is unsurprising; that Choy ascribes comparable expressions to community elders, however, presents a paradox. On the one hand, Choy's previous description of Jung-Sum's early childhood alerts readers to the dangerous implications of violent masculinity; on the other hand, this moment voices a collective yearning for fresh models of heroic, physical masculinity that, as I argued earlier, is also encoded in other depictions of Jung-Sum throughout the novel. The tension between these two visions of powerful masculinity cannot be easily reconciled, in large part because the confusion about what Chinese masculinity ought or ought not to be is an inevitable symptom of racist ideology that expresses itself through the semiotics of gender.¹⁸

That Choy uses this ritual of man-making to foreshadow Jung-Sum's entry into nascent queer desire is made more explicit when Jung-Sum looks again into the mirror. Jung-Sum—amidst all of the collective flattery—looks in the mirror and “wishe[s] Frank Yuen could see [him]” (101). At the same time, postponing my discussion of queerness in *The Jade Peony* momentarily, I would like to add that even though the masculinity that is bestowed upon Jung-Sum in this episode is very much the product of Chinese Canadian collective effort, the final touch on the coat also asserts Jung-Sum's conflicting desire to embody British Canadian identity. Poh-Poh hands Gee Sook a label to be sewn on, the original three-inch trademark that reads “Genuine British” and depicts a sailing ship at sea (102). Jung-Sum explains, “It was always this same label that had caught my eye when I hung up the coat for Old Yuen” and he is touched that “Poh-Poh had noticed” (102). Christine Lorre, in “The Healing Effects of Childhood Narrative in Wayson Choy's *The Jade Peony*,” reads the original purchase of the coat as an act of “revenge”

and the final addition of the label as a complementary act of defiance in which “British purity, courage, and spirit of conquest is subverted and appropriated [. . .] by a Chinese boy-turned-man” (76). My analysis, however, argues Old Yuen’s original purchase of the coat and Jung-Sum’s adoption of it are not radically defiant, but represent the threat of internalized racism. Old Yuen and Jung-Sum’s desire could only offer a subversive threat to the cultural norm if their racialized bodies could fully appropriate the signs of upper class masculinity. Their desire to embody these signs, however, is destined for failure, and the sense of potential social transgression that their desire signifies exists *despite* Old Yuen and Jung-Sum’s common desire to gain access to the accoutrements of financially powerful white masculinity. In Gee Sook’s shop, Poh-Poh perceives the threat of internalized racism to her grandson and assigns the label a diasporic meaning by explaining, “before boats were powered by the breath of steam dragons [. . .] the first Chinese came to Gold Mountain huddled in the smelly cargo of old sailing vessels like this ancient windjammer” (102). With this pointed explanation, Poh-Poh complicates Jung-Sum’s attraction to white, British military masculinity by reminding him firmly that the dehumanization of Chinese diasporans began even before their experience of arrival. Her history lesson poses a direct contradiction to the colonial ideal represented by the windjammer and reminds Jung-Sum that he, as a Chinese Canadian, must revise his internalized ideals.

The opportunity that this episode presents for analyzing the articulated crises of race, gender, and sexuality is further complicated in that Gee Sook, the tailor and dry cleaner, possesses the final power to transform Jung-Sum into a respectable vision of

manhood. The character Gee Sook complicates the tailor and launderer stereotypes that so many scholars describe as “feminized” or “emasculated” Asian American identity. The difference between the terms “feminized” and “emasculated” is, of course, significant; while the term “feminized” accurately describes the injurious, stereotypical representations of Asian Canadian and Asian American masculinity in white popular culture, the term “emasculated” describes the affective condition of Asian Canadian and Asian American men whose pride, agency, and humanity were seriously hampered by racist labour and immigration laws. In the character Gee Sook, Choy represents a man whose capacity to prove his masculine worth by conventional means has been extinguished by Canadian culture, but who is not, for all of the womanly company he keeps, himself feminine. In representing this character Choy also invites readers to consider the differences between gender and sexuality. Gee Sook is not portrayed as explicitly sexually queer, but as other characters gossip about the possible reasons for his lack of a wife, Choy leaves room for this possibility.

Throughout *The Jade Peony*, Gee Sook is almost always portrayed at work in the laundromat and in the company of women. Jung-Sum explains that Poh-Poh and other elderly women frequently stop by to “[drink] tea poured from Gee Sook’s all-day teapot encased in a cloth-quilted jacket” as they “sit back, gossip”, and occasionally help by mending embroidery (95). The only time Gee Sook is represented outside of American Steam Cleaners is when he visits the Tong Association Temple with Poh-Poh and Mrs. Lim to light joss sticks and offer prayers for a stillborn child (99). Choy emphasizes the limitations on Gee Sook’s masculinity when the women who socialize at his shop tease

him for never marrying. When they ask why he is not married, he says he is too old and too poor. When Poh-Poh advises him to marry, he deflects the question by turning the attention back to her, saying, “I’m asking you for the tenth time—marry me!” (95). When another elderly woman criticizes him, saying “It’s a natural law that all men should marry!”, he winks at the others and charges her double for her cleaning (96). Jung-Sum heightens the ambiguity around Gee Sook’s personal life when he explains that the questions about Gee Sook’s bachelorhood are not confined to teasing at the launderer’s shop. He comments in passing, “Why Gee Sook never did marry was sometimes a topic of conversation at the ladies’ *mahjong* tables” (95). At the same time that Choy refuses to foreclose the possibility of an adult same-sex desiring character, he also exploits this character’s ambiguity to comment on the restricted chances for normative family life that racist Canadian culture imposed on Chinese Canadian men. Jung-Sum points out that many men like Gee Sook did not marry because it was, simply, an irresponsible economic decision. “There might never be enough money to buy more food for another mouth,” he explains, “never a secure job to pay regular rent, never enough decent work to feed the children that would come along” (95-96). As a mere launderer, Choy suggests, Gee Sook’s capacity to build a family is inhibited by economic pressures and a low class position. What ultimately defines the ambiguity of the character’s vague queerness is this question of whether he is same-sex desiring or whether he is forced to sacrifice a potential heteronormative family role because of overarching feelings of social responsibility. Choy’s strategy of suggestively raising this question but leaving it unanswered encourages readers to carefully consider the difference between racialized

gender and sexual queerness and the unpredictable ways that categories of race, class, gender, and sexuality combine with one another.

The quality of respectability that Choy assigns to Gee Sook signifies as a countering response to stereotypical representations of Chinatown bachelors in other literary texts and in historical analyses of Chinese presence in North America. In her text *Asian American Literature*, Elaine H. Kim writes in the chapter “Portraits of Chinatown” that second-generation Asian American writers were often unkind to unmarried or married-but-estranged Chinese American men in their representations of Chinatowns. She opens the chapter by quickly sketching minor bachelor figures in Pardee Lowe’s *Father and Glorious Descendant*, Virginia Lee’s *The House That Tai Built*, and Jade Snow Wong’s *Fifth Chinese Daughter*. Kim explains that these texts are unanimous in their representations of Chinatown “uncles” who are physically frail and morally depraved. According to Kim, the characters written by Lowe, Lee, and Wong are, respectively: an “illiterate gambler and itinerant actor who plays cards and shoots pool in an interracial underworld inhabited by other social deviants”; “an impoverished opium addict who inhabits a filthy and foul-smelling hovel”; and “a hopeless dreamer and a pathetic fool, a mysterious part of the Chinatown scene about whom Wong is only a little curious” (92). Kim reads a more detailed, optimistic portrayal of Chinatown masculinity in Louis Chu’s *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, but she maintains that “There is precious little Chinese American literature about Chinatown [male-dominant] community life,” and that “Much of the existing literature serves to reinforce popular stereotypes” of the sort she outlines in her opening (104). Though Choy’s writing belongs to a different national literature, the

historical overlaps between Canadian and American Chinese diasporas are such that Choy's character Gee Sook can be considered an important corrective to histories of literary representation that portray Chinese American bachelors as moral failures and social outcasts.

The ambiguity that Choy cultivates about Gee Sook's sexuality also offers a different kind of revisionism to studies of Asian American masculinity and sexuality. Kim's portrait of bachelor societies in *Asian American Literature* was published long before the advent of queer theory in academia, but it can be read as embodying a fairly common vision of Chinese American manhood that was strictly heterosexual. Her text laments the rupture of the heterosexual family and also the restricted possibilities for heterosexual sex. Kim describes the many heterosexual compromises by which men satisfied sexual needs arising in what she assumes to be the absence of homeland wives, but the possibility of queer sexual interaction never arises. As Kim describes the prostitutes "of all races" who successfully solicited laundries and Chinese restaurants, she seems, in part, to be asserting the potency of Asian American masculinity by affirming the heterosexual prowess that thrived despite the shortage of female partners (100). She emphasizes the men's heterosexual desperation by listing the wide availability of brothels; the dance halls where Chinese men could pay ten cents "for a minute's chance to hold a woman in their arms"; church-led English classes where Chinese men attended "primarily because the teachers were female and [the men] were hungry even for kind looks and words from members of the opposite sex"; and the nude calendars printed in Shanghai specifically for Chinese American consumers (100-01). Considering the

timeframe in which *Asian American Literature* was published, I am not suggesting that Kim somehow deliberately obfuscates queer sexual realities that must have existed in Chinese American history. Her sensitive work, however, reproduces a common blindness that continues to frustrate many Asian Canadians and Asian Americans today.

My reading of Kim's text is paralleled by the work of Jennifer Ting's "Bachelor Society: Deviant Heterosexuality and Asian American Historiography." Ting argues that key historical texts in Asian-American studies occlude the possibility of queer presence in Chinese American history by constructing "pre-World War II Chinese immigrants in terms of a specific kind of heterosexuality" that is defined against a "critical category of 'deviance'" (271). Ting surveys multiple texts, but concentrates on Mary Coolidge's 1909 *Chinese Immigration* and Paul C. P. Siu's 1987 text *The Chinese Laundryman: a Study in Social Isolation* to show that in historical approaches to Asian American Studies, sexuality is only evaluated for the degree to which it contributes to or detracts from family life, and, subsequently, the degree to which Chinese American community on the whole is stabilized by heteronormativity or threatened by "deviancy" or, in Siu's language, "maladjustment" (276). A key point of Ting's argument is that Coolidge's and Siu's texts—and, as I have illustrated, Kim's text—only ever represent deviancy as non-conjugal heterosexuality. These representations inadvertently reinforce heterosexist models of family and, consequently, eliminate queer people from visions of diasporic or minority communities that are imagined to be made up of families. Ting's sensitivity to the fact that "not all heterosexualities will be equally privileged by heterosexism, precisely because sexualities are implicated in power relations and cultural logics"

resonates with Choy's depiction of Gee Sook (277-78). Had Choy represented Gee Sook as definitively same-sex desiring, he would have created one queer character and possibly been accused of assuming, like Frank Chin, that to feel emasculated is to be feminized and to be feminized is to be homosexual. However, by maintaining an aura of sexual ambiguity around this character, Choy's novel encourages readers to wonder: were there queer men in Chinese "bachelor societies"? Is it possible that some of the Chinese men who were firmly denied the possibility of heterosexual family might not have wanted heterosexual family in the first place? Though statistical data will never emerge to quantify the result, the answer must be, obviously, yes. By retaining a degree of uncertainty around Gee Sook, by treating the virtual certainties of sexual queerness and willful non-reproductive heterosexualities in "bachelor societies" as mere possibilities, Choy allows for vast complexities to be discovered in his small depiction of a "bachelor society" launderer.

Many of the elements that have started to texture my analysis of Chinese Canadian masculinity over these last few pages—including the topics of racialized self-contempt and sexual queerness—come into clearer focus in this second part of my chapter in which I merge my discussion of conflicted masculinity with a discussion of how queerness mediates affective, diasporic belonging. In the first half of this chapter, I introduced the aspect of Chin and Chan's "Racist Love" that Daniel Y. Kim calls "the Feminization Thesis" as I discussed representations of racialized gender. Before I consider Choy's articulated representations of gender and sexual queerness, I will again contextualize his novel in controversial critical discussions about Asian American

manhood by considering the elaboration of Chin and Chan's theory of racist love that Kim terms "the Homosexualization Thesis."

Chin and his colleagues' work elaborates on the emasculation of Asian American masculinity by portraying gendered racialization as not only feminized, but "homosexualized"; Kim calls this aspect of their work "the Homosexualization Thesis." Unlike Choy's representation of diasporic challenges to and opportunities for same-sex desire, Chin and his colleagues' depiction of sexually queered Asian American men does not reflect the slightest desire to engage with actual, lived sexual queerness. Instead, their prejudicial writing takes up homosexuality in figurative terms; they turn to cinematic representations of drag to define it as a vague quality of failed or insufficient aggression. In "Confessions of the Chinatown Cowboy," Chin writes:

The movies were teachers. In no uncertain terms they taught America that we were lovable for being a race of sissies [. . .] living to accommodate the whitemen. Unlike the white stereotype of the evil black stud, Indian rapist, Mexican macho, the evil of the evil Dr. Fun Manchu was not sexual, but homosexual. [. . .] Dr. Fu, a man wearing a long dress, batting his eyelashes, surrounded by muscular black servants in loin clothes, and with his bad habit of caressingly touching white men on the leg, wrist, and face with his long fingernails is not so much a threat as he is a frivolous offense to white manhood. [Charlie] Chan's gestures are the same, except that he doesn't touch, and instead of being graceful like Fu in flowing robes, he is awkward in a baggy suit and

clumsy. His sexuality is the source of a joke running through all of the forty-seven Chan films. [. . .] He never gets into violent things. (qtd. in Cheung 176)

This quotation reiterates the gendered-sexualized-racialized continuum that was evident in the passage from “Racist Love” quoted earlier in this chapter where gender and sexuality are indices of a racialized capacity for sexualized violence that measures, somehow, human worth. Chin’s argument is not simply that Asian American men are stereotyped, but that they are stereotyped as passive and effeminate, and, therefore, homosexual. Kim quotes from the introduction to *The Big Aiiieeeee!* to make a similar point. In this quotation, Chin and his co-editors write: “It is an article of white liberal American faith today that Chinese men, at their best, are effeminate closet queens like Charlie Chan and, at their worst, are homosexual menaces like Fu-Manchu. [. . .] The good Chinese man, at his best, is the fulfillment of white male homosexual fantasy, literally kissing white ass” (qtd. in Kim 136). The implicit chain of thought in these texts suggests that Asian American men are represented as inferior men in popular culture, and that to be made an inferior man is to be feminized; it assumes that to be feminized is to be queered; and it resolves that the fact of being queered requires a unequivocally angry response.¹⁹

Kim interprets this spiteful deployment of sexual prejudice as crucial to Chin’s work. He argues that it serves as a powerful rhetorical device that is the crux of resistance against “racist love.” Kim describes the “cannibalistic power of the homophobic epithet” in Chin’s writing that has the “capacity to swallow whole an entire range of non-masculine signifiers, and [the] ability to provide narrative coherence to the range of

injurious psychic experiences” (136). Kim describes this style of persuasion in colloquial language as “a kind of rhetorical blackmail,” but it can also be understood in the terms of Classical rhetoric as the appeal of *pathos* rather than *logos*, emotion rather than reason. Kim mimics the emotional appeal of Chin’s work as he summarizes Chin’s theory of racist love using an italicized font and a mixture of academic language and slang: “*if we yellow men court the racist love of white men by trying to be like them (and thereby affirm their ‘irresistibility’), we will not only lack the kind of threatening masculinity that men of other races possess in abundance, we will essentially become faggots*” (143). The logic is sloppy, but the feeling is strong. The violent, angry language with which Chin and his colleagues describe femininity and same-sex desire performs, rhetorically, the violent, reactionary anger that they think is a necessary response for purging the internalized contempt that derives from their complicity in belittling racist love. Kim holds Chin responsible for the “palpable and central” sexual prejudice that he produces, but he also argues that Chin’s sexual prejudice is a manifestation of racialized self-loathing. Kim demonstrates that Chin often directs his anger against himself rather than any specific queer “other,” a self-loathing that is clearest in Chin’s autobiographical sketch “Riding the Rails with Chickencoop Slim” and play “The Chickencoop Chinaman” (133). Analyzing these texts in depth, Kim demonstrates that the greatest desire for white, masculine love in Chin’s work, be it homosocial or homosexual, is Chin’s own desire. So, too, are the shame and self-contempt that emerge when he realizes that this desire is not reciprocated by the white men whose desirability—and, therefore, power—he has corroborated.

Choy's *The Jade Peony* and Chin's texts offer radically different representations of queer sexuality, but by putting their representations in conversation we can reach a fuller understanding of how Choy's fiction signifies in critical discussions about Chinese diasporic experience. The differences between their representations are immediately obvious: Choy details the affective, embodied experience of sexual desire as he represents Jung-Sum's first experiences of lust. In Choy's text, affect is the medium through which his character overcomes the alienating demands of performative masculinity and attains loving diasporic inclusion. Chin, on the other hand, strips queer sexuality of all feeling. For Chin, queerness is a loose amalgam of cultural signifiers that collectively signify inefficacy, femininity, and racial otherness on the inferior Asian American body. In Choy's work, queerness enables diasporic love. In Chin's work, queerness is a target of racialized hatred.

More surprising than the dissonances between these two visions of Chinese North American queerness, however, is the harmony. The problematics of queerness, articulated as they are with the complexities of gender, present an opportunity in both writers' work for addressing internalized racial contempt. On the literal level of his work, Chin's rejection of queerness is represented as necessary collateral damage in his quest to destroy visions of emasculated Asian American identity; on the literal level of his work, Choy's representation of Jung-Sum's embodied feeling directly defies Chin's strategy by firmly inscribing queer sexuality in the Chinese diaspora. Considering Chin's writing on a more abstract level, however, sexual queerness can be read—as it is by Kim—as a metaphor for that which must be vanquished in the self, the treacherous desire for white

culture's belittling love. In light of this reading of Chin's work, it is salient that the character who sparks Jung-Sum's nascent sexual feeling on multiple occasions is Frank Yuen, the older outlaw teenager who functions in so many ways as a mirror for Jung-Sum's outcast sense of self. Read against Chin's urge for purifying violence, it also is significant that Jung-Sum's desire for Frank only bursts forth after Jung-Sum suffers an emotional collapse and tries to kill Frank before breaking down into sobs.

Before discussing the ways that Choy's work, like Chin's, explores violence as a possible means of exorcising anxieties about cultural exclusion, I will fill out the cultural context of Asian Canadian and Asian American queerness alongside which these texts signify. An argument that appears consistently throughout this dissertation is that many diasporic writers describe deeply entrenched heterosexist attitudes as a defining dimension of displaced collective identity. In the Chinese Canadian context, for example, Eric C. Wat's "Preserving the Paradox: Stories from a *gay-loh*" describes how Wat's parents' acceptance of their queer son depends explicitly on their vocal rejection of his sexuality. Wat's father asserts his love for his son even as he proclaims an absolute hatred of homosexuality, arguing that it is a violation of his traditional moral system (154). Wat's father disassociates the son he loves from the sexuality he despises by repressing his feelings in a discourse of non-emotive philosophical preference. Confronted by his son, he consistently deflects Wat's frustrated desire to argue by asking evasively, "Cannot two friends disagree on [the morality of sexuality]?" (154). Wat writes that his parents' paradoxical balance of love and hatred is easily sustained because in their minds, their feelings target two completely separate objects. For them, as "for most Asian

parents,” Wat writes, “being Asian and being gay are mutually exclusive” (155). His parents are capable of dividing sexual identity from a Chinese diasporic identity because in their view, Wat explains, homosexuality is really “only a *problem* for white people” or a “white *disease*” (155 org. italics).

Wat writes that the positive terms for queer identities that circulate in popular culture do not have ready equivalents in many diasporic communities, particularly non-Anglophone ones. In his experience, he laments, he has not encountered any ready language for describing queer Chinese diasporans. This absence functions not only as a linguistic impediment, but as a conceptual and affective barrier that seems to legitimize heteronormative diasporans’ rejection of sexual or gender queerness as forms of Western corruption or sickness.²⁰ In other chapters of this dissertation, I argue that nostalgic narratives of origin are sometimes deployed in an effort to naturalize heterosexuality as a sign of pure cultural identity. Wat’s description of his encounter with his father points out, however, that such exclusions are also effected in a rhetoric of cultural preservation in which personal biases are cloaked as rational preferences and authorized by the need to safeguard traditional philosophies and heuristics.

Read against Chin’s writing, Wat’s “Preserving the Paradox: Stories from a *gay-loh*” illustrates the shades of difference between an Asian American masculinity that has been negatively assimilated within the nation through racialized-sexualized popular culture stereotypes and the experience of diasporans whose non-normative behaviours are disavowed under their communities’ racialized-sexualized discourses about white culture. Reading these texts in light of each other reinforces the fact that the bodies that are

targeted differently by these different discourses are caught in the crossfire. Wat does not speculate whether his parents would uphold the same prejudices or adhere to the same vision of racialized sexuality if they either were disinterested in cultural tradition or lived in China. It is clear from the terms of his explanation, however, that in the lived reality of diaspora, queer men and women must negotiate diasporic discourses of sexuality that occlude the possibility of queerness even as they face discourses of race in popular culture that construct queerness as a sign of racial inferiority.

Though some theorists read “diaspora” and “nation” as necessarily oppositional terms, my earlier discussion of Jung-Sum’s performative gender supports the point made in the previous paragraph: diasporic bodies are subject to all manner of communal, legal, and popular-cultural demands, regulations, and norms that do not translate into forced binaries of diaspora and nation. That being said, I argue that *The Jade Peony* strives to naturalize Jung-Sum’s queerness at the level of diasporic community by combining detailed descriptions of his affective, sexual experience with concepts provided by Poh-Poh that interpret his embodied feeling in a traditional Chinese mythology and worldview. My continued references to affect throughout this chapter are motivated by Choy’s representation of nascent queerness as a matter of innate physical feeling rather than a sexual act or distinct identity. The queer feelings that Choy describes are distinctly embodied, but do not signify through the conventional signs of masculine erotic arousal. Whereas Choy emphasizes that Jung-Sum’s gender identity is heavily over-written by layer upon layer of discourse, he assigns a quality of purity to Jung-Sum’s queer feeling by concentrating on the physical signals that are, for Jung-Sum, outside of language.

Though I do not engage the complexities of their respective projects in this chapter, I would like to acknowledge that my use of the term “affect” in this chapter is influenced by Brian Massumi’s text *Parables of the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* and Silvan Tomkins’ essays in *Exploring Affect: the Selected Writings of Silvan S. Tomkins*. These theorists are products of different ages and write in different academic contexts, but they share a common purpose of striving to describe the feeling body as, if not entirely free from discursive power, cultural norms, and popular ideology, at least not entirely contained by it. For Massumi, whose text was published in the early twenty-first century, affect is the literal embodiment of hope. As I describe in more detail in the introduction to this dissertation, the core of this theory is the notion that the sensory dimension of the human body incessantly produces infinite possibilities for movement as it reads its environment and its bodily response to its environment. Massumi develops his theory in response to thinkers such as Butler who, he argues, overstate the binding effect of performative identity. In response to what he sees as the fatalism of performativity, Massumi argues that our embodied capacity to produce infinite possibilities for movement through physical feeling can be thought of as a perpetual condition of embodied hope. Of course, Choy’s depictions of Jung-Sum’s gender identity and sexual feeling make clear that bodies are never finally defined by dominant ideologies, but—inscribed with the signs of race, gender, and class—nor are they as free to move as Massumi would have readers believe.

Tomkins first developed his ideas about affect in the mid-twentieth century, so his description of actual feeling processes is much more structured than Massumi’s work.

Tomkins lists a specific set of affects and creates taxonomies of the ways that they manifest themselves in daily life. Though his thinking is often overly-structured, it is clear from his rhetoric that these ideas provided him with a comparable feeling of liberation from dominant academic discourses. Tomkins felt bogged down by the academic institutionalization of Freudian theory in the 1950s; like Massumi, he craved a theory of human experience that recognized the unpredictability of feeling and the massive influence of affect on daily life, feeling that was informed by, but not totally confined by, the symbolic systems that ruled the work of his peers. Tomkins discusses the small bodily signals that are commonly interpreted as representing some “inner” emotion as existing in a body-mind-mood circuit of feeling that can be described as affect. These physical signs function as feedback signals that motivate the self to improve or maintain the quality of any given situation. At the core of Tomkins’ work is the notion that all people develop and constantly adapt mini-theories, or scripts, to negotiate recognizable patterns of affective experience. Tomkins, however, like Butler in *Bodies That Matter*, carefully distinguishes his theory of scripting from dramaturgical performance (289). Instead of denoting playfulness or set performances, the term “scripts” describes the self-renewing strategies by which people bring their psychological resources to bear on the management of affect (289).

While I do not intend to evaluate Choy’s writing using either Massumi’s or Tomkins’ elaborated affect-based concepts, I summarize the foundation of their work here to contextualize my reading of Jung-Sum’s embodied experiences as in excess of the performative constraints that so clearly determine his sense of gender identity. This is not

to say that his queerness transcends all limits of language or signification. Whereas his strong, powerful masculinity is shown to be the embattled outcome of specific tests, demands, and injunctions that were constantly imposed on him as a young child, Jung-Sum's entry into sexuality is shown to be produced in the dynamic between his startling physical feeling and Poh-Poh's explanations for that feeling. Given Wat's explanation that no convenient language exists in the Chinese diaspora for discussing queer sexuality, we can read Poh-Poh's efforts to provide a Chinese context for Jung-Sum's feeling as also offering him entry into feelings of diasporic belonging. We can, by extension, read Choy's depiction of Poh-Poh's efforts as his own effort to suggest viable terms for such a diasporic sexuality, or at least to demonstrate that such terms can be produced out of traditional epistemologies.

Choy's writing establishes early in Jung-Sum's section that embodied affect and performative identity, queerness and powerful masculinity, can simultaneously co-exist in the same feeling body. In the second chapter of "Jung-Sum, Second Brother," the twelve-year-old narrator walks into the family living room to practice his shadowboxing when Poh-Poh suddenly hints to a friend, Mrs. Lim, that he bears a fundamental difference from the other children in the family. The two women begin to discuss this vague difference as Jung-Sum half-listens, concentrating on his boxing technique and thinking about Joe Louis' fist flying like "a bomb through air" (81). Mrs. Lim, missing Poh-Poh's point, agreeably states that the adopted child's "different blood" makes him "More handsome than [Poh-Poh's] own two grandsons" (81). Poh-Poh clarifies her meaning for Mrs. Lim; she recites an expression that the sun and moon are both round,

but different. Jung-Sum cheerfully interrupts his boxing and their conversation to proclaim that he is “the sun [. . .] the champion!” (82). Poh-Poh quickly contradicts him, however, telling Mrs. Lim that he is “the moon” (82). Both Jung-Sum and Mrs. Lim are surprised. The moon, Jung-Sum explains, is “the *yin* principle, the *female*” (82 org. italics).

This episode marks the text’s first description of Jung-Sum’s queer sexuality. On one hand, the identificatory act illustrates that affect cannot be outside of language, for, at this point in the novel, Jung-Sum has yet to experience any kind of embodied sexual feeling. Poh-Poh’s naming of that sexuality as a *yin* quality of “moon-ness” introduces Jung-Sum’s queerness into their shared reality before he knows it exists. At the same time, the concept of affect is a valuable heuristic for discussing the level of raw, perceptible feeling that is shaped, but not entirely produced by language. Choy does not disclose what embodied signs Poh-Poh interprets in making her prophetic announcement, but as Jung-Sum boxes furiously in the corner, we see that she is not deducing his “moon-ness” from his hyper-masculine gender identity. Her certainty suggests that she has recognized some level of embodied signification that existed despite his own unawareness, signification that prompted her sure identification of that quality. The point of my analysis here is not to engage in a circular argument about whether Jung-Sum’s sexuality is prior to language or whether language calls his sexuality into being, but to suggest that Choy invites readers to conceive of queer sexuality as a property that naturally emerges in diasporic bodies and can be accounted for in traditional Chinese epistemologies.

Choy's introduction of Jung-Sum's queerness to the reader—and to Jung-Sum himself—through a traditional Chinese epistemology signifies against diasporic discourses of white “sexual deviance” and Asian American discourses of racialized “homosexualization.” This is not to say that Poh-Poh's effort to naturalize Jung-Sum's queerness is without its complications. When Poh-Poh identifies Jung-Sum's *yin* quality, her friend Mrs. Lim responds with a cry of “Impossible!” (82). Poh-Poh's declaration may also be confusing to readers who are unsure of how to reconcile Jung-Sum's persistent masculinity with a *yin* sexuality that he translates as a “female” principle; in English, “female” denotes a category of biological sex that is exclusive to the category of the “male” (82). By articulating Jung-Sum's *yin* quality with an extroverted, powerful masculinity, Choy emphasizes that Poh-Poh's definition of his sexuality is in the language and conceptual inventory of a Taoist worldview as opposed to a Western biological discourse. Poh-Poh's decision to vocalize her recognition, because it refuses to sensationalize, pathologize, and reject his “moon” sexuality, performs a diasporic embrace of her adopted grandson.

Poh-Poh's description of Jung-Sum as the “*yin*” invokes a principle of relationality that allows her to reconcile Jung-Sum's same-sex desire and Chinese heritage without compromising his ultra-masculine identity. In “Theorizing Woman: *Funü*, *Guojia*, *Jiating* (Chinese Woman, Chinese State, Chinese Family),” Tani E. Barlow describes the logic of *yin* and *yang* relationality as she investigates the genealogies of *funü* and *nǚxing*, different signs for “woman” that historically produced very different experiences for women living under them. These signs, Barlow explains,

have not signified a consistent overarching idea of “woman” throughout history as much as they have produced competing subject positions that have been inextricably intertwined with oppositional political ideologies (254, 257). While her analysis of women’s subject positions does not directly relate to Jung-Sum’s experiences, Barlow’s description of the *yin* and *yang* elements that shaped women’s identities illuminates how Poh-Poh could read Jung-Sum’s sexuality in a relational field rather than as a fixed identity. Barlow’s emphasis on the fixity of the positions that have been legitimized by these variable forces further underscores the fact that Poh-Poh’s naming of Jung-Sum’s queerness is an act of diasporic improvisation: Poh-Poh retains the traditional paradigm of *yin-yang* relational forces, but varies from tradition by mobilizing them to produce inclusion for her grandson. Drawing on Manfred Porkert’s *The Theoretical Foundations of Chinese Medicine*, Barlow explains:

The forces of yin and yang are many things: logical relationships (like up and down, in and out, husband and wife), practical forces, “designations for the polar aspects of effects,” and in a social sense, powers that inscribe hierarchy (i.e., yang subordinates yin because it encloses the lesser force into itself), but yin/yang is neither as totalistic nor as ontologically binary as the Western stereotype would have it. (258)

Barlow analyzes the work of sixteenth-century physician Li Shichen and works with contemporary theory to conclude that in traditions of Chinese medicine, “What appear as [binary] ‘gender[s]’ are yin/yang differentiated positions: not two anatomical ‘sexes,’ but a profusion of relational, bound, unequal dyads, each signifying difference and

positioning difference [. . .] analogically” (259). Barlow’s explanation of the flexibility that is inherent in the *yin* concept allows us to better understand Choy’s fictionalization of the concept, even if her essay focuses on the ways that such flexibility has, historically, been mobilized in Chinese national politics for the production of calcified identities. Even this emphasis, however, is valuable to my analysis of *The Jade Peony*: Barlow’s emphasis on the political, ideological production of women’s identities throws into relief Choy’s *refusal* to produce a defined queer Chinese Canadian identity for Jung-Sum.²¹

Choy’s text defies heterosexist ideologies that articulate gender, sex, and sexuality by invoking the relational language of *yin* and *yang* to describe the nascent sexual queerness that exists alongside Jung-Sum’s hyper-masculinity. While I have invoked Barlow’s work to contextualize the ontological fluidity suggested in Poh-Poh’s explanation, I will, in the conclusion of this chapter, contextualize Poh-Poh’s explanation in terms of its mythological significance. *The Jade Peony* invites such a reading by emphasizing that a shared trust of Chinese mythology is, initially, the defining dimension of Jung-Sum’s and Poh-Poh’s relationship. Immediately following Poh-Poh’s declaration that Jung-Sum is the “moon,” Jung-Sum remembers the moment when he met Poh-Poh as the first representative from his family-to-be. The association of Poh-Poh with Old China was immediate for the four year-old child who mistook her “cunning” look as evidence that she was the “gut-hungry” Fox Lady about whom his biological mother had once warned him, a demon who “took on many shapes and disguises to ensnare little children for her supper” (83). In the careful negotiations that ensued between the aggressive child and the surprised older woman—who later revealed that she had recognized his

mythologized suspicions—the two slowly gained a deep mutual respect for one another.²² Nothing in the earliest scenes of Jung-Sum's life with the Fox Lady foreshadows their eventual shared understanding about his sexuality, but these memories are significant even as they are comical because they define the relationship as one that mediates Canadian life through traditional Chinese culture and that respects hidden, "other" ways of being. The proximity of the two episodes suggests that Jung-Sum's "recognition" of Poh-Poh's doubled identity can be read as a precursor to the recognition, trust, and acceptance that the two achieve around the emergence of Jung-Sum's yet-to-emerge sexuality.

Choy's earliest representations of queerness in "Jung-Sum, Second Brother" represent the opportunities that diasporans have to draw creatively upon tradition to effect an inclusion of difference within the diaspora. As Jung-Sum approaches the embodied experience of lust for the first time, however, Choy's depiction of same-sex desire begins to resonate with Kim's analysis of the racialized self-loathing in Chin's writing. To return to the discussion that I initiated in earlier sections of this chapter, I argue that Chin's and Choy's representations of sexual queerness, while radically different, overlap in surprising ways. Chin excises queerness from visions of Asian American masculinity as he violently rejects the self which desires the white, racist love that demeans and emasculates Asian American men. Choy, in contrast, embraces queerness as a literal presence in the diaspora. Even in *The Jade Peony*, however, this embrace signifies doubly as a response to racialized exclusion from the mainstream as well as sexualized exclusion from the diaspora. Jung-Sum's nascent desire for Frank Yuen only manifests

itself as sexual feeling after these doppelgangers work through an unexpected ultra-violent confrontation that demands comparison to other discourses of violence and racialized masculinity. Read against Chin's work, Choy's representation of queerness can be interpreted not only as the literal presence of same-sex desiring people in diaspora, but also as the triumph of a racialized Asian Canadian boy over his internalized self-contempt. Whereas Chin's writing seeks to purge anxieties about exclusion from mainstream white culture, Choy's writing, while also addressing institutionalized and mainstream racism in Chinese Canadian history, addresses the spectre of doubled exclusion from racialized white culture and heterosexualized diasporic culture. His representation of queerness, then, is a representation of diasporic love.

Frank Yuen is a lumber-camp labourer and street fighter who, in transition from adolescence to adulthood, is an outcast from both mainstream society and the Chinese Canadian community. He is an exile within a community of exiles. In representing Frank's family life, ruptured as it is by the pressures of unemployment and white institutional prejudice, Choy reconsiders the assumed superiority of heteronormative family units, even in Chinatowns of the early to mid-twentieth century where opportunities for heteronormative family were heavily restricted. Frank's father, Old Yuen, was an abusive, gambling alcoholic whose violent behaviour forced his wife to take their five year-old son and escape to a rooming house for bachelors. Like Jung-Sum, whose own biological family violently collapsed on itself, Frank was moved from house to house as a child; like Jung-Sum, he "never cried" (108). Hearing the detailed rumors about Frank's life from Kiam-Kim and tracking the countless similarities between their

early life experiences, Jung-Sum becomes entranced by the tough young man nearly ten years his senior.

The relationship between Frank and Jung-Sum is initially depicted as a loose association between a social outcast and an adoring neighborhood kid. Jung-Sum knows that Frank only tolerates him because of his older brother. Their relationship eventually takes on a legitimacy of its own, however, after Kiam-Kim is warned by his father and girlfriend not to spend too much time with Frank. Jung-Sum explains conspiratorially to the reader, “No one realized that he [Jung-Sum] still saw Frank Yuen” and “No one realized that [Frank] would take an interest in a thirteen-year-old” (112). The two characters, one an established outsider and one who feels that way, build their relationship through normative masculine violence as Frank buys Jung-Sum his first pair of second-hand boxing gloves, vouches for him at the gym, teaches him dirty fighting tricks, and even takes him out for his birthday to see a night of professional boxing.

One late afternoon, however, their relationship takes on entirely new levels of intimacy and violence that expose the deep self-contempt caused by internalized racism. Jung-Sum encounters Frank after Frank has been drinking. The two come across each other in the otherwise empty Tong assembly hall, and after a brief exchange, Frank sneers, “Let’s see if you can really fight” before punishing the thirteen-year-old with a drawn-out series of punches, slaps, kicks, and taunts (113-116). At first Jung-Sum playfully fights back, but he is quickly filled with fear and shame as the drunken attacks, physical and verbal, escalate. In other parts of his section, Jung-Sum prides himself on the masculine discipline he commands over his affective body. In this moment, however,

his eyes begin to well up with tears. Sensing his own display of vulnerability, he snaps into a state of suspended affect: he is suddenly filled with “a clarity about what to do next” and the “icy resolve” to carry it through (116). Jung-Sum grabs for the knife that Frank carries in an ankle sheath, claws it free, and lunges at Frank’s throat. Frank manages to knock the knife loose by kicking Jung-Sum’s shoulder, but is shocked out of his drunken stupor by the intensity of Jung-Sum’s counter-attack, the ferocity of which is evidenced by the fresh gaping hole in his shirt. The kick sends Jung-Sum plunging into the depths of affect and memory; he falls to the floor, babbling “panic-stricken, in a dialect that [he] had forgotten” as he begs for his long-dead father not to beat him (117). Still stunned himself, Frank kneels down beside Jung-Sum and cradles him, rocking back and forth until both are finally settled. Frank then kisses Jung-Sum once on the forehead and stands up, removing himself from the intimacy that belies his tough persona.

This complex episode challenges Chinese Canadian masculinity in multiple, contradictory ways that are at once intensely personal to the characters and also indicative of the feelings experienced by many Chinese Canadians under an abusive and neglectful Canadian state. Choy signals the diasporic significance of the fight by setting it in an ethnicized public arena, the Tong community assembly hall, where “the walls [are] hung with calligraphy” and where “five-foot porcelain gods of fortune” glare down fiercely (113). The statues come alive at night, Poh-Poh has told Jung-Sum, to protect Tong members and fight back evil spirits (113). By setting the fight in this place of communal gathering, Choy suggests that this is a common diasporic battle: a deeply internalized battle where Chinese Canadian masculinity is forced to defend itself against

the threat of self-loathing in a national culture of exclusion. Fighting so viciously against each other, the doppelgangers Frank and Jung-Sum are each, in essence, fighting that which they have been trained to hate about themselves, almost, like their fathers, to the point of death.

Illuminated by Kim's analysis of Chin's writing, Choy's representation of this life-and-death fight can be read as a battle of Chinese Canadian masculinity against the self that is defined by a legacy of imposed constraint and internalized hatred. Kim writes:

The masculine "redemption" that Chin finds within masochism is located, paradoxically, in the sadistic violence of the self-inflicted blow, in the insistent battering of the self that is always a battering of another. Through this incessant recirculation of fury and wrath, what Chin seeks to lay his hands upon is the thing that most defines manhood in our culture: a "promiscuous violence." (202)

While the battle against the self that Kim describes is recognizable in Choy's representation of the fight, Jung-Sum and Frank's war culminates in a tentative, but mutually freeing reconciliation. The intimacy that is so brutally earned between the two characters is not reducible to either the risks of compromised gender or the possibility of same-sex desire, but signifies as a moment of much-needed human connection that defers the imperatives of gender and the excitement of sexual feeling. The post-fight relationship between Jung-Sum and Frank is not merely a reconciliation between friends. It represents a transcendence from the impossible condition of diasporic exclusion.

Just as Choy assigns diasporic significance to the fight by setting it in the Tong assembly hall, so too does he assign queer diasporic significance to the characters'

reconciliation. Frank is clearly filled with a unique love for Jung-Sum throughout the rest of the novel, a love consistently described in terms of adoring brotherhood. Jung-Sum's attraction to Frank, however, crosses into the homoerotic as Frank, from this point on, becomes sexualized in Jung-Sum's narrative. This aspect of the text advances Choy's project of queering the diaspora by explicitly introducing Jung-Sum's intense physical attraction into the narrative. When Frank releases Jung-Sum after kissing his forehead on the temple floor, Jung-Sum discovers the affective rush of sexual desire:

As I, too, moved to get up, my whole body suddenly lit with an unbidden, shuddering tension; a strange yearning awoke in me, a vivid longing rose relentlessly from the centre of my groin, sensuous and craving, rising until my hands unclenched, throwing me forward, soundlessly, until my fingers tingled and stretched to grope the raw tactile air. (117)

This dizzying cluster of feelings is interrupted by Frank's voice, and when Jung-Sum opens his eyes, he sees Frank, "[standing] in silence above [him], like one of the temple gods" (117). While this perception of godliness conveys the dramatic adoration that characterizes adolescent sexual attraction generally, Choy's earlier description of the porcelain gods' role—of protecting and fighting evil spirits—situates Jung-Sum's attraction firmly within a freshly renewed Chinese Canadian masculine strength. Jung-Sum's desire is not in opposition to Chinese tradition, but is directly produced through a Chinese Canadian crisis and resolution. Recalling Poh-Poh's prior recognition as he walks out of the Tong assembly hall with Frank, Jung-Sum thinks to himself: "*Frank Yuen is the sun* [. . . and] *I am the moon*" (118). As with his representations of Gee

Sook, Choy does not resolve the ambiguity of this chapter-closing insight. Jung-Sum does not elaborate on whether this sun-moon identification represents hope for potential romantic pairing or whether it represents a recognition of fundamental, irreconcilable sexual difference. Even though later scenes suggest that Frank's expressions of love are fraternal, the vagueness of this moment creates a sense of queer possibility between the two that is never totally extinguished by Jung-Sum's narrative.

The first affective impressions that Choy records here rise up from within Jung-Sum's body and spiral outward, but as Jung-Sum closes his eyes, affect becomes a matter of dynamic, sensory exchange with his environment. The outside world blends with inner feeling in waves: he "taste[s] salt," "smell[s] dust," and hears a "roar" that, ambiguously, may be an affective rush or may be a car "gunning" by (117). By locating feeling by feeling the queer longing that articulates with diasporic masculinity, Choy ensures that his representation of queerness cannot be read solely as a triumph over racialized self-loathing. This representation of diasporic love represents an abstract level of affirmation and inclusion, but it is also, decidedly, real queer desire.

Choy's description of Jung-Sum's affective collapse and subsequent entry into desire is the climactic episode in this section of the novel, but Choy once again underscores Poh-Poh's translation of that queer potential into diasporic belonging in the conclusion of "Jung-Sum, Second Brother." The strongest moment of diasporic inclusion that Choy represents between Jung-Sum and Poh-Poh is signified through the image of a jade circlet and occurs just after Jung-Sum's desire for Frank peaks again. Frank enlists in the American army, and at his going-away party, Frank has a few drinks and begins to

clown around. He hugs Jung-Sum, yelling to the crowd, “Hey, all you bastards! This is my Little Brother [. . .]!” as he gives him a “kiss-smack” on the forehead (120). As in the temple, Jung-Sum feels “A warm, sensual shiver start[ing] inside [. . .] rising from [his] groin and threading up [his] spine” (120). Feeling dazed afterwards, Jung-Sum returns to the Chen family home bearing a gift from Frank: an antique pocket watch with a crescent cut-out through which, significantly, a sun and moon take turns rising and falling. Jung-Sum ponders the watch while sitting amidst his family in the parlour, and eventually asks Poh-Poh what else is signified by the moon besides the *yin* force. He relays her answer in a way that summons up memories of his and Poh-Poh’s earliest meeting: “She said the moon was the sign of the dark storyteller. In Old China, this was the one who told of hidden things not seen in the glare of daylight. Moon people *felt* things, as she did, things that others did not name” (123). Jung-Sum’s father shakes his head in displeasure at his mother’s transmission of “Old China nonsense” to her grandchildren, but Poh-Poh continues by retrieving and by unpacking her valuable collection of jade “amulets and charms” for Jung-Sum, Sek-Lung, and Jook-Liang (123). Removing them carefully from their silk envelopes, she holds up a “moon piece” that “glows, pale as a ghost,” and takes Jung-Sum’s hand to run his finger around its edge (123). Clearly speaking in a register that signifies acceptance of his queer sexuality, she explains that “Each piece is different” and, more importantly, that “Each is precious” (123). This jade moon is not a dominant symbol in the text, and is quickly overshadowed by a piece of rare pink jade that is carved with a peony design. With his description of this latter piece, Choy gently distracts the reader’s attention away from Jung-Sum, as the pink peony is both transition to the

next section, “Sek-Lung, Third Brother” and the source of the novel’s title. Despite the dominance of the peony image, Poh-Poh and Jung-Sum’s brief exchange about the jade moon in the midst of the Chen family’s living room certifies her acceptance of his *yin* quality and gives him the sense that his difference, though a variation on the norm, is cherished.

Earlier in this chapter I described how the myth of the Fox Lady mediates Poh-Poh and Jung-Sum’s first meeting and anticipates the continued emphasis on “unseen” doubleness in their relationship. To return to this line of thought here in my closing paragraphs, I would like to flesh out the mythological subtext of Poh-Poh’s moon imagery. Choy’s concise summary of the moon’s significance in the final pages of Jung-Sum’s section does not mention details about Chang’o, a Chinese mythological goddess who is exiled on the moon, but the way he explicitly narrates the details of the Fox Lady figure in “Jung-Sum, Second Brother” and the Monkey Man figure in “Jook-Liang, Only Sister” authorizes my interpretive strategy of bringing this myth to bear on Jung-Sum’s experience. As with any oral mythology, different textual sources tend to offer slightly different explanations of how and why Chang’o gained immortality and floated from earth to live on the moon. The basic gender division upon which the myth of lonely exile turns, however, remains consistent. According to Tao Tao Liu Sanders’ *Dragons, Gods, and Spirits from Chinese Mythology*, the story is set in ancient times when ten suns, all sons of the God of the East, Dijun, circled the earth. One day, instead of taking turns, the ten suns decided to shine on the earth all at the same time. This made the earth uninhabitable for all living things. The Emperor Yao begged for help from the god Dijun,

who in turn summoned the immortal archer-hero Yi and asked him to scare away his misbehaving sons. Yi agreed, but upon descending from heaven and seeing the devastation caused by the suns, he became angry and used his arrows to kill nine of them. As punishment, Dijun banished Yi and his wife, Chang'o, to live as mortals on earth. Unable to adapt to the hardness of life as mortal exiles on earth, Yi eventually approached a powerful goddess, the Queen Mother of the West, to plead his case. Moved by his plight, the goddess gave Yi an elixir of immortality. The elixir was only powerful enough to restore full heavenly status to one of the two, she explained, but shared, the elixir would allow Yi and Chang'o to live together on earth forever. Yi happily brought the elixir home to share with his wife, and quickly left again to hunt for a celebration feast. Chang'o, however, had remained resentful that her husband's rash arrogance had led to her banishment from heaven, and she consumed all of the elixir herself. As Chang'o floated homeward to heaven, she became fearful of the gods' reaction to her theft, and she decided instead to go to the uninhabited moon where she has lived in isolation ever since. While some versions of the myth describe her as "imprisoned" on the moon, Sanders writes, "it is kinder to think of her living there in solitary glory, looking down for ever at the earth she had chosen to leave behind" (Sanders 25-32).

Because this myth is not internal to *The Jade Peony* as much as an inter-textual referent, it does not map directly onto Jung-Sum in the same way the Fox Lady and the Monkey Man are explicitly invoked for other characters. Nonetheless, I see this myth as creating an opportunity to reflect on Choy's representation of sexual queerness and hyper-masculine gender in *The Jade Peony*. A comparison between Chang'o, the woman

whose face still appears on the moon, and Jung-Sum, the character whose sense of diasporic belonging is made possible by the moon metaphor, offers insight into Choy's representation of Jung-Sum's predicament. Such a comparison must not project a common femininity between Chang'o and Jung-Sum, but must recognize a common rejection of the ultra-violent masculinity that might appear desirable under exilic conditions. It takes little imagination to think of Chang'o's consumption of the elixir as treacherous and unfaithful; but should she alone be blamed for her transgressions? Because of her husband's incapacity to control his violent ways, the goddess endured a doubled exile: first to the uncompromising hardness of the earth, then to the cold isolation of the moon. By focusing on this detail, we can read the myth of Yi and Chang'o as speaking to the crisis of racialized masculinity and diasporic queerness that is the core tension of the central section of *The Jade Peony*. As a queer Chinese Canadian in the 1930s and 1940s, Jung-Sum also faces the threat of a doubled exile. And while his condition is not directly caused by the foolishness of a violent masculinity as is Chang'o's condition, he is certainly at risk of succumbing to such a domineering masculinity because of the expectations that are placed upon him. Poh-Poh's metaphor of the moon offers Jung-Sum comfort, but the full myth of Chang'o reminds us that Jung-Sum's life "on the moon" might also be lonely. At the same time, the myth insists, it is preferable to the realm of violent masculinity.²³ Earlier in this chapter I quoted a question posed by King-Kok Cheung: "Is it not possible for Chinese American men to recover a cultural space without denigrating or erasing 'the feminine'?" *The Jade Peony* implicitly asks a related question: is it not possible for Chinese Canadian men to recover a cultural

space without denigrating or erasing “the queer”? Choy’s decision to send Jung-Sum “to the moon,” I argue, answers both questions in the affirmative.

The Twilight of Memory & Performative Resistance in Selvadurai's *Funny Boy*

Collective displacement is represented only indirectly in Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy*, but a diasporic outlook structures this novel's queering of feeling, memory, desire, and collective belonging. As one of many South Asian Canadian writers who concentrate on migration and trauma, Selvadurai can be considered a member of what James Clifford describes in "Diasporas" as those "interpretive communities where critical alternatives [to systematic social injustices] can be expressed" (261). In *Funny Boy*, this diasporic critical potential is exercised as the text invites a critique of the legal and social discourses that target sexualities, genders, and ethnicities in Sri Lanka. Even as I uphold the potential for critique that Clifford perceives in the diaspora concept, however, I would add that attention to "interpretive" and "expressive" signifying acts can be blended with attention to affective feeling to create new possibilities for resistance to structured exclusions.²⁴

Theorists who analyze discursive identity regulation and theorists who study embodied affect undertake different routes in their search for agency that does not rely on cultural norms. Queer theorists such as Judith Butler understand identity to be an effect of gender, sex, and other regulating discourses, an effect that allows humans to become socially intelligible only insofar as they comply with the norms that structure the flow of power in culture. Taking into consideration the discursive-regulative pressures that Butler identifies, I read *Funny Boy* as a resistant text which queers the sex-gender norms and ethnocentric attitudes that are encoded in diasporic narratives of origin and nationalist visions of belonging. At the same time, my analysis of the text also recognizes that sex,

gender, and diasporic experiences are not felt as discrete discourses, or as “discourses” at all. In this vein, I read *Funny Boy* as emphasizing the common affective experiences that merge different kinds of dislocation at the level of feeling in the protagonist’s life. *Funny Boy* illustrates that the feeling body is the medium through which diasporic and sex-gender forces dominate human behaviour, but also emphasizes that it is a medium in which hope is produced.

My analysis of *Funny Boy*’s intervention into oppressive normative ideologies depends on the concept of critical nostalgic narrative that I established in the introduction to this dissertation. *Funny Boy*’s Arjie Chelvaratnam, who serves as the adult narrator and the young protagonist of the text, looks back on his Sri Lankan childhood from a Canadian setting. He describes his transition from childhood to adolescence by narrating a series of memories that naturalize his experiences with transgender play and his emergence into queer sexuality in a Sri Lankan landscape. Even as Arjie takes up a nostalgic rhetoric to structure his outlook as narrator, however, he undermines notions of sweet sentimentality by detailing the harsh punishments that he suffered at the hands of his parents and peers for his queerness. His nostalgic recollection of home is also undercut by his description of the sharply escalated tensions between Sinhalese and Tamil communities, tensions that culminate in the symbolic and literal destruction of his home. The novel sustains a contradiction between sentimental narrative and realistic political content that signifies with a powerful irony. Its critical nostalgic perspective conveys the narrator’s genuine longing for a distant home; at the same time, it evidences an ironic awareness that such longing can be marshalled for ideological, persuasive ends.

Selvadurai exploits that potential to launch a counter-discursive defense against heterosexism and the logic of ethnic communalism. To track the novel's production of ironic critical potential, I will differentiate between adult Arjie the narrator and young Arjie the protagonist throughout this chapter even though the novel explicitly references this distinction only once.

The opening scene of *Funny Boy* plunges the reader directly into the life of Arjie-the-protagonist's Sri Lankan setting, but Arjie-the-narrator intrudes on the plot a few pages later to establish that the events are narrated from an adult perspective in Canada. This explicit distinction introduces the ongoing tension between the naïvety of Arjie-the-protagonist and the distant maturity of Arjie-the-narrator that constitutes the novel's diasporic perspective. While it remains possible to argue that young Arjie simply is a naïve character, my reading—aware as it is that adult Arjie is the narrator—suggests that adult Arjie over-exaggerates his own naïvety in remembering his youth. As he identifies his Canadian vantage point, adult Arjie evokes a tone of lament that summons up the kind of blissful and pained nostalgia that produces false recollections and that usurps real memory. Young Arjie, however, disputes the value of such longing in an episode midway through the novel when he explicitly rejects literature that offers a nostalgic vision of the British schoolboy experience. Young Arjie is forced to recite the two poems at a school assembly, but he decisively rejects the texts on the grounds that, in destroying real memory, they breed complicity in everyone who overlooks the fact that the school is run by bullies. *Funny Boy* culminates in the emphatic shattering of young Arjie's naïvety and the disappearance of adult Arjie's narrating voice in the epilogue. This stylistic shift

contrasts the suspect nature of sentimental narrative with the pressing need for historical and political awareness. The epilogue's form, written as young Arjie's diary, embodies urgency, immediacy, and indeterminacy to reflect the intensity of feeling that is so different from nostalgic recollection. The novel concludes with Arjie in a suspended state of heightened affect, so we do not see him achieving the maturity that is conventional in the genre of the *bildungsroman*. The sense of rupture that is created, paradoxically, in the epilogue reinforces the mature diasporan's capacity for testifying to uncomfortable social truths from a displaced perspective.

Affect theorists Brian Massumi and Silvan Tomkins both describe the human capacity for embodied feeling in such a way that they theorize agency without foregrounding the idea of agency *against*. Massumi's work centres on a concept of "potential" and Tomkins' on the concept of "motivation," and I read both of these approaches as describing a kind of embodied hope that finds voice in both diasporic and queer theoretical politics. Neither of these theorists writes about either of these politics, but both theorists describe their versions of affective hope as the body's tendency to manufacture possibilities for change through the media of the senses. In *Parables of the Virtual*, Massumi deliberately seeks an alternative to postmodern theories of performative agency by grounding the abstract concept "potential" in an always-in-motion, self-referential sensory body whose sensations are "always doubled by the feeling of having a feeling" (13). Massumi writes that our fundamental inclination towards change is created by the sensory economy of the body as it encounters and creates possibilities for thinking-

feeling-acting at a rate that conscious reflection, language production, and even physical action cannot match.

Massumi writes that while social constructionists like Butler focus on how the body signifies or makes sense in discourse, they tend to gloss over the fact that the body constantly senses, and in sensing, feeling, and registering—in short, in being affected—has an ever-present opportunity to affect in kind (2). He demonstrates that neither the corporeal body nor the mind ever exhausts the incorporeal potential created by physiological systems of feeling. In making this point, Massumi distinguishes between “possibility” and “potential.” He thinks of “possibility” as a specific variation on the norm, a variation that is “*implicit in* what a thing can be said to be when it is on target” (9). His concept of “potential,” however, is more generalized; “potential” is “the *immanence* of a thing to its still indeterminate variation” (9 org. italics). I read this distinction as the difference between specific strategies for social change, as are evident in identity politics, and a generalized capacity for hope that is a necessary precondition for feeling that social change is possible. I do not dismiss the former even as, in this chapter, I argue that *Funny Boy* asks us to dwell on the latter. The difference between what Massumi describes as “possibility” and what he describes as “potential” is not a binary opposition in which the two terms are exclusive to one another. To understand our drive for sustainable real social change, we must become alert to the fact that our bodies incessantly search out opportunities for improvement. By realizing that we are always in this condition, we shake ourselves free from the illusory fixity produced by cultural norms and dominant discourses.²⁵

Silvan Tomkins also focuses on the tangible-intangible production of potential change by writing that affect is the primary source of human motivation, the medium in which people are driven to improve the quality of their situations at any given time. He does not use the language of “hope” to describe this effect, but I liken his theory of motivation to Massumi’s theory of potential in that both describe human bodies as evaluating the present to achieve a better condition. Tomkins describes the body as constantly sensing its environment or monitoring its own status, amplifying those feelings as it reacts to physiological sensations, and communicating those doubled-over reactions to itself and others through innate physiological signs and learned codes.²⁶ Affect is not, Tomkins stresses in “Modifications in the Theory—1978,” an expression of distinct emotion or an inner state expressed outwardly, but is a precognitive phenomenon of raw, urgent feeling that is produced and amplified by the body (90).²⁷ Although the physical mechanisms of affect are basically the same from one person to the next, Tomkins suggests, experiences and expressions of affect are not universal. He points out that affect is regulated by social norms that govern our bodies (94). He writes, for instance: “No societies encourage or permit each individual to cry out in rage or excitement, or distress, or terror, whenever and wherever he or she wishes. Very early on, strict control over affect expression is instituted and such control is exerted particularly over the voice in general, whether used in speech or in direct affect expression” (93). Working in a literary form, Selvadurai is able to represent the cultural management of affect in a way that details the consequences for feeling bodies in a way that is overlooked in performative models of resistance that focus on the discursive codification of bodies.

There is, of course, an inherent difficulty in searching out traces of affect in *Funny Boy*. Selvadurai does not portray the physiological signs of characters' feeling in his novel as much as he describes their conscious emotions, and, as Tomkins and Massumi emphasize, emotions are not affects. The benefit of affect theory to my analysis in this chapter is that it helps me think through the flexible connections that Selvadurai structures between otherwise unrelated scenes in *Funny Boy*. These affective connections allow him to avoid the illusion of certainty that is conveyed by identity categories while resisting the oppressive forces that act upon the feeling body. Massumi's and Tomkins' faith in the affective production of embodied hope inspires me to read Selvadurai's text as exploiting the unpredictability, uncertainty, and illogicality of feeling. He exploits these qualities to create connections between scenes of sex-gender and diasporic exclusion, connections that produce a generalized hope for social improvement even as they enable intervention into specific discursive oppressions.

Rather than trace specific affects, this chapter borrows from affect theory to describe the novel's structural logic and the means by which it undermines the discursive production of identity as it challenges social hierarchies. In a review of *Funny Boy*, June Unjoo Yang observes that the six interconnected stories that constitute the novel are "full of symmetries, subplots, [and] parallel structures." But how do these complex layers signify? I suggest that early scenes in *Funny Boy* anticipate subsequent scenes by following a literary structure that is akin to what Tomkins calls "affect magnification" or "magnification advantage." Affects are urgent, fleeting impulses that easily command the attention of our bodies and minds, Tomkins explains, so we develop "minitheories" or

“scripts” to bring a degree of efficiency to our evaluation and reponse to affect. The concept of magnification describes the ordering process whereby, “Through memory, thought, and imagination, scenes experienced before can be co-assembled with scenes presently experienced, together with scenes anticipated in the future” (315). Key to the concept of magnification is that these ordering processes are themselves subject to the production of fresh affect, and so can never achieve total finality or stability. Tomkins’ principle here enables me to conceptualize *Funny Boy*’s narrative flow as a process of magnification, a narrative flow whose ordering signifies something more than what can be signified by the scenes in isolation.

The value of this interpretation is its capacity to explain relationships between scenes of otherwise-unrelated “funniness.” As Arjie’s family accuses him of being “funny” time and time again, they collapse gender, biological sex, sexuality, and random behaviour into such a generalized queerness that he eventually recognizes their accusations as an effort to wield power rather than a recognition of an innate essence within himself. Through Arjie’s curious young mind, Selvadurai teases out the inconsistencies in the traits and behaviours that are wrangled together under heteronormative ideologies. Arjie’s early experiences of transgender play, his love of reading, and his later ventures into same-sex activity are linked by accusations of queerness and his objections to the accusations. There is not, however, a gay evolutionary principle at work in these episodes even though Selvadurai’s use of the *bildungsroman* genre frames the plot as one that moves from childhood towards maturation. Arjie’s young transgender play is not the cause of his love of reading, and his love of reading is

not a symptom of an essence that eventually manifests itself as same-sex desire. I make this distinction because even some sympathetic literary critics interpret Arjie's childish transgender play in the first story, "Pigs Can't Fly," as an early sign of the adolescent same-sex desire that occurs in the last full story, "The Best School of All."²⁸ Attention to affective connections that join formative experiences in Arjie's life, however, allow us to discuss the relationships that link these episodes together even as the text strives to undo the confluences of sex, gender, and sexuality that take place in heteronormative prejudice.

Before concentrating on the affective links between stories, I would like to elaborate on the diasporic premise of the novel by describing Selvadurai's critical, ironic nostalgia in more depth. When *Funny Boy*'s narrator establishes his adult perspective in the early pages of the first story, he appears to indulge the kind of nostalgic sentiment that does not convey affect, but suffocates real feeling with romantic convention. The moment when he identifies his setting as Canadian is brief, but stands out because it is the only time in the novel when Arjie-the-narrator overtly interrupts the plot with his adult voice. Arjie evinces no attachment to his Canadian setting as he reminisces about childhood "spend-the-days" at his grandparents' house in Sri Lanka, monthly visits he enjoyed with all of his cousins as a boy (5). Arjie signals that the ensuing narrative of events will be romanticized: "Those spend-the-days, the remembered innocence of childhood, are now coloured in the hues of the twilight sky. It is a picture made even more sentimental by the loss of all that was associated with them. By all of us having to leave Sri Lanka years later because of communal violence and forge a new home for ourselves in Canada" (5). Though Arjie appears as a child throughout the rest of the

novel, this moment establishes that an adult persona is narrating the stories. This adult character is not rounded out, but his lament for his ruined homeland and his apparent ambivalence for his host-land tell readers that his outlook has been defined by displacement in a lasting way.

As the introduction to my dissertation shows at length, diaspora theorists often consider origin-narratives to be a defining quality of diasporic identity even though such narratives often belie, or falsely homogenize, the many tensions and differences that exist in any collectivity. Vijay Mishra, for instance, describes the traumatized-idealized homeland as a central referent that enables collectivity in “The Diasporic Imaginary: Theorizing the Indian Diaspora.” He writes that “The fantasy of the homeland is [. . .] linked, in the case of the diaspora, to that recollected moment when diasporic subjects feel they were wrenched from their mother(father)land” (423). The ruined homeland, whether it is conceived of as an ethnicized primordial territory or a fractured nation-state, figures as the primary object of diasporic desire that, in being shared, has a bonding function for those who have been displaced.

Beyond uniting members, however, such narratives can also impose social hierarchies while distorting the complex realities of the lost home. In *Scandalous Bodies: Diasporic Literature in English Canada*, Smaro Kamboureli suggests that the narrative of the ancestral homeland can obfuscate origins by serving as “an allegory of values that are [. . .] commemorated while the historical and social contingencies informing them are ignored” (135). Mishra makes a similar point when he describes xenophobic values specifically, writing that origin narratives can reinforce racialized identities by regulating

sexual practices. He writes: “diasporas very often construct racist fictions of purity as a kind of [. . .] pleasure around which anti-miscegenation narratives of homelands are constructed against the reality of the homelands themselves” (423). Mishra’s argument suggests that origin narratives function as regulative apparatus in displacement, as discourses that use myths of racial purity to define what are appropriate and what are unthinkable objects of desire for diasporic subjects. Building on Kamboureli’s and Mishra’s insights, I would argue that prejudices against queer sexualities and genders are also encoded in many diasporic narratives of home. Though the narrator of *Funny Boy* invokes a nostalgic mode when he introduces his Canadian position, he balances his evocation of blissful innocence with a resistance to sentimental amnesia as he remembers the early stages of his nascent queerness and subsequent experiences of loss and desire. Selvadurai employs the nostalgic mode to structure *Funny Boy* around feelings of innocent joy and sad longing, but queers the conventional object of joy and longing.

When Arjie longs for joyful, idyllic origins in the novel’s first story, he longs for the freedom and innocence of seven-year-old transgender play. In “Pigs Can’t Fly,” he lovingly recalls dressing in a sari and make-up every “spend-the-day” to lead his girl cousins in the game of “bride-bride.” Selvadurai undertakes extensive descriptions of Arjie’s dressing rituals, meticulous transformations that enable Arjie “to leave the constraints of [his] self and ascend into another, more brilliant, more beautiful self [. . .] a graceful, benevolent, perfect being upon whom the adoring eyes of the world rested” (4-5). Arjie’s mimicry of feminine social norms calls to mind Judith Butler’s work on performative identity and power. Butler argues that the fusion of gender identities, sexual

practices, and biological sex categories creates fixed identities that are organized according to categories of what is natural and what is morally, psychologically, and scientifically deviant. She argues the point in several texts, most recently in *Undoing Gender*, that this division is manifest in culture as the difference between social coherence and unintelligibility, between being recognized as “human” or as “loathsome” other (2-3). Butler argues that although individuals cannot simply excuse themselves from the rules of heteronormative discourse, they can exercise degrees of agency within restrictive systems of gender normativity by undertaking strategies of deliberate mis-performance or by capitalizing on the inadvertent mis-performances that inevitably occur even in sincere efforts to recite gender and sex norms. Arjie’s transgender play in *Funny Boy* signifies on both levels: as a seven-year-old protagonist, Arjie feels that his transgender play is a natural way of accessing a “more beautiful self”; there is a distinct sincerity in his efforts to emulate glamorous femininity even as he is aware that this is the realm of fantasy. He enthusiastically takes up the standards of dominant feminine beauty because he feels that they are deeply rewarding. For him, it is only a matter of bad luck that these standards are, he finds out roughly, the “wrong” standards for his male sex.

At the same time, Arjie-the-narrator emphasizes the threat that this performance issues to his family. Though young Arjie is initially oblivious to the consequences of his play, the episode echoes Butler’s explanation of drag in *Undoing Gender* when she writes: “The point about drag is not simply to produce a pleasurable and subversive spectacle but to allegorize the spectacular and consequential ways in which reality is both reproduced and contested” (218). Arjie’s contestation of power might be inadvertent, but

it is real. His parents shame him in front of his aunts, uncles, and cousins; after those measures fail to kill his transgender desire, they directly prohibit Arjie's participation in "bride-bride" and try to salvage his masculinity by forcing him to play cricket with his boy cousins, which, they agree, would constitute a correct performance of gender. Arjie defies both injunctions, and as a result is imprisoned in Ammachi's house in subsequent visits where he polishes furniture under the watchful eye and threatening cane of his grandmother.

To the seven-year-old character, sulky and repeated resistance to gender norms is an instinctive reaction to the rude interruption of his feminine play. Recalled in the context of displacement, however, adult Arjie describes his childhood subjection to gender regulations in a way that anticipates his adolescent experience of diasporic expulsion. Just after describing himself as displaced to Canada, adult Arjie introduces the prohibition of the "bride-bride" game as "mark[ing] the beginning of [. . .] exile from the world he loved" (5). In their respective essays, Gayatri Gopinath and R. Raj Rao also point out that Arjie connects his initial transgender and final diasporic loss for readers by using the language and imagery of "territories" to narrate his parents' prohibition of his transgender play. As Arjie explains:

Territorially, the area around my grandparents's house was divided into two. The front garden, the road, and the field that lay in front of the house belonged to the boys [. . .] The second territory was called "the girls," included in which, however, was myself, a boy. It was to this territory of "the girls," confined to the back garden and the kitchen porch, that I seemed to have gravitated naturally, my

earliest memories of those spend-the-days always belonging in the back garden of my grandparents' home. (3)

Adult Arjie continues the suggestive connection between gender prohibition and diasporic exile in "Pigs Can't Fly" by remembering himself running away from both territories when he is punished for his queer transgression. He remembers crossing the border of the local railway lines to get to the beach, which was, he explains, as foreign to him as "an unknown country into which [he] had journeyed by chance" (39). Though Young Arjie's transgender desire withers over the next few stories, the torn feeling he endures in this story stands as the affective prototype for subsequent events in the text and, ultimately, for the "twilight hues" of diasporic longing that characterize the narrator's introduction of himself in Canada.

The connection I describe here can be read as a confrontational act of metaphor-making in that it puts the dissimilar categories of transgender and diasporic experience into contact. At the same time, the relationship between queer and diasporic experience is not fully reducible to metaphor. Arjie's eventual diasporic alienation is not just comparable to his nascent experiences of queer exclusion, it is an affective extension of it. If the novel is considered as a linear plot that leads from childhood through to his early adolescence, Arjie's early experiences of gender regulation foreshadow his eventual diasporic loss. If the novel is considered in light of its total narrative framework, however, in which diasporic exclusion is the precondition of the narrator's perspective, the ambiguous uncertainty of gender exclusion can be recognized as the same feeling that becomes intensified in diasporic expulsion. Actual diasporic expulsion is a discrete,

intense episode that occurs at the very end of *Funny Boy*, but through repeated representations of uncertainty and possibility, Selvadurai reveals the connections between queer and diasporic experiences as mutually formative. As a result, Selvadurai does not merely establish a metaphorical similarity between disparate things, but establishes that they are of the same affective category of experience. “Pigs Can’t Fly” not only insists that funniness is a part of Sri Lankan-ness sociologically, but also that it is, in Arjie’s case, a defining element of the diasporic condition affectively. By merging queer and diasporic feeling, Selvadurai undermines the authority of diasporic discourses that represent queerness as foreign to South Asian homelands and creates an opening for non-queer readers to identify with the feeling of being queered.

The edenic, feminine realm of Ammachi’s back garden is irretrievably spoiled by the end of “Pigs Can’t Fly,” but another idyllic scene emerges in “See No Evil, Hear No Evil,” *Funny Boy*’s third story. In this story, Arjie again recalls queer pleasures against a lush Sri Lankan setting when his adulterous mother and her lover bring him along to a countryside bungalow. Whereas Arjie’s original paradise was contained in Ammachi’s secluded back garden, this second paradise offers him the sense of expansive, colonial privilege. He describes the view from the verandah: “The garden was beautiful, with triangular and circular flower beds that contained an assortment of flowers which grew only in the hills. The garden bordered on a tea estate and, for miles below us, we could see, like a green carpet, the tidy foliage of the tea bushes” (114). Because he is only twelve years old, Arjie sees the manicured landscape as if it were arranged only for him, a perception that evidences his ignorance about his upper-middle class position. While

this classed aspect of his nostalgic vision soon begins to erode, it is, at this point, a happy fact of his idyllic perception. Life at the bungalow is good: “Daryl Uncle made me laugh a lot and usually included me in their conversations with Amma. Also, Amma was happier than I ever remembered her being and this made her even more kind and loving towards me” (117).

This story centres on a heterosexual family arrangement consisting of a man, woman, and child. The child is, of course, Arjie, and the woman is Amma, his mother. The arrangement takes on a quality of funniness, however, in that the man is not Arjie’s father, but Daryl Uncle, a Burgher who returns as a journalist to Sri Lanka from Australia to investigate police and governmental corruption; Daryl Uncle is also, significantly, Amma’s former lover. Arjie’s father, Appa, is abroad on business when Daryl Uncle starts to visit, and because Arjie is at home, sick with hepatitis, he becomes a silent accomplice when Daryl Uncle and Amma revive their affair. Arjie’s complicity is deepened when Amma rents a bungalow in the beautiful countryside, ostensibly for Arjie’s health, but also to obtain romantic privacy for herself and Daryl Uncle.

Amma and Daryl Uncle’s illicit relationship does not involve same-sex or transgender desire, but Arjie feels it as funny when he notices that it inspires great shame in Arjie’s aunts and siblings, the same kind of shame that Arjie’s transgender play caused in his parents and family. This story thus magnifies “Pigs Can’t Fly” by elaborating on Arjie’s queer experiences of interest, excitement, and shame while challenging the discourse of sex-gender perversity to which Arjie had been subjected earlier in the novel. It is the heaviness of shame that drives Amma, Arjie, and Daryl Uncle to temporarily

relocate to the glorious countryside, citing Arjie's poor health as an alibi. Their alternative family arrangement is also coded as funny in that its success hinges on the quasi-queer point of connection between Daryl Uncle and Arjie. The two do not share any same-sex or transgender experiences, and the fact that their quasi-queer relationship is predicated on ambiguous funniness says more about the arbitrary, incoherent nature of sexual prejudice than it does about either of the two characters. Specifically, their point of connection is a shared enjoyment of reading. Before Arjie's father leaves Sri Lanka to advertise his hotel to European investors, he invites his children to submit requests for presents. When Arjie asks for the sequels to *Little Women*, however, Appa refuses, calling it "a girl's book, a book that twelve-year-old boys should not be reading" (109). Appa declares an aversion to this particular book and in the next story goes so far as to cite the very act of reading as one of Arjie's queer "tendencies" (166). Daryl Uncle, in contrast, not only recommends *Good Wives*, *Little Men*, and *Jo's Boys* to Arjie, but connects with Arjie by buying them and reading them aloud as Arjie lies sick in bed. Their relationship is mediated through the world of *Little Women* for the rest of the story, as when Arjie repeatedly dreams that he, his mother, and aunts are sisters from the novels while Daryl Uncle is the boy next door (118-19, 134, 138-39, 153).

"See No Evil, Hear No Evil" counters the shaming effects and muddled reasoning of sexual prejudice by provoking uncertainties about what can be considered funny. Is Amma's adulterous but heterosexual relationship funny? Can a non-sexual act such as reading be inherently queer? Is reading through a different gender identity an act of transgender imagination, or reading through a different sexuality an act of queer desire?

Whereas “Pigs Can’t Fly” carries a confrontational quality by portraying bold transgender crossing in its nostalgic vision of home, “See No Evil, Hear No Evil” dwells in uncertainty by depicting Arjie as a young character who is too old for girlish “dress-up” but too young for conscious sexual feeling. In light of previous stories, it seems possible that Arjie identifies with the characters in *Little Women* because he sees himself as capable of embodying the feminine ideal, but Selvadurai retains a degree of ambiguity here in that the bed-ridden Arjie, when he initially dreams he is a “little woman,” identifies with “Beth, the sick one” (119). Does Arjie see himself as Beth because she is a woman or because she is, like him, ill? This minor ambivalence takes on greater significance when considered metafictionally. If connecting affectively to a “different” character is an inevitable part of reading, then is Appa right, and is reading itself funny? What does that say about the reader reading about, and presumably, forging affective connections with Arjie in *Funny Boy*? By raising these unanswered, and perhaps unanswerable questions in this story, Selvadurai entangles the reader in questions about the feeling-connections that precede distinct identities and gender-specific desires. Such ambiguities do not have the power to obliterate our identities, but they do gesture to a deferral or suspension of identity that takes place in reading that can result in changes to the way we inhabit our sense of self and sense of “other.”

The ambiguities about queerness that Arjie opens in this story are overshadowed by the crises of a nation-state when Daryl Uncle vanishes while investigating police and governmental corruption. As it begins to expose the fissures in Sri Lanka’s public sphere, Arjie’s diasporic perspective begins to offer a distanced clarity rather than a deluded

revisioning of home. His pastoral vision of Sri Lanka erodes significantly when he and his mother undertake a futile search for her lover. The sense of security and entitlement that has shaped Arjie's vision of the landscape is unsettled as he and Amma are threatened at the police station, dissuaded at the office of a cynical civil rights lawyer, and attacked in a village. As in "Pigs Can't Fly," Arjie struggles to reconcile his new understanding of the world with naïve perceptions of his environs. After being stoned in the village, he reflects: "I leaned back in my seat and looked at the view in front of me, the clear blue sky, the mist-capped mountains, and thought how out of place their beauty and serenity seemed" (149). Though twelve-year-old Arjie has not yet come to terms with the hypocrisy and abusive tendencies of the powerful figures around him, it becomes increasingly clear that his innocence is disintegrating, that the narrator's initial claim to originary innocence is a point from which necessary growth happens rather than a timeless vision of idyllic origins. When Daryl Uncle is found dead, Arjie remembers how he had once described police torture to them, "how the victims were hung upside down and made to breathe chili fumes, how honey was spread over their bodies and red ants allowed to eat at them" (126). Arjie and his mother had not believed him when he offered the description because such acts are never reported in the press; after his scarred body is found, however, they know the stories are true (110). By depicting the moral failures of the media, the government, and the police, Arjie-the-narrator undercuts the airy sentimentality of his earlier tone and creates a context for the Tamil terrorism and Sinhalese mob violence that eventually erupt in the glorious landscape of the narrator's homeland.

Human rights abuses in Sri Lanka include sexualized violence as well as ethnicized violence, and the fact that Selvadurai is able to openly critique them in *Funny Boy* is a function of his diasporic position. Chelva Kanaganayakam draws attention to the critical potential that is created through diasporic distancing in “Labels, Lives and the Poetics of Inclusion” where he observes: “Selvadurai’s writing is about ethnic strife and sexual politics, and neither one is likely to have found expression that readily in a Sri Lankan context. To be able to write about such issues with honesty requires the perspective and security of exile” (xiv-xv). Selvadurai echoes this sentiment in “Introducing Myself in the Diaspora,” the introduction to a 2004 collection that he edited called *Story-Wallah! A Celebration of South Asian Fiction*. Reflecting on South Asian sexual politics, he writes: “Homosexuality is illegal in Sri Lanka and the very real threat of physical violence and intimidation might have stopped me from exploring this theme had I lived there. [. . .] My thoughts and attitudes, indeed my craft as a writer, have been shaped by my life here in Canada” (2). Reflecting on ethnic conflict and diasporic dislocation, he writes that “the growing violence [in Sri Lanka], the spilling over of that violence into our lives [. . .] did not disturb that sense of who I was,” but rather it was “the arrival in Canada that shook it” (3). This diasporic “shaking” effect, the feeling-insight of physical and cultural distancing, is not the effect of a new nationalist perspective coming to dominate a past one. It is a condition of relationality between cultures in which the intensity of embodied affect is sharpened by the experience of physical-cultural disorientation.²⁹

Lest the concept of “diaspora” become superficially over-idealized, I must also note that Sri Lanka’s laws against same-sex activity are themselves the product of diasporic migration and globalized culture. Although the term “diaspora” is most commonly used to describe the historical displacement of Jewish communities, Robin Cohen explains that the term—literally meaning to scatter around or sow over—originally described the colonial endeavours of ancient Greek populations (*Global Diasporas* ix, 177).³⁰ Given this understanding of the term, British diasporic migration to South Asia can be identified as the root of Sri Lanka’s modern prohibition against same-sex activity.³¹ The current Sri Lankan law states in Section 365A:

Any person who, in public or private, commits, or is a party to the commission of, or procures or attempts to procure the commission by any person of any act of gross indecency with another person, shall be guilty of an offence and shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years or with a fine, or with both and where the offence is committed by a person over eighteen (18) years of age in respect of any person under sixteen (16) years of age shall be punished with rigorous imprisonment for a term not less than 10 years and not exceeding 20 years and with a fine and shall also be ordered to pay compensation of an amount determined by court to the person in respect of whom the offence was committed for the injuries caused to such a person.

(“Sexual Offences Laws—Sri Lanka”)

The legacy of British colonialism is apparent when the language of Sri Lanka’s contemporary law is revealed as identical to Britain’s now-repealed Labouchère

Amendement of 1885. The British law stated: “Any male person who, in public or private, commits, or is a party to the commission of, or procures, or attempts to procure the commission by any male person of, any act of gross indecency shall be guilty of misdemeanour, and being convicted thereof shall be liable at the discretion of the court to be imprisoned for any term not exceeding two years, with or without hard labour” (Weeks 14). The uniformity of the language in the two laws reveals an important point about the articulation of diaspora and queer studies generally. Texts that intervene in sex-gender politics from a transnational perspective offer an entry point for discussing the slippages and inconsistencies between nation-states’ regulation of sexual identity, even when the nations naturalized heterosexuality as good citizenship in exactly the same way at different points in history.

By tracing the transnational histories of sexual legislation in my reading of *Funny Boy*, I suggest that heteronormative citizenship can be recognized as a foreign, colonial concept rather than a fact of organic South Asian peoplehood. My point here speaks to the South Asian diasporic outlook that produces homosexuality as a distasteful by-product of displacement to the West. Rakesh Ratti identifies this prejudice in his introduction to *A Lotus of Another Color*, writing that “[displaced] South Asian communities are often uncomfortable with our [queer] presence and try to pass off homosexuality as a trait foreign to our native lands” (13). In the same collection, Nayan Shah echoes this observation in “Sexuality, Identity, and the Uses of History” while writing about diasporic loyalty to homeland values. Shah writes: “The conservative ideologies of heterosexist South Asians [in South Asian countries] equate queer

sexualities with an already well-defined yet adaptable arsenal of ‘Western evils’—divorce, drinking alcohol, eating meat, or drug abuse” (199). South Asian emigrants are under a good deal of pressure to endorse this stance, the essay argues, because, in exile, they are already “unceasingly chastised for shedding their ‘culture’ and acquiring the degenerate and destructive values of white societies” (119). To counter charges that same-sex desire results from contact with “the destructive values of white societies,” these and other contributors to *A Lotus of Another Color* work with historical and religious texts and experiment with poetic imagery to tease out the traces of queer presence in ancient South Asian histories as a way of naturalizing queer acts in those regions. By keeping the focus on Arjie’s youth in Sri Lanka instead of his experiences in Canada, *Funny Boy* similarly insists that Arjie’s queerness is not acquired from the influence of foreign corruption, but is a natural part of life in his homeland.

By making this point I risk implying that Sri Lankan and other South Asian anti-same-sex laws are anachronisms, straggling leftovers from an earlier era of transplanted European medical, religious, and colonial ideologies. In the case of Sri Lanka, however, the current law is not merely a “leftover,” but is a renewed, modernized aspect of the Sri Lankan state’s management of family, sexuality, and citizens’ bodies. Moreover, while violations of Section 365A are not often pursued in the courts, the press’ handling of the law in recent years also illustrates how the values are upheld in non-governmental productions of national identity.

The Sri Lankan Parliament’s commitment to heterosexism was asserted in 1995 when, in response to lobbying from feminist groups, Section 365 of the Sri Lankan Penal

Code was modified. The government amended this section of the code in response to activists who pushed for increased legal protection for victims of rape, incest, and other types of sexual violence. The activists' demands did not deal with same-sex persecution, but when Penal Code (Amendment) Act, No.22 of 1995 appeared in Parliament, the proposal had changed so that women, as well as men, could be prosecuted for same-sex activity under charges of "gross indecency." Yasmin Tambiah suggests in "Man-Made Laws and Feminine Feelings: a 'Lesbian' Encounter with the Law in Sri Lanka" that the draftsman's office responsible for composing the proposed changes was most likely responsible for altering the phrasing at their own discretion. Whereas the original Sri Lankan law, like the Labouchère Amendment, originally prohibited citizens from "any act of gross indecency with another man," post-1995 it criminalized "any act of gross indecency with any other person." When the original law was created, Western European perceptions of women as socially and anatomically passive rendered same-sex activity between women inconceivable. Jeffrey Weeks writes that the topic of female same-sex activity rarely arose in English nineteenth-century medical, moral, or sociological discourses, and when it did, it was quickly subsumed under the topic of prostitution (88). Late-twentieth century notions of sex, sexuality, and female agency, however, enabled Sri Lankan legislators to envision, and consequently, to criminalize, same-sex activity between women. This modification occurred despite the fact that the Technical Committee who submitted the original changes to the draftsman's office recommended that the law against same-sex activity be fully repealed (Tambiah).

While Sri Lanka's legislative body confirmed that all same-sex activity—

however it might be carried out anatomically — violates Sri Lanka's standards of human decency, a heterosexist consensus among Sri Lankan citizens has also been maintained through non-governmental channels. In *Funny Boy*, Selvadurai's journalist character Daryl Uncle is a brave man who is willing to risk his own life to expose governmental corruption; he is, however, a foreign journalist working out of Australia. The only mention that Arjie makes of Sri Lankan journalists suggests that they are complicit in abuses by the state, and as such, help shape the nation in a particular way. As Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* demonstrates so effectively, feelings of modern national community only became possible through day-to-day newspapers that united vastly divergent regions through a common set of information and narratives. Serena Tennekoon discusses how such a unified perspective can be explicitly ethnicized in "Newspaper Nationalism: Sinhala Identity as Historical Discourse." Tennekoon studies the sudden fascination with Sinhalese myth and history that took place in Sri Lankan newspapers in the wake of the 1983 anti-Tamil riots, a fascination that did not seek to discover a historical understanding of the ethnic conflict as much as "to bestow legitimacy on preferred political arrangements" (221). Both of these texts show how national media teach citizens to imagine their relation to an abstract community in a particular way, and following from their work, I would like to illustrate how newspaper journalism has also produced Sri Lankan citizenship as strictly heteronormative. The newspaper articles I will cite were published in the mid- to late-1990's, so while they are not contemporary to the novel's plot, they give insight into the affective and discursive strengthening of anti-queer sentiment in Sri Lanka just after *Funny Boy* was published in

Canada.

Tambiah's "Man-Made Laws and Feminine Feelings" touches on one instance when the Sri Lankan media not only taught the public how to conceptualize queer sexuality as "gross indecency," but also equipped a branch of the police with the legal knowledge necessary to prosecute it. Tambiah describes a 1998 incident in which a journalist reported a story about two Sinhala women who lived together and who, it was widely rumoured, were involved in a sexual relationship. When Sunitha and Kusum spurned the demands of Kusum's family that they part, Kusum's mother called local police to intervene. The village police, however, did not press charges. The police commented that "socially and culturally such a thing is unacceptable," but responded that they did not have a legal basis to intervene (qtd. in Tambiah). The article's tone was sympathetic to the women, Tambiah explains, but the journalist also corrected the police officers by explaining the power afforded by the amended Section 365A. It is unclear whether the journalist included this information or whether an editor added it later, Tambiah writes. But whatever the reporter's personal opinion of the women's situation, the article aligned itself with the state by teaching the public to think of same-sex desire in terms of illegality and by arming the police with the means to carry out the state's ideology.

If this newspaper article can be understood as interpreting and publishing the government's position to the detriment of the women, a different example of prejudice in the Sri Lankan news can be understood as producing toxic affect in the national body. Prejudice as direct contempt was given voice when a reader of *The Island*, a major daily,

wrote an editorial letter to protest the possibility of a lesbian conference that had been mentioned in the previous day's newspaper. In his extensive letter, published on August 20, 1999, P. Alles called for the police to "round up a sizeable collection of convicted rapists and let them loose among the jubilant but jaded jezebels when their assembly is in full swing, so that those wanton and misguided wretches may get a taste of the zest and relish of the real thing" (Alles qtd. in "National Press Council Calls Lesbianism 'An Act of Sadism'"). Alles' letter demonstrates why texts such as *Funny Boy* need to work against sexual prejudice both discursively and affectively. Ugly assumptions about what constitutes "humanity" and "decency" are masked in the intimidating legal rhetoric of Section 365A. In Alles' letter, however, the representation of heterosexuality as the original, "real" sexuality is deployed as an affective attack. Alles' letter disdains the pretense of logic in its expression of contempt. On the one hand, it might be said that the letter's recommendation of rape is Alles' personal stance and has nothing to do with national ideologies of good citizenship; published in a national newspaper, however, his letter signifies as an affective pulse that validates and amplifies the heteronormativity of the Sri Lankan national body.

Alles's letter might not have carried much significance had it not sparked further controversy in which the National Press Council defended his view. Following the publication of the letter, Sherman de Rose, founder of Sri Lanka's first gay organization, "Companions on a Journey," filed an official complaint with the National Press Council against *The Island*. He protested that the letter was an offence against the dignity and safety of Sri Lanka's gay population and that its celebration of violence and rape was a

violation of Sri Lankan Press Law and the Code of Ethics for Journalists. In their lengthy response to de Rose's complaint—published in *The Island* on June 2, 2000—the National Press Council not only protected *The Island*'s heterosexist position, but engaged in their own heterosexist rant that characterized lesbianism as “illegal, immoral, and obscene” (qtd. in “Sri Lankan's Media Complaint Backfires”). With this act, the National Press Council provided a firm discursive structure for Alles' personal vitriol. Not only did the Council cite Section 365A to point out the illegality of same-sex acts, but it also cited Article 27 (12) of the Sri Lankan Constitution which states that the family is the basic unit of society. Because gay people, in the Council's argument, are incapable of comprising a family unit, they cannot be included in the fabric of the Sri Lankan nation state (“Sri Lankan's Media Complaint Backfires”).

In addition to invoking the language of law, family, and public morality, the Council defended the affective thrust of Alles' letter, writing that it did not display “malice or grudge” except toward “the spreading social menace” represented by lesbians, those “misguided and erratic women [who] should be corrected and allowed to understand the true sense and reality of life” (qtd. in “Sri Lankan's Media Complaint Backfires”). The Council concluded by denying de Rose's right to complain by asserting his fundamental sex difference from the purported victims; de Rose, as a male, had no legal standing to argue a case on behalf of women. Because de Rose had no legal standing and was clearly not arguing in the “public interest,” in the Council's opinion, he not only failed to secure a victory over the newspaper, but was ordered to pay 2,100 rupees (\$33 Cdn) to *The Island* because in attempting to protect lesbianism he “[was] the

one who [was] eager to promote sadism and salacity, not the respondents” (qtd. in “Sri Lankan’s Media Complaint Backfires”). Magnifying the letter writer’s disgust to generate fresh contempt, the Council blended Alles’ affective prejudice with the rhetoric of natural citizenship to represent the national body as disgusted by same-sex desire.

I include these examples to fill out the social context depicted by *Funny Boy*, to flesh out the queer exclusions that are formally and informally enforced in the name of Sri Lanka’s national character. Queer inclusions, on the other hand, are also represented in *Funny Boy*’s next story when entrepreneurs grant immunity to a certain kind of queerness in the interests of Sri Lanka’s national economy. In “Small Choices,” Arjie has yet to comprehend that he is sexually attracted to men, but he begins to notice the embodied signs of desires when Jegan, a twenty-five-year-old friend of the family, comes to stay at the Chelvaratnam household. The increasingly evident signs of Arjie’s attraction to Jegan bring increased anxiety for Arjie’s father, who asks Jegan to help Arjie “outgrow this phase” (166). Appa’s anxiety and disgust are not surprising; his character offers the dominant patriarchal voice of sexual prejudice throughout *Funny Boy*. At the same time, Appa’s loud prejudice is tempered in “Small Choices” by his enthusiasm for his new hotel business, The Paradise Beach Resort. Appa’s hypocrisy becomes apparent when he hires Jegan as a hotel manager and shows him the facilities while Arjie tags along.

Arjie-the-narrator produces irony through his nostalgic tone in *Funny Boy* when he sets representations of transgender play and queer sex against natural landscapes and home spaces, but this idyllic vision of home also deteriorates when Arjie-the-protagonist

becomes aware of the moral hypocrisy that is a prerequisite for his privileged position in society. In the first story, Arjie revels in paradise in his grandmother's back garden; in the third, he discovers paradise in Sri Lanka's countryside at the rented hillside bungalow; in this, the fourth story, he embraces the feeling of owning paradise when the Chelvaratnam family opens The Paradise Beach Resort. As in other stories, exotic descriptions of nature abound as Appa guides Jegan and Arjie through the resort. The descriptions of nature differ from earlier descriptions, however, in that Arjie cultivates a feeling of territorial ownership more than origin.

The story is set during Sri Lanka's shift from a state-run economy to a free market economy that was initiated in 1977, and Arjie's sense of entitlement is a derivative effect of Appa's contagious ambition. Under the influence of his father's greed, young Arjie is not just somehow intrinsically *of* the territory; through his father, he thinks he *owns* it and is excited about its promise of economic and social advancement. This variation on the recollection of home is significant for Selvadurai's ironic deployment of nostalgia because it works against righteous diasporic representation of home as natural origin. Appa's pride is not an indicator of Tamil pride, but of upward class mobility. Rather than concentrate on the intersection of class and ethnic identities, however, I will focus on a small moment that occurs just before those tensions are fully developed in which class advantage, queer sex acts, and notions of paradise collide.

Transgender play and non-normative family arrangements are definitive elements of Arjie's earlier paradisaal memories, but here, a different kind of "funniness" mars his memory of the landscape. Appa and Jegan are having a drink on the hotel patio when

Jegan notices a pattern of activity between foreign men and young village boys on the beach and asks whether they come back to The Paradise Beach Resort. When Appa affirms that they do, he asks why they are not stopped by the hotel management or by the police. “I don’t see any police out there, do you?” Appa leers (171). He then adds, as a tip from a hotelier to a prospective manager, “It’s not just our luscious beaches that keep the tourist industry going, you know. We have other natural resources as well” (171). Though Appa is, as I mention above, the predominant voice of sex-gender prejudice that polices and punishes Arjie throughout *Funny Boy*, in this scene he not only accepts, but toasts child prostitution for the economic benefits that it brings.

Though the critical potential of Arjie-the-narrator’s perspective is predicated on queerness and transnational mobility, this minor episode problematizes both categories of experience. I argue throughout this chapter that *Funny Boy* counters sexual prejudice by making unlikely or unexpected affective connections between characters and scenes. In this story, however, Selvadurai contrasts young Arjie’s desire for the older Jegan with the prostitution of the boys to older foreigners. At the level of plot, extreme class differences dissuade readers from thinking that there is a similarity between Arjie and the boys. By choosing to leave this connection unmade as Arjie notices but does not identify with the boys, Selvadurai creates a void, a lack of association that draws attention to the fundamental dis-similarity of same-sex desire and the exploitation that is systematically visited by Western travellers upon the children at the beach. This void does not result in a total absence of sympathy for the victims of sexual commodification at the level of plot. Selvadurai conveys sympathy through Jegan’s disgust and incredulity. The disconnect

does, however, structure an important sense of difference between sexual exploitation and non-heteronormativity where the Sri Lankan penal code asserts fundamental similarity.

Sections 360B, 360C, 363, 364A, 365A, and 365B of the Sri Lankan penal code create a moral-ideological alignment that positions, respectively, the sexual abuse of children, human trafficking, incest, rape, consensual same-sex activity, and statutory rape as all being in the same line of sexual criminality (“Sexual Offences Laws—Sri Lanka”). In “Erotic Autonomy as a Politics of Decolonization: An Anatomy of Feminist and State Practice in the Bahamas Tourist Economy,” M. Jacqui Alexander describes a similar categorical conflation that was effected by the Bahamas’ Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act of 1991. The moral, religious, scientific, and legal debates that were offered in the Bahamas Parliament at the time of the Act’s passing, Alexander explains, offered only “a ‘civilized,’ presumably neutral, and objective mode of escape from a major ontological conundrum: how to accord lesbians and gay men the respect of fully embodied human beings, not reduced to a perfunctory mind/body dichotomy in which the dismembered body could be imagined only as a dangerous sexual organ” (81). It cannot be said that Sri Lankan politicians were equally concerned about performing even a hollow moral-rhetorical debate when they passed their amendments in 1995: according to Tambiah, there was no Parliamentary debate about the new, gender-neutral language that broadened the criminalization of same-sex acts. By refraining from representing Arjie’s desire for Jegan as akin to the prostitution of young children to older tourists—even at the level of young Arjie’s curious, naïve mind—Selvadurai’s text resists adding to the blur in

which same-sex sexuality is produced as perverse, violent, and cruel by its legal association with sexual crimes.

While Selvadurai's representation of child prostitution thus belies the rule of heteronormative citizenship that is produced in Sri Lanka's legal code, it also subverts the ideology of economic citizenship that was created in Sri Lanka's shift to an open market economy. Arjie's sex-gender queerness and the prostitution of children are certainly distinct in Appa's outlook, but it is the latter, the sexual commodification of the poor, that he looks upon with a permissive attitude. This insight into Appa's ethical system invites critique of a particular narrative of national progress that surged in Sri Lanka from 1977 to 1983, the time period in which *Funny Boy* is set. From the third story to the novel's conclusion, Arjie's father represents an upper-middle class of opportunists who began to thrive when Sri Lanka made the transition from a tightly regulated public economy to a free-market capitalist economy. Upwardly-mobile citizens like Appa represented a brand of national progress that was an alternative to primordial ethnic nationalism. Selvadurai hints that the new market structure briefly offered an opportunity to transcend ethnic differences by creating the co-owner of The Paradise Beach Resort as a Sinhalese character. Newton Gunasinghe's "The Open Economy & Its Impact on Ethnic Relations in Sri Lanka" explains that, because business opportunities in the state-regulated economy prior to 1977 relied heavily on political favoritism, the heavily bureaucratized system tended to favour Sinhalese businesses; the new system, on the other hand, favoured only capital (202, 213). Gunasinghe explains that the privatized system created opportunities for upper and middle class Tamils "to link up with foreign capital" and "to

expand within trade, commerce, and services,” both opportunities upon which Appa capitalizes in *Funny Boy* (211).

Selvadurai’s novel is deeply critical of the dehumanizing effects of this kind of social organization and the ethnic communalism that it inadvertently intensified. His literary representation reflects the same social trend that Gunasinghe explains in his essay: while the restructuring removed an ethnic-economic disadvantage for Tamils and Muslims, its erasure of Sinhala middle class privilege and its failure to improve the lives of the poor created volatile conditions for the long-standing ethnic-economic conflict that erupted in mob violence in 1983 (213). In *Funny Boy*, Appa’s arrogance begets ethnic violence when his largely Sinhalese staff perceives his class advantage as an ethnic advantage, a perception that is concretized when they discover that Jegan has connections to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, a liberationist-terrorist group. There is a mutiny at the hotel that foreshadows the more violent anti-Tamil riots that soon follow. Because my dissertation is focused on the intersection of sexuality and ethnicity, however, I will return my attention to the dehumanizing implications for the poor in a context of global sexual exploitation.

The “Orient” has long been defined by colonial notions of decadent promiscuity in Western discourses, and Selvadurai represents modern transnational travel as enabling the practices that sustain such narratives. Hema Chari’s “Colonial Fantasies and Postcolonial Identities: Elaboration of Postcolonial Masculinity and Homoerotic Desire” explores colonial subordination as a semi-erotic homosocial paradigm, but also argues that a more explicit sexualization of the East often appeared in orientalizing texts. Chari

writes that “the exotic tropics became signifiers for same-sex perversions, homosexual licences, male pornographic fantasies, and male libidinous anomalies” (283). *Funny Boy* depicts only traces of these attitudes, but its representation of Sri Lanka from 1977 to 1983 represents the nation’s investment in a tourist economy that invited a new level of global influence. Selvadurai shows that, within a larger global narrative of seductive colonial availability, queer acts undergo a paradoxical flip: queerness is *natural* insofar as it functions, in Appa’s words, as a “natural *resource*” (171 ital. mine). Under Sri Lanka’s contemporary penal code and in media discourses, adults who enjoy consenting same-sex sexual relationships are denaturalized and dehumanized; under the logic of the tourist economy, however, the bodies of the poor are naturalized as domestic goods because they are already less than human.

In the beachside scene, Selvadurai represents global mobility and a freemarket economy as creating the conditions for neocolonial sexual exploitation. Throughout *Funny Boy*, Western destinations consistently represent “opportunity” for Arjie’s family: his aunt Radha studies at an American university; Appa attends school in England and travels to England to find investors for his hotel; the Chelvaratnam family escapes to Canada when Sri Lanka becomes unbearably hostile. The unresolved beachside tension in “Small Choices” represents, then, a moment of reversed trajectories in that Sri Lanka appears as a destination point for Western travellers. Rather than equalize relationships between richer and poorer states, however, this kind of nationalism deepens existing global and domestic inequalities. Built around a sexually exploitative tourist economy,

this kind of nationalism reinforces neocolonial hierarchies, strengthens class barriers, and reinforces the production of same-sex sexuality as criminally perverse.

I would like to return attention to Selvadurai's literary technique by addressing Arjie's increasing awareness of critical nostalgia as a strategy of resistance. In *Funny Boy's* penultimate story "The Best School of All," ethno-national, colonial, and sexual ideologies converge. A key development in Arjie's maturation occurs here when the fourteen-year-old cultivates a flirtatious friendship with Shehan, a Sinhala boy at school. Shehan has a maturity and self-awareness that Arjie lacks, and he enlightens Arjie about his attraction to other boys by kissing him on one occasion and by bringing him to sexual climax on another. When their relationship first becomes explicitly sexual, Arjie is disgusted and ashamed at the idea of male-male sexual contact and violently lashes out at Shehan. He quickly realizes, however, the extent to which he prizes both the social and romantic potential of their relationship.

Around the time of this epiphany, Arjie is recruited by his principal to perform two poems at a school assembly that is heavily charged with political significance. The government is considering closing Arjie's school, the colonial Queen Victoria Academy, and replacing it with a Buddhist-Sinhala school. The strict Tamil principal, called Black Tie by the children, hopes to halt this ethno-religious renovation by appealing to the visiting government minister who seems to be on the verge of becoming the next Sri Lankan president. Though Arjie would not fare well under a Sinhalese ethno-religious nationalist program, he is tempted to sabotage the assembly for personal reasons. Shehan, one of Black Tie's "ills and burdens," suffers frequent beatings at the hands of the

principal for his general failure to fit the colonial ideal of young masculinity (222-223, 237).

Black Tie invests great hope in Arjie's recital, expecting that it will serve as proof of the civilizing benefits of British multiethnic education at the Queen Victoria Academy. The performance is supposed to stand as spectacular, factual evidence of the school's—and the principal's—success. As well as offering academic excellence as factual proof of educational success, the poems are supposed to induce powerful emotion in the audience. "Vitae Lampada" and "The Best School of All" produce sentimental visions of the British schoolboy experience that Black Tie hopes will appeal to parents in the crowd. Black Tie knows, moreover, that the poems bear a particularly powerful emotional charge for the minister: he had recited them to win the "All Island Poetry Recital Contest" when he was a schoolboy himself (246). While Arjie's delivery is supposed to offer a logical and emotional appeal to the audience in and of itself, his delivery is also supposed to introduce Black Tie's final effort to preserve the Queen Victoria Academy, a speech that mines the poems' language and imagery for their organizing structure and emotional impact.

The evening before he presents, however, young Arjie realizes that his delivery of the nostalgic poems would constitute an act of complicity with the regime of intimidation and violence that characterizes the school's everyday functioning under Black Tie's colonial ideology. He cycles slowly past the Queen Victoria Academy that evening, agonizing over the role that he has been assigned. As the sun slowly sets, the much-dreaded school appears "peaceful and stately" and even "cleansed in the setting rays of

the sun” (273). The idyllic scene calls to Arjie’s mind the lines he has memorized from “The Best School of All,” and as he thinks through the lines he makes the sudden connection between the poem’s wistful celebration of British colonial schoolboy culture and the paradoxical erasure of feeling and memory that such nostalgic texts effect. He worries: “this is how I would remember the school when I was no longer its captive. This is how my father must remember it, washed in the coral pink of memory” (273). In this moment, Selvadurai’s young protagonist realizes that nostalgia neither accurately recalls feeling nor accurately recalls objective history, but instead produces smothering sentimentality that serves ideological needs in the present. He suddenly understands nostalgia as a rhetorical device that numbs real feeling and obfuscates history. The protagonist vows that he will never remember his school experience in false, idyllic terms. This promise triggers the epiphany that he is in a position to destroy Black Tie’s oratory by making a mockery of nostalgic sentimentality. He realizes: “Black Tie needed me, and because he needed me, power had moved into my hands” (276).

Young Arjie’s meditation on memory, history, and feeling carries a metafictional significance that encapsulates the structural logic and political charge of *Funny Boy*’s first five stories. Selvadurai implicitly asks readers to reflect: “does Arjie, as an adult narrator, stay true to his adolescent disavowal of nostalgia?” Plot events that mimetically represent sexual prejudice and ethnic violence would suggest that he does, but young Arjie’s epiphany in this moment speaks back to and directly contradicts adult Arjie’s initial self-positioning. In the early pages of the novel, the narrator describes “the remembered innocence of childhood” as “now coloured in the hues of the twilight sky,”

language that anticipates young Arjie's later perception of the deceptively "cleansing" sunset and his use of the twilight image as a metaphor for distorted memory (5, 273). Though an isolated comparison between his adult introduction and his adolescent vow might suggest a moment of hypocrisy, adolescent Arjie's subsequent actions demonstrate a deliberate manipulation of nostalgic rhetoric as he folds the powerful force of sentimental nostalgia back against itself. This episode can therefore be read as embodying adult Arjie's ironic narrative strategy.

"The Best School of All" marks Arjie's conscious recognition of the power that becomes available when authority figures trust him to fulfill their will, to actively comply with their agendas so that ideological power bears material consequences. Arjie seizes on the opportunity to perform his role wrongly and mangles the poems during the assembly. He mimics the role of the sincere student, but renders the poems incomprehensible as he intermixes and stutters through them. His sabotage reduces the school event, the principal's speech, and the principal's political hope to a travesty. Black Tie tries to deliver his speech, but after stumbling through the first few lines, gives it up to lambast Arjie, bitterly citing the student's mangled delivery as proof of the imminent failure of the country's ethno-nationalist direction (282). Young Arjie's deliberate misperformance of nostalgia reminds readers that although we are constantly asked to participate in the norms that determine the way we imagine our relationships to our living conditions, there are always possibilities for variation in how we respond to those injunctions.

At the same time, Arjie's self-sacrifice highlights the limitations that are inherent in strategies of performative resistance. Massumi sums up the limitations of these

approaches when he writes: “in the case of theories of subjectivity as performance, change is confined to sites whose ‘marginality’ is defined [by] the evanescence of a momentary parodic rupture or ‘subversion.’ How the subversion could react back on the positionalities of departure in a way that might enduringly change *them* becomes an insoluble problem” (69). Although Massumi’s dismissal of performative strategies in *Parables of the Virtual* is reductive in its amalgamation of “mixture, margin, and parody,” his argument identifies a real problem in Butler’s work (69). After all, what is really accomplished in this episode of *Funny Boy* at the level of plot, the episode which most directly narrates deliberate performative resistance? Arjie makes a laughingstock of the principal, strengthening the possibility that the principal’s career will be ruined and that Shehan’s abuse may not continue in the next school year. But does his sacrifice change the way that other characters think about gender, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, or nationalism? Arjie’s mis-performance is motivated by his loyalty to Shehan, but his motivation is so obscure that even Shehan does not initially understand that Arjie’s mistakes are deliberate, let alone that they are motivated by loyalty (283-84). And were Arjie’s actions to result in the expulsion of Black Tie, the ideological change at the school would not be an improvement: Buddhist religion and Sinhalese language, history, and politics would prevail where Tamil and Sinhalese culture had overlapped.

This episode, even as it reveals the limitations of performative resistance, illustrates for readers that such strategies have significance beyond the moment of mis-recital because of the hope that they allegorize. The novel emphasizes this point by describing the affective impact in the aftermath of Arjie’s mis-performance, narrating

queer and diasporic episodes as deeply, mutually formative. When Arjie faces his gloomy parents shortly after his “failed” poetry recital, he reflects: “I was no longer a part of my family in the same way. I now inhabited a world they didn’t understand and into which they couldn’t follow” (284-85). The language of separation and impossible return in this scene suggests that Arjie’s lost sexual innocence is an affective extension of his gender expulsion and a precursor to his eventual physical exile. He implies that his decision to invest wholeheartedly in his queer sexual relationship—a decision publicly demonstrated through his mis-recital—is, fundamentally, an experience of self-selected dislocation.

Part of what characterizes *Funny Boy* as a diasporic narrative is that the narrator’s nostalgic tone vanishes when Arjie’s innocence is finally, completely shattered in “Riot Journal: an Epilogue,” the section narrating his family’s expulsion from Sri Lanka. If the novel’s ironic, critical nostalgia serves a doubled purpose of remembering origins and resisting norms that are regulated in the rhetoric of origins, its representation of raw affect in the epilogue foregrounds intense feeling, rather than a nostalgic narrative mode, as the source of a diasporic perspective. Arjie describes slipping out of his house and across the neighbour’s wall when Sinhalese mob violence breaks out following an attack on the army by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. The radio reports that the mobs are extremely efficient in targeting Tamil citizens because of the government’s complicity in the violence by supplying voter registration lists to the mobs. Instead of retreating into a defensive discourse of Tamil identity, however, Arjie emphasizes that the mobs’ violence also affects non-Tamils. He describes how the fearful anticipation experienced by Arjie’s

family is shared by his Sinhala lover Shehan and by the Sinhala neighbours who hide them from the violent crowds.

The tone of distanced memory and sweet sentimentality that is gradually chiseled away across the first five stories is totally usurped in the urgent, chaotic affect of the novel's conclusion. I am not making the case that Selvadurai works consciously with Tomkins' or Massumi's theories of affect, but his epilogue heightens the intensity of the narrative in such a way that it seems to embody the characteristics of affect as Tomkins and Massumi describe it. For Massumi, the most precise synonym for affect is feeling intensity, which he distinguishes from the structuring processes of language and ideology (27). While my literary analysis cannot approach affect except through linguistic representation, I suggest that *Funny Boy's* epilogue changes gears in such a way that a vulnerability and a receptivity to feeling, as distinct from imposed ideologies or identities, is dramatically intensified. This is represented by the novel's stylistic shift into the mode of the diary, a shift in which Arjie-the-youth suddenly replaces Arjie-the-adult as narrator. Traditionally, an epilogue provides a sense of resolution by detailing the after-effects of plot events from a distanced perspective. The conventional epilogue confirms the structural integrity of the narrative by reassuring readers that, for better or for worse, the story is complete, a fact of the past. *Funny Boy's* epilogue, however, concludes with an urgent sense of rupture that accelerates the plot flow and situates the reader squarely in the "present" of the narrator's violent 1983 expulsion. Selvadurai departs from the convention with an epilogue that renders closure impossible and that instead ushers readers into a state of anticipation and uncomfortable uncertainty.

Specifying the date as well as, occasionally, the time, Arjie records his parents' conversations as they fearfully contemplate the family's relocation. He does not, however, describe passing safely across the threshold into exile. The distance established by Arjie-the-narrator in the introduction collapses into immediacy: events are chronicled as they happen, and any sense of a pure, coherent home is obliterated as young Arjie reports the murder of his grandparents, the burning down of his family's house, and the belated decision his parents make to escape to Canada.

If young Arjie's strategic use of nostalgia in "The Best School of All" clearly demonstrates performative resistance, "Riot Journal: an Epilogue" clearly embodies the openness to feeling that allows Selvadurai to blend queer and diasporic perspectives throughout his novel. Considering *Funny Boy* as a linear evolution from childhood through to early adolescence, we might see that Arjie's first encounters with gender regulation can be understood as formulating his eventual response to the experience of diasporic loss. Although the destruction of the family home is the last major event in the plot that is narrated from Canada and is, at a literal level, the cause of Arjie's diasporic outlook, Arjie-the-narrator's initial introduction describes his sex-gender expulsion from Amma's garden as precipitating his fundamental feeling of exile. My reading, in emphasizing the affective interconnectedness of sexual and diasporic experience, runs counter to the reading of *Funny Boy* offered by R. Raj Rao in "Because Most People Marry Their Own Kind: A Reading of Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy*." Rao proposes that "gay fiction needs to be mapped differently, with sexuality rather than nationality, race, or gender as the determinants of identity, so that if a writer is gay it does not matter

that he comes from the developed or developing world, or is white or black” (118). The formative overlap that I perceive between queer and diasporic feeling in *Funny Boy*, in contrast, is of the utmost importance because it tells the reader something about both queer experience and diasporic experience that is more elemental than the specific politics of either one. Selvadurai writes the one as produced through the other in such a way that the different experiences are more than just symbolic echoes of one another, they co-exist with, amplify, and feed back into—or, to borrow Tomkins’ term, magnify—one another. The aura of open potential in the epilogue magnifies the feeling of uncertain loss throughout all of *Funny Boy* in a way that does not add up to specific sexual or ethnic identities, but that invites empathetic, affective connection from readers.

Just as Selvadurai’s novel queers the “paradisal-devastated origin” narrative that is common in diasporas, one of his non-fiction stories, published almost a decade after *Funny Boy*, queers the diasporic trope of “impossible return.” The autobiographical story “Coming Out” was published in the August 2003 issue of *Time Asia* and is unrelated to the characters in *Funny Boy*, but it offers a counter-point to the novel by describing the government’s production of negative affect in Sri Lanka from an adult, semi-outsider diasporic perspective. In the story, Selvadurai writes about returning to Sri Lanka with his white Canadian partner under the guise of close friendship. He describes how, in the middle of the night, their house was raided by soldiers. The soldiers targeted his house because of his Tamil last name, Selvadurai explains, but he was more afraid that they would notice evidence of his sexual relationship than that they would terrorize him for reasons of ethnicity. Selvadurai describes the terror he felt upon hearing the abrupt

banging at the door, and how he and his partner quickly moved a glass of water, some clothes, and a book into the spare bedroom to create the illusion of separate sleeping areas. “Coming Out” confirms that even though Selvadurai’s family left because of ethnicized violence, his continued exclusion from Sri Lanka is as much about sexuality as ethnicity.

“Coming Out,” with its realistic reportage of military violence, presents an opportunity for me to emphasize that my notion of “embodied hope” is not an optimistic medium for dreaming about the future as much as a necessary strategy for survival. Despite expectations that are raised by the title of the article, Selvadurai and his partner did not “come out” to the soldiers by revealing their sexual identities; to the contrary, they rushed to avoid being detected and felt great relief when they were successful in this deception. In this story, the affect that I read as embodied hope was manifest as terror. Tomkins writes that our capacity for embodied feeling is the most basic source of human motivation, not because affect is inherently pleasant, but because it amplifies and doubles sensation in a way that “either makes good things better or bad worse” (“Modifications in the Theory—1978 88). “Coming Out” represents a moment where Selvadurai’s capacity for affect made a threatening situation worse by producing panic and fear, and his description of that experience might heighten the negative affect of readers who are at risk of similar threats. So how can such terror be read as “hope”? Selvadurai does not present a logical argument for the overhaul of anti-same-sex legislation in this story, but we can read his pointed representation of terror as dwelling in feeling for the purpose of recognizing the need for substantial social change. Michel Foucault’s *The History of*

Sexuality, even as it critiques dominant networks of power, also points out that the legal, moral, and ontological discourses that marshal queer experiences into perverse identities also make it possible for subjected people to develop “‘reverse’ discourse[s]” (101). He writes that an effect of the normalization of monogamous heterosexuality was that “homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf” (101). “Coming Out,” however, depicts the kind of scenario where ethnic and sexual norms are enforced through the threat of physical violence as well as through complex linguistic-cultural networks of power. As a diasporan with no political, legal, or grassroots contacts in Sri Lanka, Selvadurai had no access to a reverse discourse in that moment. We must read the title of the piece, then, not as describing a plot event in the story where a specific identity was exposed, but as describing the function of the text itself. The publication of this narrative in a major venue, *Time Asia*, performs a certain kind of “coming out” wherein the “outed” subject is not Selvadurai himself but the affect that is produced on a daily basis by acts of violent heterosexism. Using a defamiliarized diasporic perspective, Selvadurai does not name a sexual identity, but exposes the heterosexist terror that is produced on a daily basis across South Asia and makes it familiar to non-queer readers by blending it with a representation of ethnicized violence. In doing so, he puts differing cultural perspectives into play to expose the pressing need for new definitions of “the human” in South Asia.

Affective Coordination & Avenging Grace: Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here*

*Everything make sense from then
the way flesh make sense settling into blood.*

Elizete, falling for Verlia

Dionne Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here* confronts readers with the crises of fragmented belonging and irrecoverable origins that trouble the black diaspora. Using highly poetic prose, Brand creates characters who fight courageously against global, national, and local forms of capitalist domination that regulate black bodies long after the formal abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Characters' ability to resist these forces is made possible by their heightened sensitivity to bodily affect, where sensation, perception, feeling, and cognition merge in ways that defy the mind-body divide and the perceived limits of corporeality that are at the centre of western Enlightenment thinking. Brand focalizes her attention on the affective body through the queer relationship of protagonists Elizete and Verlia. The queer quality of their relationship is not about the politics of specific sexual identities, but about the possibilities for hope and pleasure that are generated in raw affective experience. Brand portrays affect as a living medium that registers the visceral pain of history and that enables resistance against the crushing power of that history. As Elizete and Verlia reorient themselves in Caribbean and Canadian sites of black diaspora, their bodies become less vulnerable to dominant networks of racialized, gendered, sexualized, and classed power. I describe their shared experience of embodied reorientation as "affective coordination." This term plays upon a doubled meaning of "coordinate": invoking the word as a verb, my term describes the

kinetic, sensual synchronization of bodies that creates increased power; invoking the word as noun, the term describes the mapping, self-locating function that their relationship performs for their otherwise dislocated diasporic bodies.

Brand emphasizes the unevenness of experience across the black diaspora through a chaotic narrative that pieces together—and tears apart—the tangled relationship of an emphatically grounded Grenadian sugarcane worker, Elizete, and an idealistic Trinidadian-Canadian revolutionary, Verlia. Elizete's deep desire for Verlia introduces the novel, but their relationship is quickly revealed as a fact of the past. The heteroglossic narrative subsequently moves achronologically through multiple voices and transnational spaces. Descriptions of Elizete and Verlia's time together—narrated by Elizete, Verlia, and unidentified third-person narrators—is intercut with stories of their respective childhoods and mixed with a description of Elizete's desperate efforts to orient herself around traces of Verlia after Verlia dies. The brief time that the two are together coincides with their entry into a socialist revolution; these two inseparable developments (romantic and revolutionary) constitute the text's central focus. Brand concentrates on the affective quality of their relationship to show how the potential for massive social change can be inspired at the minutest levels of the flesh. Written in 1996 but set between the late 1960's and early 1980's, the tone of the novel alternates between bright optimism and deep lament as the complications of Elizete and Verlia's personal lives channel the anti-racist and anti-colonial political struggles of that era. Brand turns to this point in recent history because, as she explains in an interview with Christian Olbey, the 1960's and 1970's offered a brief moment of "collective victory" for black political activism during

which “Black people in general, in the Americas, breached [the] walls of racism and were able to re-think themselves in quite different ways” (92). Brand synthesizes social awareness and embodied sensation in her writing because the period was “gone too soon, or too quickly, or unrecorded as taking place in the body [before] the [capitalist] master narrative had taken over its description” (92). Set during a socialist revolution on an unnamed Caribbean island, moreover—an island that despite being unnamed is identifiable as Grenada—Elizete and Verlia’s queer relationship literally embodies revolution against militarized globalization.³² Their relationship is a catalyst for reinvigorated resistance and their mutual caring issues a powerful refusal of racial, neo-colonial, and sexual oppressions in the black diaspora.

Though he does not take up the specific politics of race or sexuality that are foregrounded in *In Another Place, Not Here*, Brian Massumi’s meditations on affect in *Parables for the Virtual* provide a way to understand Brand’s representation of the black female body, particularly its ability to generate agency under conditions of physical displacement. As I explain in my introductory chapter, the operative element in Massumi’s thinking is the body’s capacity to affect and be affected by virtue of its incessant movement. Unlike Brand, Massumi does not focus on any particular bodies’ actual movement, nor on any collective body’s diasporic movements. He concentrates instead on the quality of indeterminacy that inevitably characterizes every body even at “rest”: ever in transition from one position to the next, all bodies are open to infinite futures. Massumi theorizes that the very idea of a static body is deceptive because a sensory body never exhaustively occupies any moment. Always in affective transition to

the next, the body is paradoxically both material and incorporeal. “When a body is in motion,” Massumi writes, “it does not coincide with itself. It coincides with its own transition: its own variation” (4). This dimension of existential incorporeality is incessantly renewed by that which the body senses as possible. The human body is, therefore, simultaneously material and incorporeal because the flesh can never catch up to, or finally *embody*, the infinite potential created through feeling (30-32). The sensory production of potential at this level of human experience—an economy that operates without respect for common social notions of corporeal boundaries—constitutes the core of Massumi’s affect. Later in this chapter, I will elaborate on Massumi’s basic sense of mobility by taking up his discussion of humans’ embodied capacity for producing a sense of orientation. He challenges the common notion that orientation is a phenomenon of vision and coins the term “biogram” to describe the proprioceptive means by which we determine conditions for mobility as we produce “lived diagrams” of our environments (186-87).

Before introducing the concept of “biograms,” however, Massumi argues that the body’s capacity for motion is indexed in so many sensory, material ways that its infinite potential can never achieve full expression in language. In issuing this claim, *Parables for the Virtual* overtly distinguishes its affective paradigm from language-based models of culture that often dominate thought in the humanities. Because linguistic and narrative practices order the world by imposing structures of difference, Massumi argues, much of literary and cultural theory can only point to concepts of social change that are fundamentally restrictive, subtractive, or derivative (25-27). The radical openness of the

body, on the other hand, has a capacity for absorbing stimulation and producing feeling in ways that allow us to imagine countless incipient futures, those “mutually exclusive pathways of action and expression” that constantly regenerate as the body moves through space (30). Massumi revels in the abstract, blurry chaos of affect, and suggests that by relaxing our desire to impose order over “the pressing crowd of incipencies and tendencies,” we can open ourselves to an everpresent “realm of [affective] *potential*” that will fundamentally change our thinking about broad social change (30). His engagement with affect is, he repeatedly asserts, an effort to think through social change while escaping stale trends of thought in the humanities that over-prioritize concepts of discourse, signification, and performativity.³³

Because mine is a study of literature and the cultural-discursive production of race and sexuality, I do not share Massumi’s polemic stance against linguistics-based thinking in the humanities. Nonetheless, perhaps in the spirit of Massumi’s enthusiastic poaching from the sciences, I find myself re-routing his discussions of the body, mobility, and social change into diasporic discourse where they correspond powerfully with Brand’s writing. Putting aside Massumi’s own dependence on the written word and the realities that he hopes to bring into existence through textual endeavour, I will elaborate on my earlier reference to the intense physicality of Brand’s writing that is enlivened, rather than numbed, by her representation of affect in language. Affect dominates the content of Brand’s writing, but is also palpable in her literary form. Sentences in *In Another Place, Not Here* often flow for paragraphs without final punctuation, and dialogue and interior monologues often appear as if they were transcriptions of oral speech. As readers, we do

not distantly observe these signifying acts as a manipulation of abstract linguistic codes, but are challenged by Brand at the level of the sensory body: our eyes are compelled to over-ride our habit of taking periodic pauses, our breathing instinctively adjusts to the flow of feeling across pages, and our minds loosen to absorb content that is determined, in part, by unconventional styles of textual meaning-making.

From its very first passage, the text of *In Another Place, Not Here* elides the promise of orderly reason that is typical of prose in favour of a poetic aesthetic that submerges the reader in movement and feeling. The novel's first sentence activates the reader's affective sensibility with a single word that precedes any character descriptions, a word printed in capitals. The use of capitals may be a publishing convention, but the appearance of the word in capitals intensifies the impact of the text's opening term. The novel begins, simply, "GRACE." (3). This signifier, deployed without context, confronts the reader with a concept of positively-valued mobility: it connotes kinetic beauty, easy motion, and transcendental, even religious feeling. The next sentence inflects the text with Caribbean orality and decisively confirms the affective impulse of the novel's first term. Still in all-caps, it reads: "IS GRACE, YES." (3). As the passage unfolds, this stream-of-consciousness establishes itself as Elizete's narrative voice and the preeminent quality of grace becomes embodied on the page through her appreciation of Verlia's physique. The qualities of dynamism, lightness, and beauty that are summoned in the text's first term, however, are immediately juxtaposed with circumstances of brutal physicality. Elizete gazes longingly upon Verlia as the two toil in a cane field amidst other workers. Writing under the banner of "grace," Brand rejects conventional signification as Elizete,

mesmerized by the sight of her lover, carelessly sinks her machete into her own foot while she works, the “blood blooming in the stalks of cane, a sweet ripe smell wash[ing] [her] faint” (3-4). Elizete becomes dizzy at the sensation, and her mind drifts again to Verlia’s sweat, “sweet like sugar” (4). One would expect radical breaks in a series of images that begins with transcendental beauty and transitions through slave-like field labour, clumsy self-inflicted agony, and raw sexual desire, but this tide of synesthetic feeling remains uninterrupted. Object blends with subject; sight merges with touch, smell, and taste; insides blur with outsides; lust bleeds into pain and pain bleeds back into lust. What is startling about this passage is not the radical disparity of its contents, but the seamless continuity of these disparate elements, a graceful continuity that only makes sense within an affective schema.

Elizete’s language, in particular, consistently absorbs readers into the affective economy of the corporeal body—a point that I will elaborate later in this chapter—but the entire novel’s fluid narrative style epitomizes the incessant movement that Massumi identifies as the incorporeal dimension of the body. The promise of perpetual motion and the curse of arrival signify the urgency with which Brand represents political engagement in the black diaspora. The promise-curse of mobility is identified even in the title of *In Another Place, Not Here*, a phrase that denies a relationship to place but that suggests that such a relationship could be possible. In addition to negating “here” as a *destination*, the title also puts *origins* under erasure: the phrase is a line re-routed from Brand’s poem “No Language is Neutral,” published in the collection of the same name. As in “No Language is Neutral,” the characters in *In Another Place, Not Here* move through

multiple spaces in the Caribbean and Canada, but only achieve a sense of gravity in relation to one another. This affective-gravitational pull is reflected in the novel's most basic structural organization. Brand bifurcates the text almost exactly in half, inscribing the first with Elizete's and the second with Verlia's relative styles of mobility, "Elizete, beckoned" (1) and "Verlia, flying" (119). These titles signal information about the characters' individual psychologies and experiences, but in the total picture of the novel they also establish the kinetic balance of the women's relationship. In accordance with this dynamism, an unsettled feeling dominates the structure of events which unfold in a discontinuous, achronological manner. Though Elizete's perspective prevails in the first half and Verlia's perspective dominates in the second, their collective narration does not amount to a simple dialectic. The flow of each character's section shifts, often without warning, between past and present, first and third person, Caribbean and Canadian dialect, Caribbean and Canadian setting, and oral and textual modes.

Verlia fascinates Elizete when she suddenly appears on Grenada where the pace of life is slow and steady. She alone, in Elizete's words, is "all the time moving faster than the last thing she say" and even when standing still is "moving, moving, moving all the time without moving" (7). Verlia's tendency to frenetic motion, however, is not purely idealized in the way that Masumi fantasizes about the incorporeal potential of perpetual bodily transition. As a black queer woman in a 1970's-1980's socialist revolution, her commitment to an agitative politics ultimately leads to her death. In a gesture that is equal parts defeat and defiance, Verlia leaps off a cliff while defending the island's socialist government from heavily-armed American invaders. The details of

Verlia's death are not narrated until the novel's closing pages, but the event is tangible long before it is actualized in prose. With a rhythmic consistency, Elizete indexes her own unspeakable grief and foreshadows this spectacular event with dream-like images of a "cliff" and veiled references to Verlia "flying," "leaping," "jumping," and "leaving" (22, 23, 47, 53, 75, 84). In "Sexual Citizenship and Caribbean-Canadian Fiction: Dionne Brand's 'In Another Place, Not Here' and Shani Mootoo's 'Cereus Blooms at Night,'" Heather Smyth notes that this imagery is deployed when the women have sex, citing a passage where "Elizete says that Verlia writes her words 'in an arc in the sky' ([Brand] 75) while her own words 'come to grounds' ([Brand] 75)" (156). This series of poetic eruptions both anticipates and embodies Verlia's death in a style that exceeds the grounded corporeal heuristics that had dominated Elizete's thinking before she met Verlia.

Brand's attention to the mobile body is significant for discussions of diaspora because it reworks the common diasporic trope of mythologized origins. In other chapters of this dissertation, I argue that Shani Mootoo, Wayson Choy, and Shyam Selvadurai put this convention to critical purpose by queering the usual object of diasporic nostalgia while deploying the trope with a sense of irony. Nostalgic narratives of origin are not unique to people in diaspora, but they carry a strong charge in diasporic contexts because diasporans often cannot claim territorial legitimacy with the same authority as citizens in settled nation-states.³⁴ The widespread sanctioning of this trope in diaspora studies is evident in Safran's "Deconstructing and Comparing Diasporas." Safran suggests that a longing for origins is the leading factor that distinguishes diasporas and immigrant

groups. Safran draws on his own landmark essay from the inaugural issue of *Diaspora* (1991), Gerard Chaliand and Jean-Pierre Rageau's *The Penguin Atlas of Diasporas* (1995), and Robin Cohen's influential *Global Diasporas* (1997) when he writes that people in diaspora:

have retained a memory of, a cultural connection with, and a general orientation toward their homelands; they have institutions reflecting something of a homeland culture and / or religion; they relate in some (symbolic or practical) way to their homeland; they harbour doubts about their full acceptance by the hostland; they are committed to their survival as a distinct community; and many of them have retained a myth of return. (10)

Safran's faith in the trope of the homeland is significant because it recognizes that many diasporans define their collectivity through such myths. While recognizing that many diasporans produce collectivity through this type of narrative, however, we must also be open to the dangers that are posed by such myths. Writers like Brand complicate nostalgia by representing the anesthetic danger that such myths pose and by striving to reawaken diasporic bodies with feeling-rich representations of neo-colonial injustices.

In Another Place, Not Here is not inattentive to the desire for origins and the lures of nostalgia. But if the ultimate origins of the black diaspora lie in a pre-slave-trade Africa, how can they be reclaimed? In *A Map to the Door of No Return*, Brand admits that such a paradigm is tempting, but she interrupts herself as she drifts towards this idea, firmly denying that origins can be restored. She asks, "Why do I slip into the easy-enough metaphor of Africa as body, as mother? Is it because the Door induces

sentimentality? The idea of a return presumes the certainty of love and healing, redemption and comfort. But this is not return. I am not going anywhere I've been, except in the collective imagination" (90). In *In Another Place, Not Here* Brand represents the point of the rupture between African origins and New World destinations in the character Adela, Elizete's great-great-great grandmother. Violently torn from Africa, Adela's absolute separation from origins is unmistakable. Brand confirms the loss of origins as complete, however, by representing Adela's linguistic-affective decision to refuse destination in Grenada: "when [Adela] done calculate the heart of this place, that it could not yield to her grief, she decide that this place was not nowhere and is so she call it. Nowhere" (18). The pathway between origin and destination cannot be retraced because, as Brand's fiction details, enslaved arrival was an event that negated place as much as enslaving departure. Paul Gilroy reacts to narratives of pure origin and final destination in a similar way in *The Black Atlantic*. In this text, he rejects rhetorical strategies and political philosophies that naturalize "home" territories as a crucial element of "the continuing aspiration to acquire a supposedly authentic, natural, and stable 'rooted' identity" (30-31). Gilroy decries myths of "pure and homogenous culture," where racialized identities are constituted through imagined "connection[s] with other kindred souls" and envisioned as destined for nationhood (32, 31). It is in the context of this argument that he expresses his now-famous preference for "routed and re-rooted" utopic cultural production over stultifying narratives of "roots" (33). The enduring persuasiveness of these theoretical terms is evidenced, at one small level, by the thorough permeation of this dissertation by these terms, but it is also explicitly recognized in

“Rooting and Routing Caribbean-Canadian Writing,” the introduction to a 2005 special issue of *The Journal of West Indian Literature* that bears the same title. In their introduction to the issue, Michael Bucknor and Daniel Coleman work through the various ways that these twinned terms have been textured and reworked by Canadian critics to offer a contestatory, provocative “detour from [. . .], rather than an outright rejection of, the nation and its narratives” (vi-vii). “Rooting and Routing Caribbean-Canadian Writing” recognizes that diasporic narratives, particularly in Caribbean and Canadian multicultural contexts, do not restrict themselves to figuring Africa as origin but also draw on more recent points of departure and arrival. Brand’s fiction also performs this work by problematizing narratives of origin and arrival that are generated by those in the black diaspora who travel between contemporary nation-states.

Given that embodied affect is such a precious source of political hope in her writing, Brand could not portray “nostalgia” in more loathsome terms in *In Another Place, Not Here* than by depicting it as a narcotic that numbs the displaced body. In Brand’s writing, nostalgia functions as an escape for people from the realities of racism in Canada and the Caribbean and the attendant need for collective resistance. The term surfaces at a deeply frustrating point in Verlia’s nascent political development when she first becomes disillusioned with the limited efficaciousness of the civil rights group that she joins after coming to Canada. When Verlia first escapes her anxious-to-assimilate relatives in Canada, nothing excites her more than the highly animated street-protest ethic of “the Movement.” After encountering deep-seated hatred at a neo-Nazi rally, however, she contemplates the state of black consciousness in Toronto and is disheartened by the

apathy she perceives. “She hates nostalgia,” the narrator simply states, “she hates this humid lifeless light that falls on the past” (182). The narrator elaborates:

She smells their seduction, it’s the kind of seduction that soothes the body going home on the train, insulates it from the place of now and what to do about it. It’s seduction that keeps them here for thirty years saying they’re going home some day, seduction that makes them take the bit in their mouths, expect to be treated like dirt, brush past her hand outstretched [. . .] The hip-shotted walk of the men, one leg heavy and lingering on possibility, one leg light and ready for flight; and the women braced and girdled to hold in their regular sway, to saving the sweetness collecting in their hips for some other time, some other street, hoping it doesn’t dry away. (182-83)

In Verlia’s perspective, nostalgic complacency saps the vitality from black bodies and deadens black minds to the structural inequalities of a racist Canadian culture. She senses that Canadian doctrines of multiculturalism encourage people in minority cultures to offset their objection to racialized hierarchies with the belief that “somewhere else [they] are other people,” thus enabling a system of white privilege to thrive (182).

Verlia’s cynicism in this passage assigns responsibility to diasporic people for their nostalgic self-hypnosis, but the moment also implicates the Canadian state. Verlia’s hyper-active political ethic blossoms at a point in Canadian history when the Canadian government was first seducing its populace and defining its national identity with a modern narrative of multiculturalism, or in the language of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau’s policy statement, “fair play for all.” The ideology of multiculturalism was not specifically aimed at seducing the black

diaspora, but revisions to immigration policies in 1967 and ideological statements about cultural plurality issued in 1971 would have sounded particularly sweet to Caribbean Canadian people who had been exploited under such immigration initiatives as Canada's 1955 Domestic Scheme. Under this immigration management plan, women from Jamaica, Barbados, and Trinidad were invited to live and work in Canada. Makeda Silvera points out in *Silenced* that the women were welcome as long as they were between the ages of 18 and 35, single, childless, in possession of at least a grade-eight education, willing to work as live-in domestic labourers for at least a year, and willing to undergo a medical examination upon entering the country (7). Elaborating on the position of embodied vulnerability created by the last requirement, Nona Grandea writes in *Uneven Gains* that women seeking to come to Canada under the Domestic Scheme were often scrutinized for venereal diseases because the women, it was expected, were naturally inclined towards being "promiscuous" and therefore physically as well as morally sick (19). In contrast to this type of explicitly hierarchized ideology, the narrative of multiculturalism introduced by Trudeau's government provided a way for ethnicized and racialized people in Canada to imagine themselves as contributing to an overall Canadian identity by preserving a vested interest in another place, a culture of origin.

Brand's critique of the Canadian government's cultivation of nostalgia, implicit in *In Another Place, Not Here*, is explicitly articulated in her subsequent non-fiction text, *A Map to the Door of No Return*. In it she writes, "Too much has been made of origins [. . .] This country, in the main a country of immigrants, is always redefining origins, jockeying and smarming for degrees of belonging. Erasing aspects of complicated origins by shedding accents, shedding dress, shedding tastes, shedding tyrannies" (64). A few pages later Brand is equally critical of

people who ethnicize themselves through this type of discourse: “And so if I reject this notion of origins, I have also to reject its mirror, which is the sense of origins used by the powerless to contest power in a society” (69). Brand elaborates: “Out of a multiplicity of stories, they cobble together a narrative glossing over accident, opportunism, necessity, and misdirection. [. . .] In opposition to the calcified Canadian nation narrative we read calcified hyphenated narratives, without exception, from all other groups in the nation which stand outside of that narrative” (70). Gilroy also seeks out the discourses that structure the longing of deterritorialized peoples. Like Brand in *A Map to the Door of No Return*, he sees ethnic absolutist narratives as spawned by European narratives of modernity, rationality, progress, and civilization. Though he is highly critical of minority groups who subscribe to such absolutisms, Gilroy reminds readers to raise the “question of where the impulse to formalise and codify elements of our cultural heritage in this particular pattern comes from” (33).

Given that in *In Another Place, Not Here* Brand represents embodied lethargy as a symptom of origin narratives, it is appropriate that her proposed antidote to such discourses is a revitalized attention to the body. I have briefly gestured at how Brand establishes affective logic as a living heuristic for the characters and as a narrative aesthetic for the novel, and I would like to elaborate on this as the novel’s central project. The passages I have quoted in my discussion of nostalgia might seem to represent Brand as coldly insensitive to feelings of loss and displacement, but *In Another Place, Not Here* recognizes two kinds of longing to which Brand assigns dramatically different value. While the character Verlia is unabashedly judgmental of those who wallow in nostalgia, she herself eventually becomes overwhelmed with what Brand calls “Missing.” It is as if

the two phenomena emerge from the same experience of longing, but are processed in radically different discursive and affective systems. “Nostalgia” is static, the surrendering of one’s capacity to feel and the fossilizing of affect in clichéd narratives that make social injustices sufferable. “Missing,” by contrast, is a self-reflexive, embodied submergence in feeling that, when recognized and respected, produces action. Brand does not entirely valorize the fragile experience of missing; it is a process that signifies a respectable vulnerability, but the narrator laments matter-of-factly, “Missing is unravelling though” (197). Verlia worries that there is too fine a distinction between fruitful missing and barren nostalgia. She wonders, in a thought that puts the first half of the text’s title into play: “Will she become one of those women standing at Bathurst and Bloor, looking into the window of some store, plastic bags in her hand, looking into the window but not looking, forgetting that she is looking into the window because she is seeing some *other place* [?]” (197-98 ital. mine). Nonetheless, it is the embodied experience of missing that motivates Verlia to join the revolution in Grenada after she tries to work for Canadian social services under conditions that are woefully inadequate. When a woman comes in for help one day, Verlia cannot make her mouth produce the futile advice that she is supposed to deliver because she is suddenly, bodily overwhelmed by the multiple sensations that she associates with eating “tamarinds, sour, seedy and stringy” (195). The two women begin to cry together for no obvious reason, but Verlia suddenly stops when she tastes her tears and finds that they are “tepid and tasteless” (195). The narrator explains that her tears “did not taste brackish as they should,” and, shocked at her body’s betrayal of her pain, Verlia wonders, “how hopeless can the body be [?]” (195). When

she cannot clear the taste of tamarinds from her mouth in the following days, the tangible-incorporeal cluster of sensations leads to a sensory web of others: the colour and texture of Pomeracs, hanging lilac trees, mangy dogs, sugar on the tongue, distant braying, water sucked against conch-covered rocks, and others (199). She worries again, invoking the other half of the novel's title, "will she become one of those women arrested in the long gaze of better memories even if they weren't better, just *not here*?" (198 ital. mine). The fear that missing could degrade into nostalgia represents a crisis point for Verlia. The narrator comments with beguiling simplicity, "She might on a day like today decide to go back. Go back for something so small. Or she might walk all the way up Bathurst in the drizzle thinking of tamarinds and where things were now. But it would have to be something small in the end" (200). And, with the taste of tamarinds in her mouth, Verlia returns to the Caribbean. Hers is not a return to origins, however, as she heads for Grenada instead of her country of birth.

Verlia's diasporic-affective crisis of "missing" frightens her because it suddenly appears that, against her will, her body is a function of place. Following her instinct, however, she meets Elizete and learns that the reverse can also be true, that place can be a function of embodied living through acts of corporeal self-orientation and shared affective coordination. Having decided to survive despite being abandoned as a child, Elizete learned about self-orientation at a young age. In meeting Verlia, however, she is likewise re-oriented in a fundamental way by the experience of sexual, affective coordination with another woman. She describes the epiphany that she experiences in the advent of her sexual relationship with Verlia: "Everything make sense from then the way

flesh make sense settling into blood” (6). The power of this metaphor in part depends on the simplicity of the imagery that Brand invokes, imagery with which we are all intimately, bodily familiar. At the same time, the metaphor bears complex ontological and epistemological implications for the queer and the diasporic lives of the characters. The image of flesh settling into blood evokes the erotic sensuality of Elizete and Verlia’s sexual relationship, and also naturalizes their relationship in the most basic matter of human life. Because the figure describes a queer relationship, it pointedly defies heterosexist conventions that privilege heteronormative arrangements as singularly capable of creating the conditions for life-giving and pleasure-making sex. The proximity of the statement to the description of her husband’s frustrated departure only amplifies its embedded defiance. Elizete offers the insight immediately after describing how Isaiah, who had spent their married life whipping and raping her, simply goes mad. He reportedly spends his time sitting under a fishing net in Las Cuevas (5). The chronological benchmark “From then on,” therefore, records the start of a new temporality that begins in the moment of Isaiah’s defeat and departure as much as in Verlia’s and Elizete’s sexual, affective coordination. The metaphor also represents the clarifying effect of their relationship as defeating the ominous uncertainties of the past. For at what point in the living body does flesh settle into blood for the first time? Are they not, in the living body, *always* implicated in one another in a kinetic cellular exchange? In light of these considerations, the deceptively simple statement encapsulates the novel’s core idea that by taking control of the way they inhabit their own and each other’s bodies—in work, in sex, in migration, in war, and in language—Elizete and

Verlia provide each other with affective coordinates, a sense of embodied orientation that defies masculinist, sexualized violence and the displaced, haunted conditions of diasporic exile.

In *Parables for the Virtual* Massumi theorizes the human capacity to achieve orientation by enlarging on his basic ideas of human movement. He disputes the common understanding that orientation is a function of vision, and instead describes the embodied capacity for orientation as a function of proprioception, the human “sixth sense” that can be “defined as the sensibility proper to the muscles and ligaments as opposed to tactile sensibility (which is “exteroceptive”) and visceral sensibility (which is “interoceptive”)” (179, 59). Our muscles and ligaments, Massumi suggests, “register as conditions of movement what the skin internalizes as qualities,” so that “the hardness of the floor underfoot as one looks into a mirror becomes a resistance enabling station and movement; the softness of a cat’s fur becomes a lubricant for the motion of the hand” (59). From this affective capacity we develop “lived diagrams based on already lived experience, revived to orient further experience” that are cross-referenced with visual cues, but that are much more powerful than visual maps (186-87). He reflects: “Lived and relived: *biograms* might be a better word for them than ‘diagrams’” (187). What Massumi conceptualizes by raiding clinical science, Brand conceptualizes in *A Map to the Door of No Return* by raiding bird-watching manuals. She writes:

The rufous hummingbird travels five thousand miles from summer home to winter home and back. This hummingbird can fit into the palm of a hand. Its body defies the known physics of energy and flight. It knew its way before all known

map-makers. It is a bird whose origin and paths are the blood of its small body. It is a bird whose desire to find its way depends on drops of nectar from flowers. (6)

Massumi's writing inspires readers to think beyond that most fundamental catalogue of the human capacity to feel, the five senses. His meditation on a sixth, proprioception, conveys the idea that there is a hidden reserve of self-reflexive human ability that is invisible, but that guides us as we navigate our way through space. In essence, biograms turn spaces into places. Brand's description of the miraculous abilities of the rufous hummingbird signifies in much the same way as Massumi's proprioception, except that the scale of her depiction—the success of the small creature against overwhelming distances and odds—also carries a particularly diasporic charge.³⁵ This is especially true of her statement that the hummingbird's "origins and pathways are the blood of its small body" (6). In my initial readings of the text, my mind tended to supply the preposition "in" where it did not exist in the middle of the statement. When I finally noticed that the bird's routes are not *in* the blood but *are* the blood, the passage revealed a more profound message not only about abstract hope, but about the real abilities generated by the incorporeal dimension of the diasporic body.

If Brand's hummingbird and Massumi's biograms seek out hopeful potential in an innate ability to orient oneself in space, Brand's characters in *In Another Place, Not Here* demonstrate the challenge of what it means to also have to orient oneself in time, in unrecorded, disorienting histories of slavery. For, as I discussed earlier, Elizete's ancestors had not arrived in the Caribbean after orienting themselves in Africa for a long journey; in the narrator's words, "They had been taken. Plain. Hard. Rough." (41).

Having been taken “too far and without trace and without maps,” her ancestors are “trapped,” doomed to haunt the present through the bodies of the living “in the way a thumb was sucked, the way a head inclined, braid hanging” or “in straight-backed, stiff-kneed children who wanted to walk before they could crawl, in babies who refused food and died within a week of their arrival, [. . . and] in children who wouldn’t keep their clothes on” (44, 39, 40). Under a total obliteration of origins, the innate human capacity for orientation must struggle with the dizzying, nauseating presence of the eviscerated past.

Prior to meeting Verlia, Elizete’s life in Grenada is forcibly grounded by powers both incorporeal and corporeal. Her immobilization is enforced by an inherited disorientation and her husband’s whip. What minimal connection to place that does exist to Elizete was created when, as a child, she imposed meaning on the nothingness that her ancestor Adela discovered. Elizete’s narrative recalls the creative labour of naming every plant, rock, and landmark, a slow lonely process of re-rooting necessitated by Adela’s un-naming, the terrible uprooting performed by her adopted great-great-great-grandmother when she was torn from Africa and shipped to Grenada as a slave. In meeting Verlia, however, Elizete suddenly achieves a sense of direction that is not bound by the diasporic need for origins or immobilized by the burden of history. Though the women’s sexual practices violate Caribbean cultural norms, the act of their coming together in unprecedented feeling creates the affective coordination that is necessary to their sense of orientation in diaspora.

The sexual relationship between the hyper-mobile intellectual Verlia and the re-rooted plantation worker Elizete is passionate and sensual, but, defined by their work in the cane fields and their respective experiences in the diaspora, must not be read as conventionally romantic. Their queerness intersects with their lives as field workers in uneven, unpredictable ways because they approach the same scene from radically different directions, each with her own momentum. Elizete becomes angry, for instance, when, lying in bed, Verlia lightly kisses the scars inflicted by Isaiah that criss-cross her legs. Having caught Elizete as she tried to run away to the train station, he had whipped her with the “Same rhythm” they used to cut the cane, and Elizete “knows that there is no kiss deep enough for that” (55). Brand’s use of the whip image strikes a continuity between the violent contempt Elizete suffers at the hands of her husband in the neo-colonial plantation economy and the horrific conditions of slavery that ought to be a fact of the past. In “Written in the Scars: History, Genre, and Materiality in Dionne Brand’s *In Another Place, Not Here*,” Pamela McCallum and Christian Olbey concentrate on how this continuity is represented throughout the entire novel by reading it as a postmodern appropriation of the antebellum slave narrative. They write that “Brand’s representation of the ubiquity of the whip reminds us of the connection between past and present forms of coercion. It also reminds us [. . .] that the production of commodities such as sugar from the southern global regions remains bound up with relations of domination secured by the relentless, brutal exercise of force” (173). For all of the incorporeal promise that Elizete and Verlia’s erotic bodies generate together, then, Elizete’s discomfort during this erotic scene also shows that embodied hope must contend with the deadened, non-

regenerative scar tissue inscribing both Elizete's legs and the corporeal history of the black diaspora.

Paradoxically, the brute conditions of the cane field—described in Verlia's journal as “one step short of slavery”—provide the conditions for the women's graceful eroticism and their reorientation (220). Elizete remembers Verlia's naïve ambition, Verlia “sweating as if she come out of a river [. . .] she head running ahead of we, she eyes done cut all the cane,” and instead of feeling dismissive towards the foreign intellectual, she recalls, “That is the first time I feel like licking she neck” (15). Verlia's attraction for Elizete emerges in a more abstract way, but likewise emerges from her lover's affective relation to the land. Focalizing through Verlia, the narrator explains: “When they'd first met she thought that she was the one who knew everything, and how she was going to change this country woman into a revolutionary like her, but then something made her notice that she was the one who had doubts and what she was saying she merely said but Elizete felt and knew” (202). To borrow again Massumi's distinction between a visual map and a biogram: Verlia arrives to promote radical socialism in Grenada with what she thinks is a complete economic-historical discursive “map” of the cultural situation, but her map is affectively deficient. She is out of touch with the people's sense of their place in the local landscape and culture, and is subsequently transfixed by Elizete's deeply embodied sense of orientation. The narrator describes Verlia's connection to Elizete's biogrammatic sensibility through sex and the hope that this affective coordination brings:

It was usually close to morning when [Verlia] missed [Elizete], when she reached over and felt for her, hoping that she was there and sensing another thing, the

room full of hoping. She knew that she was safe with a woman who knew how to look for rain, what to listen for in birds in the morning [. . .] She needed someone who believed that the world could be made over as simply as that, as simply as deciding to do it, but more, not just knowing that it had to be done but needing it to be done and simply doing it. (202)

Elizete's profoundly felt biogram of her place in the diaspora creates new coordinates for Verlia. By connecting with Elizete, Verlia comes to a clearer understanding of her own struggle to urge the island workers to revolution and to enlightened living. Verlia's perception of Elizete's rootedness causes self-doubt in Verlia, but it also equips her with a new, embodied sense of purpose. The characters' coordination with one another also provides Elizete with a fresh sense of direction. Her re-rooted attachment to place may radiate an alluring certainty for Verlia, but Elizete is aware that it evidences a degree of resignation to political and personal immobilization. Verlia's earnest efforts counteract this imposed fixity. Though Verlia is ideologically overzealous, she inspires and mobilizes Elizete. By setting the sexual and political dimensions of their affective coordination against the historically overwrought context of the cane field, Brand represents their brief triumph over the immediate and historical, local and global conditions of their diasporic existence.

Brand's fixation on the relationship between their work and their sex, moreover, embodies a particularly queer and female triumph over their diasporic circumstances. Their victory signifies doubly as a victory over the body-wrecking conditions of production in the cane field and the body-morphing demands of heterosexual

reproduction. Elizete and Verlia's affective coordination manifests itself in the sexual synchronization of their bodies. Elizete describes their total, mutual indulgence: "I abandon everything for Verlia. I sink in Verlia and let she flesh swallow me up. I devour she. She open me up like any morning. Limp, limp and rain light, soft to the marrow. She make me wet. She tongue scorching like hot sun" (5). Their sex is valuable for the pleasure it generates in and of itself as it washes away the pains of hard work, but this pleasure is also a forceful denial of the uses to which their bodies would be put in the heterosexist logic of slave and neo-colonial economies, economies that figure reproductive labour as the key to ongoing productive labour.

Elizete and Verlia's victory is not just a victory over the pains of the day, but also an overarching victory over the gender and sexual particularities of exploitative, dehumanizing global economies. To this end, Brand establishes, but also queers, a continuity between their affective indulgence and the acts of spiteful bodily disavowal that were performed by Elizete's adoptive great-great-great-grandmother, Adela. Forced to bear children as a slave, Adela "did not learn the grace of drying up her womb after even eight children" and "she mothered not a one. [. . .] She only see their face as bad luck and grudge them the milk from her breast. She eat paw-paw seed to make them sick in the womb" and to curse them for life (18-19). Elizete's adoptive mother figure, Mirelda Josefena—or in Elizete's preferred phrase, "the woman I was given to"—also attacks her own body for the purpose of destroying Adela's forced lineage. Though Mirelda Josefena has an inherent brilliance for planting, growing, and selling produce, she loathes the prospect of raising people because they will certainly bear the signs of

Adela's curse (30, 34). She "Tie[s] her womb in brackish water. Drink cassava tea from the first day. Starch it stiff" (31-32). And when the abandoned Elizete wanders in her back yard as a child and bears the signs of Adela anyway, Mirelda can only perpetuate the poisonous cycle by complaining bitterly and frequently.³⁶

Elizete and Verlia's queer resistance of the sexualization of labour, however, defeats the cycle of miserable reproduction that begins with Adela and that persists despite her descendants' best efforts to destroy their own capacity for reproduction. Elizete and Verlia's labour participates in, but also queers non-reproductive resistance so that it is a continuing act of bodily noncompliance and a necessary source of hope. The signifier "GRACE" opens this novel as Elizete studies Verlia in the field, and near the novel's close, Verlia resurrects this concept as she watches Elizete. She laughs at herself, "That she would envy hardship [. . .] That she would fall in love with the arc of a woman's arm, long and one with a cutlass, slicing a cane stalk and not stopping but arcing and slicing again [. . .] That the woman would look up and catch her looking and she would hate herself for interrupting such *avenging grace*" (202-03 ital. mine). "What made her notice that she was the one needing," the narrator explains of Verlia, "was that grace, that gesture taking up all the sky" (202-03). As I discussed earlier, grace is more than a condition of easy movement, but its suggestion of bodily dynamism and ascendant beauty is central to Brand's representation of how these women save one another through avenging grace. Brand shows that the female body has the corporeal capacity to double life through reproduction, but that in the black diaspora this can also be a doubling of historical agonies that further split and reproduce again, on and on, into the future. My

understanding of Elizete and Verlia's rupture of this continuity thus draws on Massumi's faith that even the singular body has the capacity to produce hope by producing potential through feeling. Elizete and Verlia's queerness represents a refusal to mobilize women's corporeal capacity to bear life, but as they wash each other in physical pleasure and incorporeal affect, their sexual labour and affective coordination is their saving grace.

My reading of the relationship between queerness and diaspora in *In Another Place, Not Here* bears a fundamental difference from my reading of this relationship in the other novels under study in this dissertation. As in *In Another Place, Not Here*, Selvadurai, Choy, and Mootoo make a point of refusing to represent their characters under the signs of increasingly-globalized, Euro-American gay and lesbian identities. In the other novels, however, queerness is, with considerable consistency, portrayed as a relatively fixed social-discursive position into which young characters wander unawares or which they recognize and struggle to preempt. Queerness is manifest in a wide array of practices, desires, and pleasures from one novel to the next, but its representation in the other three novels always lends itself to a discussion of social-discursive resistance and resignification. Each of these three novels invites such a discussion by representing children and adolescents who are unfamiliar with language, power, rigid hierarchies, and the complex rules that govern sex and gender codes. As a result, substantial sections of these novels are dedicated to the characters' negotiation of the frictions and slips between nascent sexual feeling and normative sex-gender discourses. Queerness is represented as a potentially threatening reversal of positions in the Taoist sex-gender balance in *The Jade Peony*; as a discursive site at which the erroneous conflation of gender, sex, and

sexuality becomes shockingly clear in *Funny Boy*; and as a taboo position defined more by globally-recognizable-but-highly-localized attitudes of disgust and contempt than by bodily practices in *Cereus Blooms at Night*. Using different strategies, these novelists work at altering the value of queerness by asserting the overarching importance of unity in diasporic displacement or by queering a diasporic longing for origins. By queering diasporic longing, characters produce narratives of belonging, whether by selectively harmonizing with normative characters around them, or by staking out diasporic positions while defiantly resisting the heterosexist norms that inflect the diasporic identities around them.

Brand's main characters, in contrast, consider concepts of "belonging" and "love" to be naïve to the point of being undesirable, and while they are self-conscious that they are breaking social norms, they are certainly not tortured by the disapproval that greets their social deviation. The narrator describes Verlia's coming into queerness as a gradually realized preference that surfaces only after she had tried sleeping with men but found herself thinking about "her breasts in the curve of a woman's, her legs wide to her tongue, her lips warm to her face" (204). Consumed with trying to orient herself in the black diaspora, there is no particular sexual identity that Verlia claims for herself as a queer woman. She is, however, definite about what she does *not* want from sexual-social encounters with other women: "She wants nothing more. Not the bed that comes with it, not the kitchen, not the key to the door. She hates the sticky domesticity lurking behind them. [. . .] Just her sparse room [. . .] and sometimes a woman with her back to kiss, her company to keep all night" (204). When Elizete eventually asks why Verlia stays with

her, Verlia misinterprets the question as an effort to produce just such a relation of emotional ownership. She writes in her diary: “I don’t want to be responsible like that for anyone. I can’t stand the feeling of being attached” (223). In yet another entry she asks, “How many times have I heard that this is what fucks up revolutions?” (218). The risks, for Verlia, are clearly more about the effect of her emotional involvement on the integrity of her radical socialist agenda than on her sense of belonging in a bourgeois heterosexual paradigm. Elizete’s rejection of “love” comes from a very different perspective, but, having been married to a rapist and violent abuser, she also treats the conventions of heterosexual romance with flat disbelief. She describes her relationship with Verlia as “Coarse like a bolt of crocus sacking full of its load of coconuts” (76). For Verlia, heteronormative models of romance threaten to impose political hypocrisy and affective stasis; for Elizete, they are simply a lie. In the wake of a nasty argument with Verlia, Elizete thinks: “I wouldn’t call nothing we do love because love too simple. All the soft-legged oil, all the nakedness brushing, all the sup of neck and arms and breasts. All that touching. Nothing simple about it. All that opening up like breaking bones” (78). In the richly corporeal language of Elizete’s narrative, sustaining a sexual-affective connection with Verlia is harder than being in the field. Whereas characters in other novels harmonize queer experiences with diasporic families as they undergo careful negotiations of identity and belonging, Brand’s characters preemptively reject—and are already excluded from—discourses of love and belonging that structure the other novelists’ representations of identity, family, and diaspora.³⁷

Because the revolutionaries' massacre in Grenada is narrated as the final, most highly charged episode in the novel, I will follow Brand's lead and discuss it after I engage with Elizete's traumatic experiences in Toronto even though, chronologically, Verlia's death precedes that voyage. Very early on in the text, it is evident that Elizete is so disturbed by the loss of her lover that she is helplessly pulled to Canada as if by an affective gravity. The narrative of Elizete's childhood concludes with a description of how she was "beckoned" into a house for the first time by her resentful adoptive mother (45). Brand uses this moment to segue from a representation of Elizete as a lost child to a representation of Elizete as a lost adult. Having shown the reader Elizete on her way indoors, the next section begins: "She'd landed up here though, the square mall of the donut shop, gape open to the road and iron Canadian National [. . .] blooded with rust, smelted out of the side of the donut shop, frozen in mottled iron wall, dropped into the street below" (46). What is a hidden, overlooked site for Canadian eyes is, for Elizete, an originary discovery: "Today she was Columbus" (47). This figuring signifies hope and purposeful direction that initially seems only to be a semi-ironic parody of the colonial explorer narrative. After all, though she lacks the colonial will to conquer and exploit, Elizete's earnest faith and sense of purpose are genuine. It quickly becomes apparent, however, that Elizete's mission is driven by the most incoherent of hopes, a desperate dream born out of neo-colonial military violence in Grenada. She migrates to Canada to rediscover the affective orientation that Verlia had provided, as if she could re-establish a sense of direction by coordinating with Verlia's last Canadian lover, political associates, family, and geography. Even before she steps into alienating Canadian spaces, however,

Brand makes Elizete's affective disorientation perceptible. The fact that her disorientation sets in before she steps foot in Canada does not absolve Canadian culture for aggravating and amplifying that condition; instead, this continuity underscores the property of compatibility that characterizes global networks of neo-colonial power. Different national systems enact violence on diasporic bodies differently, but in concert with one another. Massumi's text argues optimistically that the affective body is a powerful locus of hope. Brand's representation does not disabuse this notion, but it does emphasize with painstaking clarity that the affective dimension of human experience, particularly for the racialized diasporic body, is fragile and must not be misrecognized as an easy source of agency or directed, goal-oriented hope. The narrator describes Elizete's affective unravelling in response to Verlia's death: "She tried to mash her own face in with a stone when Verlia went. She'd held it in her hand and pounded and pounded, but Verlia was still gone. Over and over the stone in her hand moved to the pulp of her mouth, hoping" (50). The mouth, the source of so much pleasure and power, is crushed as Elizete's body turns upon itself. This intensification of feeling and hope describes an affective implosion rather than the kind of incorporeal externalization that Massumi describes, and when the futile act fails to produce Verlia at home, Elizete's "hope" pulls her to seek for her traces in Canada.

Traditional definitions of diaspora emphasize traumatic departures from homelands, but Brand's work also emphasizes the trauma of arrival, a narrative that is under total erasure in Canadian ideologies of multicultural harmony. Proving such ideologies to be overidealized, Elizete's condition of affective fracture worsens

dramatically when she crosses into Canada. As with her analysis of crippling nostalgia in *A Map to the Door of No Return*, Brand in *In Another Place, Not Here* represents dislocation as, at least in part, the effect of a racist host culture that overwhelms the individual's embodied coping strategies. When Elizete arrives at Canadian customs she is raped. The violent practice is made possible because of systemic biases that assign different values to different bodies. The following quotation from Brand's novel elaborates affectively on Grandea's non-fiction account in *Uneven Gains*, cited earlier in this chapter, that describes Canadian female domestic workers who were regularly accused of promiscuity and subjected to sexual scrutiny at the hands of Canadian customs agents. The passage in *In Another Place, Not Here* is not narrated in first person stream-of-consciousness, nor is it third person narration. Instead, this passage, in a rare mode of address for *In Another Place, Not Here*, uses the second person to place the reader in the position of victim. Brand writes:

A man you don't know bends you against a wall, a wall in a room, your room. He says this is the procedure, he says you have no rights here, he says I can make it easier for you if I want, you could get sent back. His dick searches your womb. He says you girls are all the same, whores, sluts, you'll do anything. His dick is a machete, a knife, all the sharp things found on a kitchen table. He says don't think about moving I can find you. (89)

Elizete, "flat against the white wall," develops an instant biogram in which she is immobilized. Hoping to restore a feeling of affective coordination with Verlia's memory, Elizete travels to Canada in an attempt to reverse Verlia's migratory path. Instead, she is

forced to disassociate herself from place as she had done previously under Isaiah's whip and abuse. Whereas her coordination with Verlia produced a sensory economy of grace that blurs, blends, and overflows feeling, in Canada she maps a void. Pinned by the customs agent, "She is drawn just so, to navigate, to scarecrow such a surface, immense, flat like the world now drawn just so, to navigate the air, to scarecrow the world, flat like pain, sharp like the world again, her hands feel her mouth, spread-eagled against the immense white wall, the continent" (89). Elizete's most reliable strength, her biogrammatic sense of re-rooted place that was once so highly prized by Verlia, completely collapses into a shocking social and spatial disorientation in the act of arrival. She comes to find that "no matter how much she walked it, no matter if she set herself to knowing, she could not size [this place] up. It resisted knowing, the words would not come" (69). Not only does Elizete fail to produce the words that will organize place cognitively, but she also is incapable of engaging affectively with it: "Her names would not do for this place. A place was tangible [. . .] It smelled of some odour, mixtures, it filled your breath, it was appealing and disgusting. [But] She had no one here, no blood turned thick and cut into edible slabs" (70). Elizete's displacement to and in Canada reveals that even when a re-rooted relationship to place is achieved in the black diaspora, the *capacity* for achieving familiarity can be unwilling to travel with the body. The strategies of home- and place-making that had ensured her survival in one place fail utterly in another.

Brand depicts the crude, dismembering violence of the rape with a sharp intensity, but she also draws out the impact of the experience by representing the embodied

anxieties that such events generate. Through another diasporic character's anecdote, Brand allegorizes the Canadian government's capacity to manifest itself as a force internal to the diasporic body. The anecdote shows how such internalized control prevents affective collectivity and inspires self-destruction. Elizete's friend Jocelyn recalls being in a house filled with other female diasporic workers when a man in the house shouts, "Immigration!" (80). Jocelyn, who has only recently given birth to firm up her chances of gaining legal status, pushes herself to run, and says, "it was like the house split in seven or eight. [. . .] Nobody care who get trampled, nobody care who get catch" (80). She and one of the other women crash through a window; her friend is so scared that when she lands, she "didn't even feel the bone come through her skin" as her leg breaks on impact with the ground (81). Jocelyn concludes her story by describing how they fell down laughing when they heard others laughing and realized it was a joke, "[she with] broken white bone and tear up skin and me with blood between my legs" (81). The narratives of Elizete's rape and Jocelyn's escape articulate the monstrosity of male power with the terrifying power wielded by those who patrol Canadian borders and purge Canadian territories. Though the rape describes a direct attack and the escape a ubiquitous internalized violence, both episodes narrate instances where the black female body becomes fundamentally oriented around the threat of Canadian state power. In representing the bodily consequences of both corporeal and incorporeal racialized-sexualized power, Brand contests the myths of benevolent, or even tolerant, multiculturalism that dominate in Canadian culture. The final image in Jocelyn's anecdote embodies the aporia of being poor, black, dislocated, and female in Canada.

Even as the last fluid traces of childbearing trickle out of her body, Jocelyn is not afforded the privilege of remaining tranquil; with a shattered leg, her friend is rendered incapable of running: possibilities for both stillness and mobility are bodily negated in the Canadian context. If Elizete and Verlia had once affectively oriented themselves as surely as flesh settling into blood, Jocelyn and her friend are disoriented themselves as decisively as broken bone tearing through flesh. Disoriented, all they can do is fall over laughing.

Elizete's quest for Verlia's last lover in Canada closes in on a character named Abena. Brand begins to intercut the narrative of Elizete and Abena's numb encounter with Verlia's final heated days in the Grenadian revolution. Juxtaposed against scenes of armed rebellion, Elizete and Abena's meeting is anti-climactic. The two do not find much sense of future direction, but they manage to establish a brief synchronicity in their mutual longing and mourning for Verlia. As such, their long-awaited meeting offers the reader a measure of closure, even if it is closure that deliberately falls short of providing comfortable resolution. When their grief is dramatically overshadowed by Verlia's final burst of suicidal political resistance, it becomes clear that comfort and resolution are the furthest things from Brand's mind in her conclusion of this novel. Though the event of Verlia's death is periodically foreshadowed throughout Elizete's narrative, Brand's representation of Verlia's death is still a climax of affect, a total submergence in the possibility of the incorporeal through a refusal of the bonds of the corporeal.

Before her death, Verlia's diary entries describe peaking tensions within Grenada's Marxist government, the Caribbean international community, and the

transnational hemisphere. Verlia reports on the execution of Grenada's leader, on the American organization of a navy force to "protect" its citizens in Grenada, and on lies about looting reported on the BBC (224, 226). By mediating these grand historical events through Verlia's personal diary, *In Another Place, Not Here* takes up a faster pace of narration as it builds to a specific boiling point in Grenada's history. The diary entries progressively sketch out a situation where the leadership of the socialist revolution is seized by a militarized splinter group who arrests and then executes "Clive," the charismatic leader of the established revolution. Faced with this turn of events, Verlia judges their socialist mission to be a failure. Surprised by the people's ensuing outrage, however, she recognizes the revolution as a genuine triumph. Verlia's rapid dispatching of political-historical details prods readers to notice that, though the island remains unnamed in the text, the novel's claim to history is far from imagined.

Brand's novel deviates from historical accounts of Grenada's socialist demise by slightly disrupting the temporality. Brand seems to draw out the events of October 19, 1983—Grenada's "Bloody Wednesday"—over a few days. On the one hand, this mild temporal distortion is necessary for Brand's project of recording the events in the personal hand of the character Verlia. Even slightly drawn out, the series of events is already compressed in the novel, and had she tried to represent them in the even *more* tightly compressed time frame in which the events actually occurred, Verlia would not have had time to note them textually. Nonetheless, Verlia records a series of events akin to those that transpired on "Bloody Wednesday," including the liberation of Grenada's leader at the insistence of the people; the execution of this leader by a challenging party

member; the rising of the people in protest; and the usurper's militarized effort to put down unarmed protesters and lightly-armed dissidents with the use of heavily-armed personnel carriers. Brand records this last event, in which many men, women, and children were driven over a cliff at Fort Rupert, as the haunting event that is deferred until the final pages in *In Another Place, Not Here*. Brand's novel retains a degree of ambiguity in that her representation does not identify the hyper-militarized aggressors as a competing group of militant Marxist revolutionaries whereas historians tend to identify them as such. Historical accounts consistently represent the events of "Bloody Wednesday" as the climax to a long-building conflict between Marxist leaders in Grenada's revolutionary government. Events on this day saw supporters of Maurice Bishop, the usurped Prime Minister of the People's Revolutionary Government—"Clive" in Brand's novel—pitted against militarized supporters of Bernard Coard, his erstwhile Deputy Prime Minister. Verlia's jotting down of momentous history does not identify the splinter group as Marxist revolutionaries, even though the group claimed this identity for itself. Instead, Brand suggests only that the group misrepresents itself and she rejects it without giving it name. Verlia describes the pretenders as "Fucking hypocrites" and dismisses the integrity of their pseudo-Marxist call for Grenadian isolation. She writes, "The only thing they want to isolate and kill here is socialism" (226).³⁸ Even so, the details that Verlia cites as she claims ultimate triumph for the real Marxist revolution are supported by the facts as they are reported in non-fiction historical texts. For instance, Kai Schoenhals explains in *Revolution and Intervention in Grenada* that the protest against Bishop's arrest included 10,000 people, or 10% of Grenada's population (75); the

protest that moved to Fort Rupert included about 3,000 people, many of whom were “uniformed schoolchildren” (76). Schoenhals also describes how Coard’s People’s Revolutionary Army dispatched three Soviet personnel carriers who, in firing on the crowd at Fort Rupert, drove many Bishop supporters “fifty to ninety feet to their deaths” as they jumped from the walls “to escape the shells and machine-gun fire from the three armoured cars” (77). Some historians, including Schoenhals, record that the pro-Bishop faction opened fire first while others, including Gregory Sandford and Richard Vigilante in *Grenada: the Untold Story* and Mark Adkins in *Urgent Fury*, record that Coard’s armoured cars opened fire in a pre-meditated slaughter of the population. However they record and interpret the details of this day, historians generally agree that these destabilizing events were exploited by the American government as an opportunity for invasion or intervention.

Brand creates an elongated temporality as she represents the collapse of the government, the execution of the usurped leader, and the slaughter at the fort over a few days. While the dismantling of the Grenadian government was spread out over multiple days, the freeing of Bishop from house arrest, the protests, the massacre at Fort Rupert, and the execution of Bishop all transpired on October 19; some historians cite the events of this day to rationalize America’s subsequent invasion on October 26. By representing the events over a series of days, Brand documents real atrocities while discrediting the narrative of urgent intervention that the American government produced to rationalize their planned invasion of Grenada. Brand’s steady pacing of events gestures to deep histories of globalized racial-colonial domination, histories that are under threat of

erasure by historical narratives that frame the American invasion as a heroic response to Grenada's sudden implosion.

Considering the violence currently being performed upon other nations' sovereignties, global grassroots protesters, and the very concepts of truth and responsibility in the context of the west's War on Terror, Brand's critique of self-righteous intervention signifies with even more importance today than when *In Another Place, Not Here* was published in 1996. An example of just such a narrative is introduced in the first lines of the preface to Sanford and Vigilante's *Grenada: the Untold Story*. They write: "The Grenada revolution destroyed itself. This fact is beyond dispute" (ix). Inadvertently acknowledging that it is not beyond dispute, they continue to explain that the destruction "was accomplished not by the CIA, nor by the bands of foreign mercenaries," but in an act of "fratricide" committed by "Bishop's closest comrades" (xi).

This kind of thinking is also exemplified in Adkin's *Urgent Fury*, a lengthy analysis written not by a scholar but by "a soldier who had the good fortune to be [in Grenada] when it was all happening" (xii). Adkin's precisely detailed project, which works from Grenadian eye-witness reports, American eye-witness reports, and military maps and transcripts, actually exposes many American military duplicities and errors. For instance, he provides evidence that the American government's proclaimed motivation for entering Grenada—the rescue of American medical students from its Grenada-based medical school—was a "smokescreen" for its desire to destroy an expanding Caribbean communist threat and to restore the confidence of a military that had fared badly in

Vietnam and Nicaragua (263-64, 130). While Adkin's facts thus afford readers the opportunities to read the "intervention" as a morally deficient invasion, he provides ideological signposts suggesting that it should not be read this way. His reading, like that of Sandford and Vigilante, frames the struggle as a triumph of America over Marxism. In describing a tense meeting between the leaders of the People's Revolutionary Government, for instance, Adkin details the meeting's opening and then writes: "The rest of the meeting was largely an orgy of self-criticism in true Marxist style" (29). This ideological context is evident long before this description. On the first page of his introduction, he characterizes socialist Grenada as "A communist nutmeg [that] was smashed by an enormous American sledgehammer" (xiii).³⁹ His introduction acknowledges that the invasion was decried by the international community and that it "flouted" international law, but that these criticisms, while "predictable, [. . .] ignored the thousands of Grenadians who took to the streets waving, smiling, holding up 'God Bless America' signs" (xiii). Reproduced in the context of my analysis, Adkins' rhetoric seems ludicrous. However, not only does it take up the mainstream American interpretation of the events in Grenada, it directly foreshadows the rhetoric that currently dominates news media descriptions of America's presence in Iraq.

If Verlia's diary entries represent a self-consciously textual counter-narrative of the events leading up the massacre at Fort Rupert, Brand's style in depicting her character's final stand represents a self-consciously affective counter-narrative of the event. The latter is just as important as the former, Brand's writing suggests, because it embodies the thousands of injustices imposed on thousands of bodies that day and

because it forms a continuity with the countless injustices imposed on countless bodies in the centuries before. This episode evokes a particular historical event in Grenada's past that also constituted an embodied protest against global-colonial power. As he describes the colonial history of Grenada, Schoenhals describes how, following Columbus' "European discovery" of the island, French colonizers from Martinique began to exploit it. They strove to annihilate the indigenous Carib people whose island it was. He explains that "By 1654, the French had pushed the Carib Indians to the northernmost cliff of the island. Rather than surrender, the Caribs—men, women and children—jumped to their death into the ocean below" (2). The place of their death is now called La Morne des Sauteurs, or Leaper's Hill (2). Schoenhals does not construct a connection between the deaths at La Morne des Sauteurs and the deaths at Fort Rupert, but his statement that the spectacular death of the Caribs is "much depicted and commemorated in present-day Grenada" suggests that such a connection would be recognizable for readers familiar with Grenada (2). While Brand's narrator does not explicitly invoke the Caribs' history, then, Verlia's leap performs an embodied citation of the island's earliest anti-colonial resistance as well as issuing an improvised, personal gesture of radical defiance.

The novel shifts from Verlia's diary into third person narration as it concentrates on the day of her final rebellion. Waking in a cemetery with a group of fellow revolutionaries and Elizete, Verlia feels fire rage all through her body, and vows not to die passively. She marshals the group and leads them running to an unnamed fort that overlooks a harbour and offers "comfort [in its] stone walls" (245). On entering the confined space, however, the group is immediately cut off from behind. Armoured cars

open fire with massive guns. Elizete's response is typical of her biogrammatic sensibility, her connection to the land. She hits the ground, and even smiles as she reflects on the predictability of her physical response: "solid as usual, [her body's] usual weight hitting something solid, ground." (245-46). Turning to share this thought with Verlia, however, she sees her lover embodying an opposite but equally biogrammatic response. She sees Verlia "running, turning, leap off the cliff [. . .] her back leap, her face awake, all of her soar, her arms out wide, her chest pulling air" (246). In the next paragraph the narrator's scope broadens, focalizing through the perspective of a distant spectator on the other side of the harbour. He "saw them fall [. . .] heard the pound, pound, pound *po, po, po, po, pound* of the guns [. . .] saw them tumble, hit, break their necks, legs, spines, down the cliff" (246). Having admitted to the fact of mass bodily destruction in the past tense, the narrator switches into present tense and focuses tightly on Verlia flying: "She's leaping. She's tasting her own tears and she is weightless and deadly" (246). Though this tasting suggests that Verlia reads her own body for its affective coding as she flies, the remainder of this passage transcends the corporeality of affect and dwells on an incorporeal state that represents freedom from the oppressed diasporic body. Brand's depiction of Verlia as she flies over the cliff's edge signals that, while the activities constituting Grenada's revolutionary crisis cannot be altered by a novel published in 1996, the way that they are recorded, interpreted, and used for future thinking can be affected.

My description of Verlia as reading her own affective coding as she falls both contradicts and harmonizes with Massumi's sense of affect. On the one hand, his work on affect is explicitly directed against humanities theory that understands political resistance

in terms of signifying, coding, and reading acts (2). As I discuss in other chapters of this dissertation, however, I think of affect as the body's means of signifying to itself and I maintain that literature is capable of not only representing embodied feeling for readers, but producing feeling in readers. Brand does not represent Verlia as "crying," a word that gestures to an emotional experience. Brand represents Verlia as tasting her tears: this self-referential sensory signifying act confirms the reality of this unimaginable moment for the character and for the reader. Brand is not inviting readers to identify with Verlia's emotion. Emotion is absent as she has her readers imagine the taste of their own tears, and in imagining this minor, insignificant act, to merge that sensation with a sudden, dizzying sense of dropping through air. The novel's imagery does not contain, but dislocates.

And while my description of affect as a self-referential signifying act is at odds with Massumi's repeated rejections of linguistics rhetoric, it is comparable to his elaborated description of biograms as lived diagrams. He writes, "Each biogram [. . .] is a virtual topological superposition of a potentially infinite series of self-repetitions. A biogram doubles back on itself in such a way as to hold all of its potential variations on itself in itself: in its own cumulatively open, self-referential event" (194). Massumi writes of biograms at the level of the individual who navigates architectural spaces, but I read it in Brand's work as an experience of transnational diasporic dislocation. Because she constantly disrupts the sense of linear time that defines most novels' plots, Brand is able to establish patterns and variations on characters' movements to represent the idea of radical openness to possibilities that are created, but not predetermined, by past

mobilities. Verlia's flying over the cliff edge, then, is familiar to readers because it once again embodies her restless, urgent movements across vast geographies, and, at the same time, represents an unexpected assertion of radical openness to new mobilities. On the one hand, a biogram signifies familiarity and repetition, anticipating and exercising one's capacity for mobility in space; Massumi describes it as "a perceptual reliving" (194). On the other hand, it means producing a capacity for infinite futures out of past actions that were themselves manifestations of infinite mobilities. Verlia's leap is both.

The intense affective charge of this episode—manifest in the episode's form and content—allows readers to clearly perceive that, contrary to Massumi's separation of affect and language, literature can reproduce affective potential. The final climax of *In Another Place, Not Here* suddenly compresses Brand's message, a message which the rest of the novel explores in depth: the body is not merely a passive site upon which history is inscribed, but is an active producer of future histories and, therefore, a living source of hope.

Though terrible, Verlia's final mobility is also euphoric and inspiring. Her incorporeal inhabitation of the liminal phase between life and death is a release from the forced condition of affective restlessness that drives her every move throughout the novel. The narrator describes how, in falling, "She feels nothing except the bubble of a laugh each time she breathes. [. . .] Her body has fallen away, is just a line, an electric current, sign of lightning left after lightning, a faultless arc to the deep turquoise deep. She doesn't need air. She's in some other place already, less tortuous, less fleshy" (246-47). If Brand plays on the title of the novel in earlier moments to describe "another place"

as the affect-negating experience of numbing nostalgia, she invokes the same phrase here to portray its opposite, a utopian “other place” that is the total maximization of affect.

Despite the narrator’s and Verlia’s own ecstasy, the intensity of Verlia’s final flight creates an openness for multiple, conflicting emotions. Driven to leap by armoured car fire, Verlia embodies proud defiance and crushing defeat in equal measure. What does it signify that the novel’s ultimate affective triumph is also a total defeat? Verlia’s silent leap screams out a counter-narrative of historical events that were twisted to justify the American invasion of Grenada and reenacts a counter-narrative first performed by Grenada’s original inhabitants. Her biogrammatic re-doubling is not just a repetition of her own potential for movement, but also affectively channels feeling from a similar leap taken by Caribbean islanders in 1654. Brand’s final question reintroduces a quality of openness into a capitalist narrative that often exaggerates the “death” of socialism. Verlia, and the surge of political energy that she represents, are not necessarily and finally defeated. Brand represents the collapse of Grenadian socialism in such a way that it occurs *despite* the successes of the system and the will of the people. Her novel represents one defeat that happens to have occurred at one time under unusual historical conditions of political hypocrisy and betrayal. The affective content and form of the novel assert that the event was not an inevitability and has not foreclosed potential for the present. Verlia recorded the revolution as a triumph in her diary. Brand’s final representation, then, does not portray a condition of loss, of final defeat for black diasporic activism. Instead, by weaving hints of Verlia’s leap throughout the body of the text before representing the event itself, Brand asks readers to think about the slipperiness

of history's powerful grasp in personal and cultural terms. Her final depiction of Verlia bursts open a sense of the innumerable, unpredictable futures that can be produced by the affective body, and the words "in another place, not here" begin to signify as a promise of a rejuvenated affective politics rather than an eternal diasporic deferral.

Conclusion

I began the introduction to this dissertation by querying the first half of the project's title, asking "just what is a diasporic sexuality, anyways?" I will begin this conclusion by querying the second half of the title. The title *Diasporic Sexualities in Contemporary Canadian Fiction* invites readers to ask, "if the sexualities are diasporic, why is the fiction Canadian? Why are the texts themselves not described as diasporic, or not described at all?" As with the questions I asked in my project's introduction, simple answers to these questions are readily available but quickly fall apart under close inspection. If *The Jade Peony* is Canadian because it is set entirely in Canada, what does this say about *Cereus Blooms at Night*, which is not set in Canada—let alone the real world—at all? If Selvadurai's introduction to *Story-Wallah!* openly praises Canada for giving him an opportunity to write freely about ethnicity, what does this mean for Brand's *A Map to the Door of No Return*, a text that harshly criticizes Canadian multiculturalism for its privileging of nostalgic origins to the exclusion of Canadian political involvement? My title suggests that the texts belong to the Canadian imaginary, yet the idea of belonging to a nation-state is inherently antithetical to the diaspora concept; considered as a group, moreover, Mootoo's, Choy's, Selvadurai's, and Brand's texts only further complicate a title that speaks "diaspora" and "Canadian-ness" in one breath.

I include the reference to "Canadian fiction" in my title precisely because it grounds the concept of "diaspora" and points to the kinds of difficult questions about belonging that are raised by the texts themselves. Concepts like diaspora enable us to

recognize that we live in an era of accelerated globalization, and they provide important vocabularies for describing experiences of de-territorialization that exceed the category of the nation-state. We must remain aware, however, that the mobile diasporic body is not somehow free from the boundaries that mark nation-states' territories or that regulate the production of national identity. This kind of analysis is present in my discussion of Brand's concept of "missing," for example, when she describes the tangible, inconsolable longing of the diasporic body for another place, a longing that she distinguishes from the apolitical "nostalgia" that is cultivated under the rubric of multiculturalism. This kind of analysis also appears in my argument about Choy's depiction of racist Canadian ideologies and policies in *The Jade Peony's* depiction of Vancouver's Chinatown in the 1930's and 1940's. Though the narrators of Choy's novel are all born in Canada and it is the only home they know, they are, at the same time, keenly aware of their outsider status within the nation that defines their community.

In other chapters, the possibilities for a discussion about the tension between diaspora and Canadian identity is overshadowed by queerness and the colonial politics of other places. All of the novels, however, signal a relationship to Canada in some way as they encourage readers to pursue questions of collective belonging, national exclusion, and hope for social change. In Choy's and Brand's texts, Canada appears as a major setting for plot events, offering opportunities that are not available in other places, but it is also represented as a site where dehumanizing racist, sexual, and gendered social hierarchies structure daily life. In Selvadurai's novel, Canada is identified as the narrator's location, but never actually described except through the anxious imaginings of

a young character who has never been there and is nervous about the downward class mobility that his migration seems likely to effect even as it offers escape from ethnic violence in Sri Lanka. Canada is the only real geographical place named in Mootoo's novel, a novel that is otherwise set in imaginary locales, and appears as a place of refuge for a character who escapes the violence of Lantanacamara. The liberation that Canada might offer to this minor character is distinctly muted, however, in that it alone is the only setting in the novel that is mentioned, but never described. In light of this brief overview, it is clear that my title does not create a paradox as much as it identifies the paradoxical claim to and unease with Canadian identity that is produced by all of the texts to varying degrees.

Though "diaspora" is a relatively new concept in Canadian literary criticism, it allows critics to discuss the tensions between powerful ethnicities, subordinate ethnicities, and Canadian national identities that are older than the Canadian literary canon itself. As early as 1857, Thomas D'Arcy McGee called for "a Canadian literature [that] would tend to the creation of a thoroughly Canadian feeling" ("A Canadian Literature" 42-43). This national literature, he imagined, would be defined by "the acknowledgement of all elements, foreign and provincial," by "the dispelling of all separate 'clannishness,' and by the recognition of all nationalities in one idea and in one name" (43). The spirit of McGee's invitation was reiterated in John Murray Gibbon's 1938 text, *Canadian Mosaic: the Making of a Northern Nation*. Fixing the metaphor of the mosaic forever in the minds of Canadians, Gibbon wrote: "The Canadian people today presents itself as a decorated surface, bright with inlays of separate coloured pieces,

not painted in colours blended with brush on a palette. The original background in which the inlays are set is still visible, but these inlays cover more space than that background, and so the ensemble may truly be called a mosaic (viii).⁴⁰ This metaphor thrives today and is often cited as proof that Canada is unaffected by racism because all of our different “inlays” represent balanced cultural harmony. It is against this oversimplified vision of Canadian-ness that Mootoo, Choy, Selvadurai, and Brand write. The histories of colonialism and the present-day inequalities that their texts reveal prevent readers from conceptualizing ethnicity as a coherent, colourful mosaic.

Though the contemporary mosaic metaphor obfuscates problems of racial discrimination in Canada today, Gibbon’s original metaphor explicitly depends on the logic of race. The harmony that he imagined was only made possible by his exclusive focus on European racial types that were organized in a hierarchy of “Northern-ness”.⁴¹ As Daniel Coleman writes in *White Civility: the Literary Project of English Canada*, “Canada’s inclusive civility, imaged [by Gibbon] as a multi-coloured mosaic, actually insists that all of its tiles will be various shades of white” (186).⁴² When Gibbon explains the rationale for his vision, the mosaic ideology appears to be a reaction against more powerful nations. The metaphor enables Gibbon to differentiate Canadian nation-building from the way that “the United States [was] hurrying to make every citizen a 100 per cent American” (vii); also, Coleman points out, the Canadian tolerance that Gibbon champions was developed against “the model of racial purification that [was] on the rise in Nazi Germany in 1938” (186). The primary factor distinguishing Canadian openness from these other visions of citizenship in Gibbon’s comparison, however, was the rate at

which assimilation should take place. Gibbon did not expect the diasporas that he studied to remain distinct: he envisioned a “Canadian race of the future” that would be “superimposed” over aboriginal peoples and that, he hypothesized, would achieve distinct racial recognizability within 200 years (vii). The eugenics in Gibbon’s vision have disappeared, an erasure that allows the mosaic metaphor to continue signifying Canadian identity. McGee’s and Gibbon’s invitations—for all people to celebrate all traditions, but only insofar as they add up to one European-based Canadian character—have their echo in the language of the 1988 Canadian Multiculturalism Act, which invites Canadians to “preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage” (3.1.a). The idea of a national culture that truly respects plurality is compelling, but the phrasing of the Act suggests that minority cultures are uniform entities that can be contained or decorous entities that can be shared on special occasions. The novels analyzed in this dissertation challenge this model of national identity by revealing the complicated nature of ethnic collectivity and by encouraging readers to recognize that ethnicity is often a matter of tough contestation and improvisation. My invocation of diaspora thus asserts an important quality of exteriority to the nation-state; it signals the writers’ refusal to represent “heritage” in a way that can be subsumed under the mosaic metaphor.

The tension between diaspora and nation in my title also signals an insider-outsider relationship with narratives of queerness that depend on belonging to a nation. As I explain in my introduction, representations of same-sex, transgender, and transsexual desire are inseparable from feelings of geo-political dislocation in *Cereus Blooms at Night*, *The Jade Peony*, *Funny Boy*, and *In Another Place, Not Here*. The need

for diasporic belonging that these novels describe is produced by an inability or refusal to assimilate in the nation. This departure from national belonging has important implications for reconsidering some of the biases that dominate Western queer theory that relies on the stability of national identity as grounds for examining the rejection of queerness from the nation. Lauren Berlant and Elizabeth Freeman explain in “Queer Nationality,” for instance, that the Queer Nation movement takes advantage of the performative demands of patriotic citizenship by merging highly-visible queer acts with signs of national pageantry to challenge heteronormative national identities. The organization borrows its logic from the Black Nation movement to exploit the inconsistencies between the individual legal rights that are supposed to be guaranteed by citizenship and the systemic rejection of certain citizens from the national imaginary. While such tactics can be very effective in asserting a certain kind of belonging, the novels studied in this dissertation—especially *The Jade Peony* and *In Another Place, Not Here*—make it clear that queer diasporans often do not have the legal citizenship that is necessary leverage in movements such as Queer Nation. Choy’s representation of falsified identities and improvised kinship structures, or “paper relatives,” and Brand’s representation of illegal migrant workers associate interest from the nation with deep fear rather than with pride.⁴³

My distinction here does not seek to reject Berlant and Freeman’s strategy. Though their approach emphasizes a radical, confrontational performativity, their reliance on inclusion within the nation is also taken up in such texts as Tom Warner’s *Never Going Back: a History of Queer Activism in Canada* in the Canadian context.

Warner's approach offers a historical narrative of gay and lesbian activism that emphasizes qualities of concreteness, continuity, and stability. Even before its analytical historical work begins, *Never Going Back* persuades readers of the legitimacy of gay and lesbian presence in Canada by listing abbreviations for 76 different activist organizations. For Warner, "lesbian and gay liberation [is] about changing self-image," and he speaks in the rhetoric of the Civil Rights movement when he describes "gays and lesbians as an oppressed people struggling for sexual and social liberation who, by so doing, advance the liberation of others as well" (8). *Never Going Back* establishes a chronological narrative of progress as Warner traces the gay and lesbian rights movement as an evolution towards freedom.⁴⁴ Describing legal injustices and human rights movements, Warner's approach is predicated on the kind of national inclusion that the novels I study in this dissertation explicitly problematize. Though they differ, however, the two approaches are not necessarily contradictory: readers whose biases are challenged by humanizing representations of queer, diasporic affective bodies in fiction may find themselves in a position to accept the binding social changes demanded by *Never Going Back*. At the same time, the novels' capacity for advancing queer Canadian rights is not reciprocated by Warner's work. The kinds of freedoms that Warner champions would not resolve the diasporic dilemmas represented by Mootoo, Choy, Selvadurai, and Brand because the problems of queerness that they depict are inseparable from discourses of race, ethnicity, and cultural difference.

The politics of visibility represent a major point of difference between "queer nationality" and being both queer and diasporic. The premise of belonging-to-the nation

that is the foundation of Queer Nation can be distorted, such as in Brian Walker's "Social Movements as Nationalisms or, On the Very Idea of a Queer Nation." Whereas Berlant and Freeman's "Queer Nationality" and Warner's *Never Going Back* discuss the idea of queerness in the United States and Canada, respectively, Brian Walker attempts to extrapolate the idea of Queer Nation by calling for a recognition of distinct gay and lesbian "peoplehood"; because gay and lesbian people are a people without a distinct national territory, he suggests, the idea of queer nation could also be described as a "queer diaspora." He argues that the "cultural claims of gays and lesbians are undeniable" as he compares what he sees as universal gay rights to "ethnic, or quasi-ethnic" claims to collective rights and solidarities (510); he further argues that "[a] Chinatown, a Jewish graveyard or synagogue, an Irish pub, [and] gay bars and community centres" can be considered as being on a continuum because of the potentially subversive relationship that these spaces pose to dominant communities (542). The possibility of queer people who belong to traditional, ethnic diasporas does not arise in Walker's essay as he abstracts the concept of diaspora to describe what he perceives to be a widespread pattern of sexual exclusion.

Walker's article is not a canonical text in queer theory, but I mention it here because it brings to the fore the inattention to racial and ethnic difference that is latent in much of Western queer theory. The experiences of harassment and discrimination that Walker identifies as "The trigger for the sense of a distinctive gay and lesbian peoplehood" might offer a genuine opportunity for transnational studies of sexual prejudice (522). Indeed, the chapters in this dissertation that focus on *Funny Boy* and

Cereus Blooms at Night draw attention to historical patterns of global colonialization that continue to structure contemporary moral and legal discourses of sexual prejudice.

Walker's work, however, only considers harassment and discrimination in the context of the "coming out" experience. His theory of queer diasporic peoplehood universalizes a Western notion of queer visibility even as it obfuscates racial or ethnic visibility. He describes the process by which "queer diasporic" belonging is achieved as a sharing of "literature on 'coming out' . . . [that] shows gay people how best to deal with the dangerous moment when they inform those around them of the nature of their inclinations" (526). Citing the "moment" of self-exposure as the defining experience of queer peoplehood, Walker describes global belonging as a process of shared advice on how best to evacuate "the closet." But what if, as this dissertation has inquired all along, queer sexual and gender desire do not live in a "closet"? What if, as in the case of diasporans, obstacles to belonging are not well-represented by a spatial metaphor that figures sexuality or gender as a private space within a larger home-space? Where do queer sexuality or gender hide in conditions of collective homelessness or in situations where there are multiple homes with different, incompatible architectures?⁴⁵

The assumption of necessary and inevitable queer visibility that is an obvious problem in Walker's text is pervasive throughout Western queer theory. Even in Judith Butler's work, for instance, in which the idea of "coming out" is a logical impossibility, the threatening visibility of the queer body is a necessary element in her fight against heterosexism. Her theory of performative identity challenges discourses that treat visible exteriority as proof of essential interiority, but her strategy of mis-performance exploits

the fact that the body signifies and is signified upon. After *Gender Trouble* Butler emphasized the differences between daily practices of gender identity and drag performances, but she maintains in her most recent text *Undoing Gender* that descriptions of drag offer a valuable entry-point into discussions of gender as visual performance. She writes: “The point about drag is not simply to produce a pleasurable and subversive spectacle but to allegorize the spectacular and consequential ways in which reality is both reproduced and contested” (218). *Undoing Gender* stresses the vulnerability of the body to public ideologies:

Although we struggle for rights over our own bodies, the very bodies for which we struggle are not quite ever only our own. The body has an invariably public dimension; constituted as a social phenomenon in the public sphere, my body is and is not mine. Given over from the start to the world of others, bearing their imprint, formed within the crucible of social life, the body is only later, and with some uncertainty, that to which I lay claim as my own. (21)

Butler’s theorization of the body as an effect of representation, norms, and ideology offers an important counter-argument against dominant trends in our individualist consumer culture. A limitation in Butler’s work, however, is its favouring of discursive resistance at the expense of the critical potential of personal feeling. Although Butler insists on the “public dimension” of the body, her work does not offer a vocabulary for how a body can connect publicly with other bodies to achieve shared feeling or a sense of belonging.

As I argue in the introduction to this dissertation, Brian Massumi’s criticism of

queer theory—and Butler in particular—is too dismissive in *Parables For the Virtual*, but he makes a valuable point when he sets limits on the value of performative resistance. He writes: “Signifying gestures make sense. If properly ‘performed,’ they may also unmake sense by scrambling significations already in place. Make and unmake sense as they might, they don’t *sense*. Sensation is utterly redundant to their description. Or worse, it is destructive to it [. . .]” (2). The novels *Cereus Blooms at Night*, *The Jade Peony*, *Funny Boy*, and *In Another Place, Not Here* likewise make it clear that the politics of gender and sexuality cannot be divorced from embodied feeling. Massumi’s and other affect theorists’ work must be blended with Butler’s and other queer theorists’ work to account for the sensory dimension of feeling that motivates gendered and sexualized acts of resistance. In literary analysis, affect theory allows us to attend to characters’ active sense experiences rather than just their reactive protests against being made visible as queer people. This is not to say that the at-risk visibility of the queer body is less important than the visibility of the minoritized racial body, but it is to acknowledge that queer diasporans may be subject to multiple kinds of scrutiny simultaneously. Moreover, because of the power that is channeled through different kinds of scrutiny, analysis of affective feeling in literary texts can take into account how these experiences are shaped by the need for collective belonging. Mootoo, Choy, Selvadurai, and Brand illustrate how diasporic sexualities and genders point to new paradigms for collectivity that emphasize affective belonging instead of reproducing identarian claims of belonging-to-the-nation that are, in everyday discourses, often tainted by heterosexist bias.

Because the novelists' representations of queerness are produced in part by their diasporic perspectives, my readings of their texts do not quite fit within canonical readings of Canadian literary history. On the one hand, Mootoo's, Choy's, Selvadurai's, and Brand's texts are all published by major publishing houses and all of these writers have been nominated for and have won several of Canada's most prestigious literary awards. On the other hand, my reading strategy, emphasizing the queer and diasporic possibilities of their texts, resists the closure that is implied by the idea of a literary canon. In making this point, I follow the lead set by Peter Dickinson's *Here is Queer: Nationalisms, Sexualities, and the Literatures of Canada*, the strongest example of a queer postmodern interpretation of Canadian literature. Dickinson's text aims to "thoroughly disrupt and destabilize the national paradigm" by pointing out the paradoxical dependence on and occlusion of queer desire in many texts that are considered central to the Canadian literary tradition (13). *Here is Queer* does not claim to have discovered a long-standing-but-little-discussed minority literature, but analyzes central texts in Canadian literature to draw out the sexualized and gendered contradictions that he sees as embedded in the existing canon.⁴⁶ As is characteristic of many queer theory texts, Dickinson often performs the queerness of his approach rhetorically through a post-structural linguistic playfulness as he strives to undo, or provocatively redo, the ideological terms by which our national culture constructs identity through literature.

Influenced by queer theorists like Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Butler, Dickinson's analytical strategy reads queerness in any representation of sexuality or

gender that denaturalize heteronormativity and, by extension, the assumptions that are necessary for a coherent national canon. Throughout *Here is Queer*, “queer” refers, “more often than not, [to] homosexuality” (3), but also signifies as “a literary-critical category of an almost inevitable definitional elasticity, one whose inventory of sexual meanings has yet to be exhausted” (5). Dickinson includes homosociality, hyper-masculinity, feminist revisionism, and sterility as examples of queerness (5). The oppositional ethics that drive Dickinson’s work are also present in my own analysis, yet my dissertation works with a more common understanding of “queer” as same-sex, transgender, or transsexual desire. Whereas his approach focuses on the belonging to the Canadian nation—as is evidenced by the other operative term in his title, “here”—my analysis emphasizes the doubled exclusion of sexual or gender queerness and diasporic dislocation. In my study, the exclusion that characters feel because of same-sex and transgender desire is intimately connected to the experiences of global migration, the dilemmas of inherited cultural difference, and the desire for diasporic belonging that *Cereus Blooms at Night*, *The Jade Peony*, *Funny Boy*, and *In Another Place, Not Here* consistently express. Throughout the dissertation chapters, I interpret depictions of queer desire as representations of personal affect that are inseparable from mobility and the embodied urge for collectivity. Because of their mainstream successes, *Cereus Blooms at Night*, *The Jade Peony*, *Funny Boy*, and *In Another Place, Not Here* could all find a place within the project offered by *Here is Queer*; in fact, Dickinson’s text includes an entire chapter dedicated to Brand’s works. Whereas Dickinson’s project blurs the binary between that which is radically marginal and that which is distinctly canonical within the

borders of the nation, my project thinks through the ways that the novels blend claims to and suspicions of Canadian culture in ways that are always inside and outside of the nation.

My brief discussion of the novels' uneasy relationship to a few important narratives of national identity does not really do justice to complex issues of multiculturalism, queerness, or literary canonicity, nor does it do justice the above-mentioned texts that think through the topics in the Canadian context. I include quick sketches of these definitive texts only to emphasize that attention to diaspora and sexuality creates potential for re-thinking the possibilities for belonging that are produced in Canadian writing. The putting-into-dialogue of diaspora and Canadian culture acknowledges the belonging within Canada that Mootoo, Choy, Selvadurai, and Brand all enjoy as award-winning writers, teachers, film-makers, and lecturers, but it also foregrounds the tangible apprehension about the terms of this belonging that arises in their fiction. By thinking Canadian fiction through the concepts of diaspora, sexuality, and affect, we can work against the illusion of one national collective being by studying multiple collective becomings.

My analysis of diaspora, sexuality, and affect in *Cereus Blooms at Night*, *The Jade Peony*, *Funny Boy*, and *In Another Place, Not Here* is arranged in such a way that I work with one novel per chapter. The strength of this approach is that I can focus on the multiple national histories, globalized discourses of sexuality and gender, and conflicting racial and ethnic identities that each author represents within her or his novel. For instance, even though Mootoo and Brand could both be described as Caribbean-Canadian

writers—or, more specifically, Trinidadian-Canadian writers—*Cereus Blooms at Night* and *In Another Place, Not Here* represent different historical eras, different geographies and migration, different experiences of racialized labour, different sexual and gender pleasures, and different kinds of domestic violence and colonial exploitation. The matrix of differences that is apparent in even a fleeting comparison of these two novels would be even more complex in any other pairing of texts studied in this project. By refraining from forcing connections between these texts, I can interpret them as offering ideas about collective becoming in ways that prevent diasporic experiences from being reduced to bicultural, hyphenated Canadian identities. My dissertation refuses to allow “diaspora” to signify as a euphemism for depoliticized, decorous ethnicity in an overarching Canadian context, in part by retaining a sense of the individual novels’ real claims to other places.

At the same time, the tension between diaspora and nation that I have gestured to in this conclusion could produce further insight in a study that offered a synthesized comparative analysis of different diasporic experiences within Canada. Lily Cho described such a project when delivering a position paper at a conference in 2005 called *transCanada: Literature, Institutions, Citizenship*. Her paper, “Diasporic Citizenship: Contradictions and Possibilities for Canadian Literature,” points to the critical potential of the diaspora concept in studying the “differential” histories that are represented in Asian Canadian, Black Canadian, First Nations, and other minority literatures that are central to and outside of the Canadian canon. Citing Fred Wah’s *Diamond Grill* as a text that attends to the differential experience of different diasporans, she claims that it “Complicat[es] a personal history that involves Chinese, Swedish, Scottish and Irish

crossings and mixings [and] also depicts interactions between Japanese, First Nations, Doukhobor, Jewish and Chinese communities.” The novels that I analyze in this project do not represent such diasporic intersections in detail and so do not readily lend themselves to the type of work that Cho envisions. At the same time, the elements of what I call critical nostalgia and embodied hope that I argue are common to *Cereus Blooms at Night*, *The Jade Peony*, *Funny Boy*, and *In Another Place, Not Here* provide a foundation for future work that will be devoted to a rigorous synthesis of differently diasporic Canadian representations.

My final thoughts on fiction that represents diasporic sexualities, collective becoming, and embodied hope turn to the concept of thixotropy. In chemistry, the term “thixotropy” describes a phenomenon wherein certain solid substances suddenly become, for a short time, liquified when they shaken. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, thixotropic substances, “from the hardest solids, through doughs and pastes to liquids such as blood and milk,” become liquid when agitated, and then thicken again if left alone. This scientific concept can be thought of as a figure for the kind of work that Mootoo, Choy, Selvadurai, and Brand accomplish through their writing. Ideologies of nation, race, and sexuality create the illusion of fixed realities and, though illusory, these ideologies have real material effects in the world. Despite their tendency to structure reality, these reifying codes can be temporarily “liquified” by texts that intervene in and agitate the ways that such codes produce and reproduce social values and cultural hierarchies. These writers will not obliterate all oppressive ideologies through their writing, but by representing diasporic sexualities and exposing the mechanics of

prejudice in their thixotropic fiction, they can liquify ideologies that may resettle in the minds of readers in improved social arrangements. The etymological roots of “thixotropy” even fold embodied affect back into the realm of language: the word comes to English from a combination of the Greek θιξο [thixo], meaning “touching,” and τροπη [tropi], meaning “turning.” Just as much of this dissertation has examined the production of hope through representations of physical touching, so too should readers’ minds be “turned” after being touched by *Cereus Blooms at Night*, *The Jade Peony*, *Funny Boy*, and *In Another Place, Not Here*.

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Notes

¹ Donald Harman Akenson describes the problem of defining the elastic term “diaspora” with frustration in his article, “The Historiography of English-Speaking Canada and the Concept of Diaspora: A Sceptical Appreciation.” In this article, he characterizes diaspora studies, even when limited to the discipline of history, as “an international Tower of Babel, in which each person uses ‘diaspora’ in his or her own way, without regard for the sensibilities of other historians” (377). In this article, Akenson asserts that the Jewish diaspora is the original diaspora, and therefore takes the position that “[t]o use the word ‘diaspora’ even as a metaphor for other groups is to replace a precise connotation with a fuzzy one” (379). “Unfortunately,” he surmises, “the genie is out of the bottle, and a word that should be our servant threatens to become an irascible master” (379).

² To expand this list, “nostos” carries particularly literary connotations, at least for students of literature or classics. The term is derived from the *Nostoi*, the title of a lost epic poem preceding the *Odyssey* that describes the return of the Greeks from the Trojan War. In literary studies, “nostos” denotes a topos of grueling travel, survival, and homecoming.

³ In asserting the prevalence of a diasporic nostalgia, I do not intend to suggest that nationalist nostalgia is only a property of diasporas. Writers such as M. Jacqui Alexander discuss the discursive violence that is made possible by a nostalgic vision of origins in Caribbean nation-states. Small nation-states that emerged from tight colonial rule are under great pressure in our neocolonial climate of cultural and economic globalization, she argues. A recognizable response for states under such pressures is to assert independence and define identity by prescribing what is natural and normal for its citizenry. Alexander’s “Erotic Autonomy as a Politics of Decolonization: An Anatomy of Feminist and State Practice in the Bahamas Tourist Economy” analyzes how a state’s desire to assert an indigenous patriarchal masculinity led to the legal prohibition of same-sex activity in the creation of the Bahamas’s 1991 Sexual Offences Act. Alexander argues that “the nostalgic invocation of sexual ‘purity’” allowed a vision of “an idyllic Bahamas, free from Western decadent incursions, a Bahamas that was not peopled by lesbians and gay men” (85). This anti-colonial, anti-American vision was strategically articulated with institutional initiatives and normalizing discourses. Alexander’s analysis shows how the nostalgic vision permitted the legal identification of same-sex activity with heterosexual rape and justified politicians’s use of semi-Biblical, pseudo-scientific discourses in parliamentary debates (84-85).

⁴ Writing in a sociological context, Anthias objects to models of diaspora that overemphasize a connection to a common homeland as a legitimate basis for diaspora studies. She insightfully points out that this model of diasporic ethnicity too-often boils down to a common “*attribution of origin*” (565). Anthias points out that this act of origin-attribution has an essentializing effect that overrides the many internal complexities that characterize any diaspora. Writing that “there does not exist any account of the ways in which diaspora may indeed have a tendency to reinforce absolutist notions of ‘origin’ and

‘true belonging’,” Anthias thus calls for a radical reconsideration of the category of diasporic ethnicity (577).

⁵ By remaining mindful of the Western European specificity of *The History of Sexuality* and the American context of Butler’s texts, my literary analyses of sex-gender discourses double as opportunities to track the global flows of power that are represented in the novels. At the start of this introduction I put diaspora theory and queer theory in dialogue by arguing that diasporic and queer pressures present competing demands on the same feeling bodies. Sometimes, however, diasporic and queer discourses merge before they are intermingled in the body. My analysis of sexual and gender discourses in the novels occasionally provides a direct index of colonial imposition. For example, my analyses of Mootoo’s *Cereus Blooms at Night* and Selvadurai’s *Funny Boy* both take into account the colonial transplantation of sex-gender norms from England to the Caribbean and to South Asia, respectively. In *Cereus Blooms at Night*, the legacy of European colonialism is depicted in Mootoo’s representation of Christian missionaries who change the social landscape of the imaginary Caribbean island Lantanacamara by planting racist and sexually prejudiced ideologies. Similarly, albeit in a contemporary setting, Selvadurai depicts the neo-colonial tourist sex trade in South Asia. His representation of this industry in late-twentieth-century Sri Lanka invites analysis of the heterosexist legal codes that are remnants of Britain’s colonial rule. By setting their representations of oppressive sex-gender discourses against the distant histories and recent periods, the novelists remind readers that concepts like “diaspora” and “globalization” do not describe radically new postmodern realities as much as they recontextualize discussions about centuries-old patterns of global exploitation.

⁶ In Austen’s work, the performative is a specific class of utterance that, when issued under appropriate circumstances by authorized agents, creates a binding effect on reality. For example, when a police officer proclaims to a suspect that he is under arrest, he becomes a detainee. Whatever the evidence against him, however, he is considered innocent until a judge pronounces him guilty. Based on the authority of these spoken words, a person’s physical mobility can be tightly restricted, his right to social and democratic freedoms erased, and his identity defined by a shameful record of his deviance for the rest of his life.

⁷ In “Subvocal Speech - Speaking Without Saying a Word”—an interview with Chuck Jorgensen, NASA’s Chief Scientist for Neuroengineering conducted by Iddo Genuth for *The Future of Things*—reveals that as of October 2006, NASA’s Extension of the Human Senses research group had developed technology that could read approximately 25 words and 38 vowels and consonants at an accuracy rate of 99%. The technology works by interpreting electromyographic signals, nervous system signals, sent to muscles of the vocal tract. The Extension of the Human Senses research group website explains that this project began with the development of a sleeve that read electromyograms in the forearm to control a joystick and type keystrokes without making physical contact with the joystick or keyboard devices. A third stage of this project involves sensing electroencephalograms, potentials on the surface of the scalp, and processing them for thought-based control commands.

⁸ Tomkins's heavily structural theory of specific affects is quite different from Massumi's notion of affect as immanence; as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank admit in "Shame and the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Silvan Tomkins," there is much in Tomkins's writings that would appear very unfashionable in contemporary humanities and social sciences. They write, tongue-in-cheek: "You don't have to be long out of theory kindergarten to make mincemeat of, let's say, a psychology that depends on the separate existence of eight (only sometimes it's nine) distinct affects hardwired into the human biological system" (2).

⁹ Another point of similarity between these two affect theorists is that, like Massumi, Tomkins's work emerged in a context of frustration with dominant academic trends. Tomkins explains in "The Quest for Primary Motives: Biography and Autobiography of an Idea" that in his field of psychology, academics were choosing sides between behaviourist and cognitive theories to the full exclusion of the other approach. Disenchanted by what he perceived to be an imperial climate in which warring, territorial academics sought to eliminate competing theories rather than promote understanding, he began to theorize motivation at a general level in such a way that his work could engage with other systems of thought without rendering them defunct.

Like Massumi, Tomkins was particularly turned off by the prevalence of what he perceived to be over-structured theory that closed off real possibilities for understanding feeling. Working in a psychology department that was fiercely dedicated to Freudian thought, Tomkins began to notice that, while people are indeed subject to their unconscious and the system of drives that manage the body's survival impulses, drives do not actually explain how human emotion or motivation works. As he reasons in "The Quest for Primary Motives: Biography and Autobiography of an Idea," experiences of excitement or joy could not be sufficiently explained by the urges of sexuality or hunger. Similarly, the extraordinary panic one would experience when suffocating could be experienced just as overwhelmingly in situations that did not at all involve the interruption anoxic drive (32). Tomkins had a revelation: "Freud's id suddenly appeared to be a paper tiger rendered impotent by shame or anxiety or boredom or rage" (32). Tomkins theorized that while not all experiences of excitement can be traced back to a root source such as a sexual drive, all experiences of excitement, sexual or not, share a common denominator. "Although mathematics and sexuality are different," he writes, "the excitement that amplifies either cognitive activity or drive is identical" (53).

¹⁰ Whereas Butler's writing in *Bodies That Matter* and *Undoing Gender* acknowledges the real limitations on such strategies, moreover, Massumi's description of power does not translate into a real-world context. His description of power does not even effectively account for the modification of rules in sports, which generally only occurs when owners and commissioners decide to increase their own profits rather than to inhibit the threat of individual stylistic innovations. With spectator interest as a priority, such changes are more likely to increase opportunities for stylistic innovation than to restrict them. A recent example that comes to mind is the National Hockey League's 2005 introduction of tie-breaker penalty shots and other innovations designed to systematically increase opportunities for players to creatively channel the immanent

potential of the sport. While players, coaches, and commentators complained loudly that the innovations took away from the integrity of the game, fans loved to watch individual players devise never-before-seen strategies for defeating goaltenders.

¹¹ An earlier version of this chapter appeared in a special issue of the *Journal of West Indian Literature* (November 2005, 14.1-2), titled *Rooting and Routing Caribbean-Canadian Writing*.

¹² In “Jamaican Popular Culture, Caribbean Literature, and the Representation of Gay and Lesbian Sexuality in the Discourses of Race and Nation,” Timothy S. Chin analyses characters who also experience sex and gender fluidity in the novels of Michelle Cliff and H. Nigel Thomas. Chin writes that the representations of these characters reflect “the unresolved (and perhaps unresolvable) contradictions that are inevitably generated by an ‘indigineous’ gay and/or lesbian identity” (29). He also writes that these representations “suggest that the willingness to accept the indeterminacy associated with such contradictions...is often the first step in undoing the homophobia that continues to marginalize the lesbians and gay men in contemporary Caribbean cultures” (32).

¹³ An article titled “Study: Homophobia Is Not a Phobia” describes how researchers at the University of Arkansas presented research at the 2002 American Psychological Society convention in New Orleans pointing out that the discriminatory attitudes that coalesce under the heading “homophobia” are not “phobias” at all. Using 138 study participants and a variety of tests, including the Index of Attitudes Toward Homosexuals, the Sexual Attitude Scale, the Disgust Emotion Scale, and the Padua Inventory (a measure of contamination obsessions), the researchers determined that so-called “homophobia” is a social-cultural attitude more than a psychological condition, more akin to racism than any actual phobia. One of the dangers of the misnomer “homophobia” is that its clinical connotations permit sexually prejudiced people to disavow responsibility for the harsh moral judgement and social exile that they actively impose through sexually prejudiced behaviour. To counter this problem, Gregory Herek suggests in “The Psychology of Sexual Prejudice” that we replace the term “homophobia” with the term “sexual prejudice.” “Sexual prejudice,” he explains, more accurately denotes “an attitude (i.e. an evaluation or judgment)” that is, like racial prejudice, “directed at a social group and its members” and “is negative, involving hostility or dislike” (158). With this shift in terms, the pathological burden of disorder shifts distinctly from the queer-ed to the queer-er. Understanding the sexually prejudiced mindset in this light not only illuminates the actual shape of hostility towards sexually queered people, but it also strengthens possible strategic connections between sexually queered people and people who are socially exiled in other ways. Such an understanding of discriminatory attitudes, an attitude that transcends the specificity of identity-focused hostility, is crucial for reading *Cereus Blooms at Night*.

¹⁴ These details are recorded in Gloria Galloway’s article, “Same-sex Marriage File Closed for Good, PM Says: Tory Attempt to Restore Traditional Definition Fails in House” in the December 8, 2006 issue of the *Globe and Mail*. Galloway writes that Members of Parliament voted 175 to 123 against reopening the debate on same-sex marriage on December 7, 2006 (A1). Bill Curry and Gloria Galloway write, in the June

29, 2005 issue of the *Globe and Mail*, that the original motion legitimizing same-sex marriage held on June 28, 2005 was passed by a vote of 158 to 133 (A1).

¹⁵ Choy also signals the overlap between Chinese Canadian and Chinese American experiences of racialized, emasculating labour in the tailor and launderer character, Gee Sook. Gee Sook's business is named "American Steam Cleaners" (99).

¹⁶ In *Writing Manhood in Black and Yellow*, Daniel Y. Kim describes the formative impact that Chin has had on the field of Asian American literature. He was "the ideological spokesman" for the group of four editors who published the groundbreaking anthology of Asian American writing, *Aiiieeeee!* (1974) and its follow-up, *The Big Aiiieeeee!* (1991); he has written two plays, *The Chickencoop Chinaman* (1972) and *The Year of the Dragon* (1974); a collection of short stories, *The Chinaman Pacific & Frisco R.R. Co.* (1988); two novels, *Donald Duk* (1991) and *Gunga Din Highway* (1994); and a collection of creative nonfiction, *Bulletproof Buddhists and Other Essays* (1998). Kim adds that he has also written comic books, produced documentaries, and worked as a script consultant, taught college courses in Asian American literature, and helped create the Asian American Theatre Workshop in San Francisco (124-25).

¹⁷ These fleeting glimpses of Jung-Sum as violently protective even persist into *The Jade Peony*'s sequel, *All That Matters*, when a younger Jung-Sum kicks a girl's shin to protect his older brother's reputation.

¹⁸ Eleanor Ty's interpretation of the scene lends itself to a queer reading of this moment. Ty writes that "This reference [to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek] aligns Jung with the national hero of Taiwan, whom mainlanders considered to be a rebel. He is not associated with Old China but the breakaway independent island" (124). Given Ty's description of the "breakaway rebel" Chiang, Mrs. Lim's observation can be read as foreshadowing Jung-Sum's entry into rebellious, non-conformist queer desire. At the same time, it must be noted that at this point in history, Chiang had yet to be exiled to Taiwan and, as the leader of a nationalist China, was more interested in internally unifying the country by violently eradicating Communists than defending the borders from Japanese invasion. According to Alden Whitman's extensive obituary published in *The New York Times* on April 6, 1975, Chiang was the "principal architect" of policy designed to unify the country under nationalist ideology. In light of this historical context, Mrs. Lim's reference to Chiang must be read as an affirmation of conformity to a violent masculine authority rather than a potentially queer rebellion.

¹⁹ As illogical as Chin's argument seems in its slip from emasculation to feminization to homosexualization, his slip mirrors the illogical patterns of racism and sexual prejudice. An example of such blurring is the April 2004 issue of *Details*, an American men's fashion and lifestyle magazine with a current circulation of 426,239. This issue featured a mock-anthropological spread by Whitney McNally titled "Gay or Asian?" with a photograph of a heavily-stylized Asian-American man in his early twenties smirking at the camera. Nine diagrammatic arrows pointed out a list of identifiable characteristics that mingled feminizing, queering, and racializing references. The introduction, in answer to the question "Gay or Asian?", stated: "One cruises for chicken; the other takes it General Tso-style; Whether you're into shrimp balls or shaved

balls, entering the dragon requires imperial tastes. So choke up on your chopsticks, and make sure your labels are showing. Study hard, Grasshopper: A sharp eye will always take home the plumpest eel” (52). Point six on the list identified “Ladyboy Fingers: Soft and long. Perfect for both waxing on and waxing off, plucking the koto, or gripping the Kendo stick” (52). The text sparked what Editor-in-Chief Daniel Peres later described as “an unprecedented number of letters,” but his response was clothed in pseudo-academic rhetoric as he claimed that it was “part of an ongoing series challenging male cultural stereotypes.” Ultimately, Peres acknowledged that it was “insensitive, hurtful, and in poor taste,” even as he tried to maintain credibility by describing it as satire that had “crossed the line.”

²⁰ Beverly Greene discusses this pattern as common to non-white ethnic communities in “Beyond Heterosexism and Across the Cultural Divide – Developing an Inclusive Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Psychology: A Look to the Future.” She writes: While lesbians and gay men of color may be supported by families and ethnic peers in challenging the validity of negative ethnic stereotypes, family and ethnic group members are often the very same source of negative stereotypes about lesbians and gay men. Because family and community are important buffers against racism and sources of tangible support, the homophobia in these communities often leaves lesbians and gay men of color feeling more vulnerable and less likely to be out in the same ways as their white counterparts. [. . .] A common theme in this denial is the suggestion that lesbian and gay sexual orientations are a ‘white man’s disease’ or a ‘Western sickness,’ acquired as a result of too much assimilation into dominant culture. (382-83).

²¹ Although it was not motivated by the desire to create a history that counters diasporic sexual prejudice, Bret Hinsch’s *Passions of the Cut Sleeve* produces that kind of work in a Chinese context and could be mobilized to that end. Hinsch’s text draws on diverse sources such as poetry, biography, sex manuals, and legal documentation to trace what his subtitle describes as “the Male Homosexual Tradition in China.” According to Hinsch, this tradition is detectable in texts written as early as the Zhou Dynasty in 1122 BCE and is characterized by “actions, tendencies, and preferences” that correspond to patterns of submission and dominance and passive and active roles rather than ideas about “innate sexual essence” (7, 9-10). Hinsch’s text could be valuable to diasporic efforts that seek to position queer Chinese identity in the present by using historical precedence and indigeneity as defenses against charges of Western decadence. It is important to note, however, that nothing of the traditions that Hinsch describes are manifest in Choy’s depiction of Jung-Sum’s diasporic sexuality. This could be because the practices Hinsch describes are explicitly associated with the aristocratic life, while Choy’s character Poh-Poh was raised in the servant class. Hinsch consistently emphasizes that the queer acts that he studies were, in contrast, made possible by structures of elite political favoritism. Choy does not borrow from the three-thousand-year-old traditions that Hinsch explores in his text, but his novel shares a goal with Hinsch’s text in presenting alternatives to dominant tropes in Euro-American queer theory and practice.

²² As Donald C. Goellnicht writes “‘Forays Into Acts of Transformation’:

Queering Chinese-Canadian Diasporic Fictions,” Larissa Lai’s *When Fox is a Thousand* draws out the queer potential in this mythological figure. Goellnicht writes that Lai represents Fox in such a way “that she ceases to be an evil or undesirable seducing spirit, as she is in most of the original, misogynist Chinese versions, and becomes instead a figure of powerful challenge to Confucian patriarchal values as well as to contemporary heteronormativity” (159).

²³ Paradoxically, at least for my interpretation, the moon also signifies the triumphant Chinese revolt against Mongolian rule during the Yuan dynasty. According to “Mid-Autumn Moon Festival” published in *Qi: the Journal of Traditional Eastern Health and Fitness*, common legend has it that as the Autumn Moon Festival approached, rebels secretly baked strategies for an attack against the Mongols inside traditional moon cakes that were shared during the festivities. When the night of the Autumn Moon Festival arrived, the Chinese rebels successfully overthrew the Yuan dynasty and established the Ming dynasty. Today, the moon cakes also symbolize family togetherness. These additional layers of meaning do not contradict my interpretation of the moon as symbolizing a distancing from violent masculinity as much as they reinstate the tension that Jung-Sum experiences between his desire for a strong masculinity, his potentially isolating sexuality, and his need for sturdy family bonds.

²⁴ Clifford’s definitive essay implicitly recognizes affect as it maintains that diasporas are bonded by common “longing” and “memory,” experiences that maintain “a sense of connection [which] must be strong enough to resist erasure through the normalizing processes of forgetting, assimilating, and distancing” (247, 255). But Clifford does not explain that feeling itself can be a rich source of political agency. He tends to see critical potential only in signifying practices.

²⁵ So what are the physiological systems of affect? How does sensing take place? In *Parables of the Virtual*, Massumi’s descriptions favour the philosophical over the physiological. He describes an experiment conducted on patients who had been implanted with cortical electrodes. Researchers sent slight electrical pulses to the cortodes as well as to points on the skin, and asked the patients to identify which point was stimulated first. The patients’s evaluations of the sensations tended to err by listing the “outside” skin contact as occurring before the “inside” stimulation. Massumi describes the confusion as occurring because “Stimulation turns inward, is folded into the body, except that there is no inside for it to be in, because the body is radically open, absorbing impulses quicker than they can be perceived” (29).

In another chapter, Massumi writes about “proprioception,” which he describes as “the sensibility proper to the muscles and ligaments as opposed to tactile sensibility [. . .] and visceral sensibility” (58). Constantly reading the environment, the body “envelop[es] the skin’s contact with the external world in a dimension of medium depth: between epidermis and viscera” and blends it with sensory data “from all five senses” (58, 59).

²⁶ Tomkins, who is very interested in extensive taxonomies, describes the affective functions of skin, hair, sweat glands, musculature, body temperature, cardiovascular systems, and vocal systems (“Modifications in the Theory—1978” 89-94; also see “What and Where are the Primary Affects?”).

²⁷ I read his theory of affect as comparable to a sort of embodied poststructural linguistics insofar as that feeling which is supposedly signified by emotion is never exhaustively expressed by the bodily signs are supposed to represent it. Tomkins makes a similar comparison in “Script Theory” when he writes that affect management is “the same process by which we communicate in speech: the meaning of any one word is enriched and magnified by sequentially co-assembling it with words which preceded it and which follow it” (315)

²⁸ Though sympathetic to Arjie’s suffering, Narvadha Salaye, in “A Sense of Not Belonging as Dislocation: ‘Funny Boy’ in Sri Lankan Society,” conflates gender, biological sex, and sexuality. Salaye writes that seven-year-old Arjie’s transgender game of “bride-bride” is evidence that he “is naturally born gay” (202). After analyzing this scene, an analysis that invokes a few different texts about homosexuality, the article consistently refers to the protagonist as “the gay character Arjie.” Similar conflation is present but less evident in Rajiva Wijesinha’s “Aberrations and Excesses: Sri Lanka Substantiated by the *Funny Boy*” and S. W. Perera’s “In Pursuit of Political Correctness: Shyam Selvadurai’s *Cinnamon Gardens*.”

²⁹ While the concept of diaspora helps readers to understand the politics of place, identity, and publishing in a fresh way, this notion can also be exploited for purposes of marketing pan-ethnic exotic difference to mainstream audiences as in *Story-Wallah!*’s front dust-jacket. The blurb describes how the writers, by virtue of their varied South Asian origins and different migrations, “creat[e] a virtual map of the world with their tales” as their “eclectic” stories “jostle up against each other,” creating “a marvelous cacophony, like early morning at a South Asian bazaar.” This language is, unfortunately, lifted almost verbatim from Selvadurai’s own introduction. The blurb, however, lacks the critical thinking about Canada and diaspora that constitutes the bulk of Selvadurai’s essay. The dust jacket instead offers a flat multiculturalism pre-packaged for easy consumption, a description that belies the rich, complex literature that constitutes the collection. The placelessness of this publisher’s blurb is also belied by Selvadurai’s end-of-text acknowledgements where he thanks Canadian scholars Chelva Kanaganayakam and Daniel Coleman at the University of Toronto and McMaster University, respectively, for helping him theorize the concept of diaspora, and also significant parts of his introduction in which he discusses in detail the importance of Canada to his own lived and writing experiences.

³⁰ Gabriel Sheffer, in *Diaspora Politics: At Home and Abroad*, dates the initial diasporic dispersal of the Greeks as between 800 and 600 B.C., but he points out that the ancient Greeks more commonly used the term “*apoieka*” rather than “diaspora” to describe the voluntary mass migrations. The first waves of the outward-concentric migration were “regarded as a legitimate and beneficial way to solve the economic problems of poorer citizens, to further enrich the wealthy and powerful, and consequently to strengthen the city-states back in the homeland” while later waves of migrants set out “to expand the political and defensive borders of the homeland, and ultimately to spread [Hellenic] culture” (46).

³¹ My suggestion that the transplantation of British sexual values can be described

as “diasporic” is borne out by other strands in the web of British colonial connections. Canada’s anti-same-sex laws, repealed in 1969, likewise accused offenders of “gross indecency.” The geo-political history of Sri Lanka’s law is also made more complex in that Ceylon’s penal code is modelled on the code that Britain established for India in 1860, but the laws regarding same-sex activity are different. Whereas Sri Lanka’s law replicates Labouchère’s language of “gross indecency,” India’s law against same-sex activity, introduced in 1872, is phrased in the discourse of the “unnatural.” Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, under the category of Unnatural Offences, stipulates that “Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal, shall be punished with [imprisonment for life], or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine” (“The Indian Penal Code”). This language matches British cultural and legal conceptions of homosexuality prior to the passing of the 1885 Labouchère Amendment. Weeks writes that the 1533 Act of Henry VIII condemned all non-procreative sexual acts, including acts between men and women, men and men, or men and animals, as “sins against nature” (12, 11).

³² There are a number of clues that invite readers to read this anonymous island as a literary representation of Grenada. These include small details such as the city names and train stop names that are listed when Verlia travels through the island. These also include significant correlations between the geographies, weaponry, and specific acts of violence that are described in the novel and the historical details of the bloody American invasion that crushed Grenada’s socialist revolution. These overlaps are discussed in more detail throughout this chapter.

³³ Massumi’s language is dismissive of the Humanities, but he tempers his attack with a postmodern rhetoric of devil-may-care interdisciplinarity. He describes his own work as “the kind of shameless poaching from science I advocate and endeavor to practice: one that betrays the system of science while respecting its affect, in a way designed to force a change in the humanities” (20).

³⁴ Whereas Paul Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic* represents nostalgia as a diasporic experience, his more recent *Postcolonial Melancholia* associates nostalgia almost exclusively with desperately disillusioned citizens in the settled nation-state.

³⁵ The Amerindian name for Trinidad, Brand’s birth country, was Kairi or Iere which is usually translated as *The Land of the Hummingbird*.

³⁶ Joanna Luft also discusses the relationship between queerness and the refusal of “a patriarchal economy of [. . .] child production [and] sexual abuse” in “Elizete and Verlia Go to Toronto: Caribbean Immigrant Sensibilities at ‘Home’ and Overseas in Dionne Brand’s *In Another Place, Not Here*.” Luft, however, offers another insight into Brand’s representation of this topic. She points out that “Ironically, the only couple who want children, Verlia’s aunt and uncle in Sudbury, do not have any. Unlike in the Caribbean, where women try to rid themselves of children, in Canada children are desired as a ticket to legitimate residence. Again, the context of heterosexual relations is the having of children, and even when rape is not involved these relations are singularly joyless or brutal” (35).

³⁷ While Brand does not claim a specific identity category for her characters, their relationship amplifies some of the strong, positive models of female Caribbean queerness that have been established in literature. I think here of Audre Lorde's *Zami: a New Spelling of My Name*. This text, a self-described "Biomythography," narrates Audre's growth from childhood into young adulthood as she struggles with family, sex, sexuality, race, class, education, and desire in mid-twentieth century New York. Lorde does not claim an explicit position or category for herself throughout the text, and the few times that the topic arises it is clear why. She writes, in a brief passage that layers self-negation upon self-negation: "Downtown in the gay bars I was a closet student and an invisible Black. Uptown at Hunter I was a closet dyke and a general intruder. Maybe four people altogether knew I wrote poetry, and I usually made it pretty easy for them to forget" (179). She reiterates, "when I had the bad taste to bring that fact [of Blackness] up in a conversation with other gay-girls who were not Black, I would get the feeling that I had in some way breached some sacred bond of gayness, a bond which I always knew was not sufficient for me" (180-81). Only in *Zami*'s epilogue does Lorde invest herself in language in a way that brings into focus the strength that she has inherited as her life appears to her as "a bridge and field of women" (255). She writes: "*Zami. A Carriacou name for women who work together as friends and lovers*" (ital. in original 255). Lorde lists some of the women who have fortified and inspired her, and writes that "Their names, selves, faces feed me like corn before labor" (256).

³⁸ This perspective is also offered in Jay R. Mandle's *Big Revolution, Small Country*, a text published by the North-South Publishing Company. Although it is a misleading oversimplification, Mandle notes that "The Americans never attacked the Grenada Revolution" (92). He argues that the Revolutionary Military Council that emerged after the massacre at Fort Rupert headed by Bernard Coard and Hudson Austin "had no popular mandate" and was "alien" and "intolerable" to the Grenadian people who had eagerly defended their socialist leader, Maurice Bishop (92). Mandle makes the point strategically so that he can argue that the Grenadians's genuine relief at seeing the Americans was not a relief that they had been saved from Marxism, but relief that they had been saved from the military threat posed to many who would have been targeted after Coard's dictatorial *overthrow* of the socialist government.

³⁹ Adkin's invocation of a "nutmeg" in this metaphor initially seems bizarre. He likely chose this image because nutmeg is Grenada's largest export. Why he chose a nutmeg-crushing "sledgehammer" to represent heroic America, however, is less clear. He is committed to the metaphor. On the very next page, he reminds his readers: "The United States could not have lost militarily. It wielded a sledgehammer; the target was a nut" (xiv).

⁴⁰ Though Gibbon is at times credited with devising the mosaic metaphor as a trope for Canada's diverse make-up, he cites himself as the third person to publish it. He first encountered the metaphor in a 1922 American text by Victoria Hayward titled *Romantic Canada*. Just before he published his own text, Gibbon found that the metaphor had also been used in the title of a publication called *Our Canadian Mosaic* by Kate A. Foster. Foster had surveyed "New Canadians" for the Dominion Council of the YWCA

and published a 150-pages social worker's manual in 1926. Gibbon offered to change his title, but Foster and the Dominion Council welcomed him to use the term (ix).

⁴¹ In keeping with the Canadian ideology of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Gibbon's racial hierarchy favours similarities between Canadians and other "Northern" (read "white") races. Describing his reasoning for choosing only Europeans, he writes at the end of his introduction: "For various reasons, it was decided to confine this survey to the European racial groups in Canada (including those that have come by way of the United States)" (xi). Consider the continuum of whiteness in the ordering of his chapters:

(1) Europe, United States and Canada; (2) France and Canada; (3) England and Canada; (4) Scotland and Canada; (5) Ireland and Canada; (6) Wales and Canada; Germany and Canada; (7) The Netherlands, Belgium and Canada; (8) Scandinavia and Canada (Norwegians, Swedes, Danes, Icelanders); (9) The Eastern Baltic and Canada (Finns and Lithuanians); (10) Poland and Canada; (11) Ukraine and Canada; (12) Czechoslovakia and Canada; (13) the Balkans and Canada (Greeks, Roumanians, Yugoslavs, Bulgarians, Macedonians); (14) Hungary and Canada; (15) Russia and Canada; (16) Italy, Spanish Peninsula and Canada; (17) the Hebrew and Canada

⁴² Coleman also draws attention to the hierarchy of European whiteness in Gibbon's text. He compares it to a similar hierarchy in J.S. Woodsworth's 1909 seminal text, *Strangers within Our Gates, or Coming Canadians*. Coleman notes that where Woodsworth describes "Levantines, Orientals, Negroes, and Indians (both 'Hindus' and Amerindians)" as inassimiable, Gibbon, for the most part, ignores non-white presence in Canada (24). Given that Gibbon was born in Ceylon, Coleman writes, this omission was likely a conscious decision (266 n.11).

⁴³ Gayatri Gopinath offers a similar critique of Queer Nation in "Funny Boys and Girls: Notes on a Queer South Asian Planet." The principles of this movement, Gopinath writes, "suggest that the power of queer activism lies in its ability to exploit the disjuncture between queers having access to the state and its juridicial privileges, that is, to citizenship, and being simultaneously denied access to the nation" (120). However, she continues, "As queer South Asians in the diaspora, 'citizenship,' queer or otherwise, is not something that we can ever take for granted" (120-121).

⁴⁴ Beginning in 2002, many provincial courts started legalizing same-sex marriage, and a Liberal-led federal government changed the heterosexual definition of marriage in 2005 after recognizing that the prohibition of same-sex marriage violated the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The change was not evidence of an overwhelming acceptance of gay marriage, however. The parliamentary vote was 158 to 133. Not only was the vote relatively close, but the Liberals were accused of using a tactics of misdirection: a vote to end debate on the issue was passed the night before the vote on the same-sex bill, itself introduced on the last day before Parliament adjourned for the summer. Many accused the Liberals of supporting the same-sex bill primarily as a means of distracting attention away from the sponsorship scandal in which their party mismanaged a secret \$100 million fund that had been established to boost federalism following the 1995 Quebec referendum. After all, in 2002 the Liberals had chosen to

spend as much as \$10 million fighting the July 12, 2002 Ontario Court ruling that first legalized same-sex marriage.

⁴⁵ My attention to the insufficiency of “the closet” metaphor is indebted to the work of Martin Manalansan IV’s “In the Shadows of Stonewall: Examining Gay Transnational Politics and the Diasporic Dilemma.” Manalansan points to the way universalizing narratives of development can also colonize on the individual level: he points out that although its implications often pass unexamined, the term “*gay* gains meaning according to a developmental narrative that begins with an unliberated, ‘prepolitical’ homosexual practice and that culminates in a liberated, ‘out,’ politicized, ‘modern,’ ‘gay’ subjectivity” (487). In an effort to disrupt the imperializing effect of this linguistic subtext, Manalansan introduces the transplanted Filipino American diasporic logic of the *bakla*. *Bakla*, Manalansan explains, is a Filipino name “for particular types of men who engage in practices that encompass effeminacy, transvesticism, and homosexuality” (491). Manalansan’s discussion of the *bakla* illustrates that while categories of sexualized identity are far from irrelevant in Filipino culture, they are not signify the same way as “global” American categories. Citing one difference between these models, Manalansan writes that “Filipino gay men argue that identities are not just proclaimed verbally but are [more predominantly] ‘felt’ . . . or intuited” (499); the identities resulting from the insertion of the *bakla* into American spaces, Manalansan writes, “go against the simplistic movement from the private domain to the public realm implied by the ideas of the closet” (499).

⁴⁶ This strategy is also employed in Terry Goldie’s 2003 text, *Pink Snow: Homotextual Possibilities in Canadian Fiction*. Both texts consider such canonical novels as John Richardson’s *Wacousta*, W. O. Mitchell’s *Who Has Seen the Wind?*, and Leonard Cohen’s *Beautiful Losers* for queer possibility.