

REWARDING CIVILITY IN CANADA'S BATTLE OF THE BOOKS

REWARDING CIVILITY IN CANADA'S BATTLE OF THE BOOKS: *CANADA*
READS AND THE POLITE DISCOURSE OF ELIMINATION

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Abstract

This thesis looks at three seasons of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's (CBC) radio show *Canada Reads* – 2014, 2015, and 2016. I examine how each year's debates over reconciliation (2014), inclusive multiculturalism (2015), and Canada's role as a global refuge (2016) commonly presume a national mythology that Indigenous peoples have either disappeared or become "Canadian." I argue that despite the show's desire to build a better society through encouraging Canadians to read Canadian books, the debates featured on *Canada Reads* reflect the way assumed Canadian control of Indigenous lands is embedded in the language of Canadian literature and culture to both limit the political disruptiveness of Indigenous presence and reproduce ongoing colonial domination. Central to my argument is the sad truth that, even as the show invites diverse critiques of Canadian society, it nonetheless favours stereotypical narratives of Canadian multiculturalism, benevolence, and civility, and by doing so buttresses Canada's unchanged status as a settler colonial state. I track and evaluate ruptures in the show's civil language and decorum by reading moments of debate when the logical foundations of these stereotypical national narratives are challenged. Thus, this thesis examines not only what panelists say to each other, but also what their dialogue says to other Canadians. I argue that panelists' critiques of the nation drawn from their readings of the books - readings that are not so much holistic interpretations of books but strategies for winning the *Survivor*-style game - are welcomed by the show's annual social justice themes which then use them to purvey the nation's virtuous liberalism. Ultimately, my analysis traces how the civil protocols of the program through these three seasons

reproduce conflicts between Indigenous peoples and Canadians by reinforcing the inequity of the arrangements of the existing nation-state.

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Introduction

Rereading What All of Canada Should Read

“What is the book all of Canada should read?” This is the question that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation’s (CBC) “annual literary title fight,” *Canada Reads*, has been asking for seventeen years. The producers claim that since it premiered in 2002 the show has exposed millions of Canadians to books by Canadian authors by hosting debates about literature and the nation (CBC, “About,” February 7, 2018). *Canada Reads* has featured some of the most famous contemporary authors in Canadian literature, with an audience of 1.9 million people in 2018¹, it sits within a matrix of popular literary discourse and celebrity culture. Each year, five prominent Canadians are invited to the CBC studios in Toronto, Ontario, where they debate which book all of Canada should read. These panelists vote off one book per day until the last book standing is crowned the *Canada Reads* champion.

Since the inception of *Canada Reads*, every title to win the competition has become a bestseller, and in more recent years all five books featured on the show have seen a marked boost in sales. Having now featured 85 works of Canadian poetry, biography, graphic fiction, fiction, and nonfiction, *Canada Reads*’ influence on the Canadian publishing market is far-reaching². Whether or not Canadians tune in to the show, *Canada Reads* is a centrepiece of holiday book-selling, with large displays in bookstores featuring both competitors and victors from various seasons.

¹ These statistics were given to me during a meeting with the CBC Research department, but are not published.

² <https://www.booknetcanada.ca/blog/2018/1/30/literary-awards-canada-reads>

Early iterations of the show featured pre-recorded debates that tended to focus on literary aesthetics and writing quality. However, since 2012, the producers of the show have introduced social justice themes for each season, such as: “One Book to Change Our Nation” (2014), “One Book to Break Barriers” (2015), and “Starting Over” (2016). With the focus on one book for all Canadians, these themes assume a homogeneous idea of national community associated with a common concern for social justice, what Daniel Coleman has called Canadian “white civility.” The show takes the nation as its point of origin, and panelists tend to extend their discussions of the books beyond their literary merits to their national socio-political implications. In 2014, for example, Indigenous journalist and celebrity panelist, Wab Kinew (Ojibwe), shepherded Joseph Boyden’s *The Orenda* (2013) to victory by appealing to the nationalist rhetoric of reconciliation which he claimed to be “the greatest social justice issue facing this nation” (Kinew, “Day Two,” 2014, 22:22-23:25). Kinew’s defence of *The Orenda* took place as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was preparing its final report for publication in 2015. While many Indigenous people welcomed this recognition of the trauma of the residential school system, the fact that reconciliation became a federally sponsored project made many Indigenous communities suspicious of it.³ For mainstream Canadians, however, reconciliation was particularly compelling because of its concern with social justice. Kinew appealed to this mainstream idea of reconciliation to shepherd Boyden’s novel to victory despite the book being criticized as a “colonial scribe and moral alibi” for

³ See Walker, “Truth and Reconciliation: Aboriginal people conflicted as commission wraps up after 6 years.”

Canada's existence as a settler state (H. King), which suggests how the national context in which these debates take place influences the panelists' strategies.

Kinew's appeal to a mainstream message of national reconciliation on the show was so successful that he seemed a natural choice for host of the 2015 season. In part, this appointment was due to the firing of Jian Ghomeshi over allegations of sexual violence, and the desire of the CBC to distance itself from Ghomeshi. Kinew's appointment after his appeal to mainstream reconciliation⁴ demonstrates how national rhetoric not only operates on the show but also structures how it operates. It is telling, then, that Kinew – acting as host – asks panelists “what [Kim Thúy's] *Ru* contributes to the Canadian public discourse that we need to hear?” (Kinew, “Day Three,” 2014, 00:21:10-00:21:15).

Kinew's question indicates how potential criticisms of Canada's current formation posed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Syrian refugee crisis, and illegal immigration – all topics discussed during the debates – tend to be seen in the light of the show's appeal to its nationalist premise. This is true of many topics featured on *Canada Reads*, including: immigrant, Aboriginal, and queer experiences, racism, and the environment in Canada.

One can also trace the national assumptions of *Canada Reads*'s participation in literary prize culture. “Alongside the conflicting yet overlapping elements of symbolic and economic capital more generally at work in literary prizes,” writes Gillian Roberts in

⁴ What I am calling “mainstream reconciliation” is characterized by an understanding of colonization as a historical event as opposed to an ongoing structure of Canadian life, and as a result is characterized by gestures of apology and conservative remuneration for perceived historical damages: “Like the project of official multiculturalism to which it is articulated, reconciliation has been appropriated by hegemonic discourses for the purpose of framing the Canadian nation-state as a leader in the “globalization of forgiveness” modeling values of civility and tolerance for the world” (Henderson and Wakeham 7).

Prizing Literature (2011), “there is a kind of national capital that functions in Canadian literary prizes” (20). In this sense, *Canada Reads* circulates in the same nationalist economy as the Governor General’s Literary Awards, the Scotiabank Giller Prize, and the RBC Taylor Prize. But unlike these other awards, which are judged by an expert committee behind closed doors, *Canada Reads* appears to democratize the adjudication process by performing it in front of a live audience on public radio. In *Key Concepts in Radio Studies* (2009) Hugh Chignell borrows Paddy Scannell’s idea of “double articulation” to point out that “there are two simultaneous forms of communication occurring, that between the presenter and the person they’re talking to and also between this talk and the audience. The radio format of the show means that what is said and broadcast performs an artificial casualness. So it sounds like ‘chat’ but it’s chat that is designed for thousands of listeners to hear” (10). The CBC’s federal mandate means that these listeners need to be Canadian or people interested in Canada. Compared to the bank-sponsored prizes where the winning authors receive a monetary prize, or the Governor General’s Literary Awards, funded by the federal government, winners of *Canada Reads* depend on the national book market to transform their cultural capital into sales. “Not only do literary prizes support the consumption of literature in general terms,” argues Roberts, “but in the Canadian context, they also specifically promote the consumption of Canadian-ness alongside the idea that Canadian culture can profitably trade in the currencies of both symbolic and economic capital” (21). So *Canada Reads* is unlike the prizes whose value is fixed by the bank’s or the government’s contribution, relies on a floating value that circulates in a national symbolic economy. This symbolic

value is then cashed into monetary value through book sales. Celebrity panelists themselves also circulate in this symbolic economy in ways that continue to influence the perception of the books they defend even after the show has concluded.

Thesis

My study does not constitute a comprehensive analysis of the *Canada Reads* series, format, or canon, nor is it meant as an evaluation of the ethical obligations of the show's producers. In this dissertation, I do a decolonial reading of three seasons of *Canada Reads* – 2014, 2015, and 2016 – to demonstrate how the double articulation of the debates exhibits a predilection for national narratives built on the assumption that colonization is a historical event as opposed to an ongoing structure or condition. Central to my argument is that even as the show paradoxically invites diverse critiques of Canadian society, its elimination structure highlights the way the idea of the nation as the default model of imagined community shores up colonial assumptions when they are exposed. I argue that expressions of social justice in seemingly benign conversations about the books featured on the program are in fact limited by the “constrained universality” (Coleman 13) that defines settler-colonial white civility. I suggest that panelists' critiques of the nation drawn from their readings of the books are welcomed by the show's annual social justice themes which then purvey the nation's virtuous liberalism. This constitutes the discursive paradox of the show: on the one hand, it recirculates the founding assumptions of the existing nation-state while on the other hand it invites its critique. This discursive paradox is highlighted by the show's hybrid format,

which is derived from the marriage between talk-radio, itself a double articulation, and reality television. So while the show features radio's aesthetic of civil and inclusive conversation, it is also based on the sensational format of *Survivor*-style elimination. Readings performed on the show are not so much holistic interpretations of books but polemical strategies for winning the game. These strategies are double articulations that appeal to concepts that circulate readily among the thousands of listeners while appearing to convince other panelists on the set. So I am not only looking at what panelists say to each other, but also at what their dialogue says to other Canadians. My central task in this thesis is to attend to the logic of elimination in the *Canada Reads* debates to show how colonial attitudes are perpetuated even in liberal and self-critical discussions of Canadian cultural nationalism.

I think of my approach as decolonial along the lines of Marxist Gikuyu scholar Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's discussion of how colonialism works in *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1986). In his work, Ngũgĩ illustrates how Althusserian ideology works in the colonial context when he observes that

The real aim of colonialism was to control the people's wealth: what they produced, how they produced it, and how it was distributed; to control, in other words, the entire realm of the language of real life But its most important area of domination was the mental universe of the colonised, the control, through culture, of how people perceive themselves and their relationship to the world. Economic and political control can never be complete or effective without mental control. To control a people's culture is to control their tools of self-definition in

relationship to others The domination of a people's language by the languages of the colonising nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonised. (Ngũgĩ 16)

Here Ngũgĩ points out how the expropriation of Indigenous wealth – be it in Africa or anywhere else – depends on control of not only the physical land and population, but the minds of its inhabitants. Language therefore is a key domain in which to track and critique this operation of power. Here Ngũgĩ echoes Althusser's influential formulation that "ideology has the function (which defines it) of 'constituting' concrete individuals as subjects" (Althusser 171). In the case of the participants of *Canada Reads* the colonial assumption of Canada, which assumes the elimination of Indigenous sovereignties, interpellates them as subjects of this founding and ongoing assumption. In my view then, a decolonial criticism keeps an eye on the extractive materiality of colonization – i.e. the appropriation of land – as it attends to the language that frames that mental geography. It is important to keep in mind as we think through Ngũgĩ's formulations that scholars like Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang have warned that "decolonization is not a metaphor." That is to say, decolonization is not a synonym for other forms of oppression or injustice. In keeping with Ngũgĩ, they remind us that discursive formulations and mental formations are ways of controlling and expropriating material resources and land.

Kinew's evocation of the mainstream rhetoric of reconciliation in 2014 drew my attention to the paradox that I am tracing in this thesis, and I wanted to see how it unfolded in subsequent seasons. While books by Indigenous authors were featured on 2015 and 2016, the winning books on these seasons appealed to other forms of rhetoric

(multiculturalism in 2015 and speculative transnationalism in 2016), and I was interested to see how this paradox functioned in these different contexts. I was also interested in seeing how the live broadcasts interacted with and responded to related events in the larger mediascape: specifically, the Idle No More movement that had grown in prominence since Chief Theresa Spence’s hunger strike over Bill C-45 in 2012, the aforementioned TRC’s cross-country tour collecting survivor testimony in the preparation for its final report in 2015, and the debates over Syrian refugees leading up to the transition of power from Stephen Harper’s to Justin Trudeau’s government in 2015. Despite the way in which these events suggested moments of rupture in public consciousness, the *Canada Reads* debates of this period revealed how that colonial mental geography and *status quo* cultural nationalism persist.

Like other listeners of *Canada Reads*, I brought my own biases and prejudices to the program, reading things in ways that others did not. My readings reflect a particular understanding of Canadian history and culture that, like critics before me, has made me blind to my own exclusions and ignorance. Notably, I am aware that these chapters feature a gender disparity⁵ in terms of panelist examples, they focus very little on queer theoretical frames, and they do not prioritize the exclusions of various racialized and minority groups in the *Canada Reads* debates. I fully recognize that an equally thorough

⁵ In part, this increased attention to male panelists and authors is reflective of a statistical gender disparity on the program itself. Recent work by mathematician Dr. Tom Baird, and 2018 *Canada Reads* author of *The Boat People* (2018) Sharon Bala suggests that *Canada Reads* itself reflects a glaring gender disparity. “In all of *Canada Reads* history there have been 37 male defenders and 43 female defenders. And yet, out of the 16 debates, men have won 13 competitions and women have won 3. Male defenders have won 81% of the time... This despite the majority (54%) of defenders having been women.” (Baird in Bala, “Canada Reads and the Gender Gap,” 2018)

study of this archive could be done on the marginalization of queer perspectives from the program, as well as on the marginalization of intersectional issues that do not fit cleanly into homogeneous categories, such as “the environment,” “the Aboriginal issue,” or “the refugee experience.” Similarly, my use of mainstream cultural theory is not meant to minimize the accomplishments of the many equity-seeking Canadians and Indigenous scholars, but rather to emphasize the way these mainstream critiques of the nation-state reproduce hegemonic assumptions embedded in Canadian discourses of reconciliation, multiculturalism, and speculative transnationalism. I prioritize the exclusion of Indigenous sovereignty in the *Canada Reads* debates because as both Kinew and Lewis described it in the 2014, this is the primary problematic at the heart of what constitutes “Canada.” As the Supreme Court put it in *Van der Peet* (1996):

when Europeans arrived in North America, Aboriginal peoples *were already here*, living in communities on the land, and participating in distinctive cultures, as they had done for centuries. It is this fact, and this fact above all others, which separates Aboriginal peoples from all other minority groups in Canadian society and which mandates their special legal, and now constitutional, status. (par. 30, emphasis in original)

The reason that I have chosen this decolonial approach, as compared to one that focuses on gender, sexuality, or race more generally, is because it addresses this constitutional position of indigeneity in the narrative that has made Canada.

Critical Frame

Previous studies of *Canada Reads* by Laura Moss, Smaro Kamboureli, Danielle Fuller, DeNel Rehberg Sedo, Kathryn Grafton, Anouk Lang, Julie Rak, and others, have agreed that the national premise of the show takes as its point of departure Benedict Anderson's configuration of the modern nation as an "imagined community." The nation, argues Anderson, as distinguished from the bureaucracy of the state, "is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members ... yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion," and it is "a *community*... regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail" (49-50). Anderson argues that, beginning with the printing press, the "image of communion" at the root of this "deep, horizontal comradeship" is the result of the shared consumption of cultural products made possible by "the convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language" (58). It's not hard to see how Anderson's ideas about the community-shaping power of print are picked up and carried on by other mass-communication media such as radio, television, and the internet. The "fatal diversity of human language" that Anderson describes here can perhaps be better understood as an interpretive "grey-area," or an imagined national space bounded by shifting moral and political ideals, and cultural beliefs about what and who constitutes this yet undefined Canadian identity.

This is to say "that nationalism has to be understood by aligning it ... with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which - as well as against which - it came into being" (Anderson 52). These preceding cultural systems tend to crystalize into popular national stereotypes. We can see these in operation when Laura Moss writes in

2004, “Canada Reads has become a new instrument of culture formation. It is intent on drawing Canadians together by creating a shared cultural background. The winning titles reinforce certain popular notions of Canadian-ness [such as] ... a sense of a multicultural Canada ... the tension of Quebec in Canada [and] ... an epic of Western history” (7). In this way, the dialogues, monologues, and debates featured on *Canada Reads* mean much more than the celebrity contestant’s personal opinion; they reveal how these preceding cultural systems can countenance and absorb diverse views and critiques of the national formation.

The flow of federal funding to the CBC provides a material demonstration of Anderson’s contention that imagined communities flow out of preceding cultural systems and draws a link between reproductions of national rhetoric and the goals of state-sponsored culture-building. Fuller and Rehberg Sedo have traced this relationship between federal funding and national culture-building in “A Reading Spectacle for the Nation: CBC and ‘*Canada Reads*’” (2006). The Parliamentary mandate to “[develop] radio programming that enlightens, reflects and connects Canadians” (Broadcasting Act 1991) has generated “tremendous cultural capital and authority” and as a result, “book programming on CBC Radio has played an active part in [the] process of national identity formation through its promotion — and publication — of Canadian writing” (Fuller and Rehberg Sedo 17). Unsurprisingly, “national identity” is never clearly defined even as it is consistently assumed. Despite the way this observation appears to connect state sponsorship to CBC programming like *Canada Reads*, the authors are careful to note that such nation-building programs often evoke an ambivalent response from Canadians. This

ambivalence suggests that the model of imagined community promoted by the show welcomes the diverse and even critical views of individual Canadians even as it assumes the large cultural systems that Anderson claims precede the current national formation.

As a former British colony, Canada is predicated on its conflicted relationship to land. The nation is built on the careful cultural (mis)representation of the dispossession of Indigenous peoples and the elimination of their position as more closely tied to the land than settlers. Australian anthropologist and settler-colonial scholar Patrick Wolfe offers a way of thinking about the evolving structural relationship between settler colonialism and genocide in “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native” (2006). Wolfe posits that settler colonialism is organized by the logic of elimination, which enacts the persecution of Indigenous peoples as relative to their power over territory. Wolfe argues that though settler colonialism has at times descended into genocide, the logic motivating genocide has not disappeared with the colonial frontier.

Territoriality is settler colonialism’s specific, irreducible element The logic of elimination not only refers to the summary liquidation of Indigenous people, though it includes that Negatively, it strives for the dissolution of native societies. Positively, it erects a new colonial society on the expropriated land base [S]ettler colonizers come to stay: invasion is a structure not an event [E]limination is an organizing principal of settler-colonial society rather than a one-off (and superseded) occurrence [T]he logic of elimination can include officially encouraged miscegenation, the breaking-down of native title into alienable individual freeholds, native citizenship, child abduction, religious

conversion, resocialization in total institutions such as missions or boarding schools, and a whole range of cognate biocultural assimilations. All these strategies, including frontier homicide, are characteristic of settler colonialism ... settler colonialism destroys to replace. (Wolfe 388)

Wolfe argues that settler colonialism is predicated on control over both physical and conceptual territory, the auxiliary strategy to explicit genocide which is a structure, not an event. It is a structure and not an event because, as in the case of North America, Indigenous peoples' very existence puts the lie to illusions that settler colonialism has somehow managed to supersede and eliminate First Nations. Wolfe agrees with Anderson that this structure of elimination and its logic constitute the central large cultural system on which Canadian settler colonialism was founded.

Kinew's opening statement on Day Two of the 2014 season of *Canada Reads* beautifully captures the tension at the root of Canada's history of nation-building and settler colonialism. "Do we own the land or does the land own us?" Kinew asks, "that's the original conflict between the Indigenous and those who've shown up" (Kinew, "Day Two," 2014, 00:13:00-00:13:05). Land, and defending the settler's claim to it, are at the center of the Canadian national imaginary. "Land is life" or otherwise so essential to it as to make "contests for land" indirectly "contests for life" (Wolfe 387). Kinew's comments cut through the discourse that hides the logic of elimination by returning our attention to the land. "Indigenous North Americans were not killed, driven away, romanticized, assimilated, fenced in, bred White, and otherwise eliminated as the original owners of the land," notes Wolfe, "but as *Indians*," as the challengers of settler colonialism (388,

emphasis in original). “As far as Indigenous people are concerned,” he continues, “where they are *is* who they are” (388). Thus, he quotes Bird Rose, “to get in the way of settler colonization, all the native has to do is stay at home” (Bird Rose qtd. in Wolfe 388). This conflict has a profound influence on the national imaginary, to the extent that pointing out the incompleteness of the colonial project often elicits a visceral response from settler Canadians.

In *Unsettled Expectations* (2016), social anthropologist Eva Mackey investigates such visceral responses in Canadian and American fears about the implications of Indigenous peoples remaining at home. Despite the efforts of Canadian cultural genocide to insulate settler fears of dispossession,

the ‘Native,’ however, did not disappear as planned. Land rights conflicts are therefore deeply embodied, grounded, and material disputes that are also about interpretations of history, justice and identity, because they raise the difficult question of who is entitled to ownership of the national homeland [sic] ...

Contemporary claims for land and culture cannot be separated from demands for recognition of past injustices, which means colonial and national pasts – how those lands were taken – inevitably live in the present. (5)

Mackey’s observations suggest that Kinew’s comments about whether we own the land or the land owns us reduce “the elaborate and illogical ‘fantasies of possession’ and ‘fantasies of entitlement’” (Mackey 10) that have been used to logically frame “settler national sovereignty over land” into a challenge to the foundational legitimacy of English colonialism (Asch qtd. in Mackey 10). The colonial logic of elimination flows through

the national discourse by connecting settler colonization to nation-building, as national metanarratives reproduce settler fantasies of entitlement and possession over land.

Mackey elaborates on the “fantasy” element of settler possession and entitlement, explaining that settlers presume that despite ongoing land-claims challenges, their land rights are protected because “they had labored and improved the land and helped build the nation and ... [are] entitled to their private property” (8). Mackey traces the origins of this fantasy through the eighteenth-century liberalism of John Locke and his theories of “improving, productive labour” read out of God’s instructions to Adam in Genesis (50). Furthermore, Mackey explains how Locke’s ideas closely mirrored the Doctrine of Discovery on which the colonial project is based (53).

Since, as Anderson argues, imagined communities evolve in relation to pre-existing large cultural systems, the logic of elimination continues to manage conflicts of settler nationhood and identity even in cases where these identities are challenged. We can see this logic of elimination operating through the habitus that frames *Canada Reads*. In *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993), Bourdieu coins the concept of “habitus” which he describes as “neither a result of free will, nor determined by structures, but created by a kind of interplay between the two over time: dispositions that are both shaped by past events and structures, and that shape current practices and structures” (170). Catherine Graham elaborates on Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, interpreting it as “the embodiment and consequent ‘naturalization’ for a particular culture or social group of socially-defined narratives and how it operates to shape unconscious strategies” (95):

Habitus, says Bourdieu, functions in a way similar to conscious strategies, in the sense that they are organized and deployed in such a way as to induce others to carry out desired actions, but they cannot really be considered strategies because the bodies that carry them out never consciously choose them as one possible strategy among others (175). This apparent lack of strategy in the enactment of moves ... [is] intended to obtain particular results While different habitus feel ‘natural’ to those educated in the culture that created them, they are not inherent biological structures, but histories (or stories) that have been incorporated into individual bodies as ways of enacting social worlds. Effectively, habitus reiterate existing social structures by replaying historical relations of power on an everyday level. As long as these histories remain unconscious, they can continue to be acted out as social processes of exclusion with no one being held accountable for either their existence or their effects. (95)

Bourdieu’s concept of habitus helps us see how the seemingly independent subjectivities that panelists perform on the show are in fact their negotiation with the preceding large cultural systems (Anderson), or historical relations of power (Bourdieu) that frame the field of Canadian cultural production. While I could appeal to other formulations of subjectivity, such as Althusser’s famous formulation of how subjects are interpellated, what I like about Bourdieu’s concept of habitus is the connection he draws between subjectivity, unconscious strategies, and the field of cultural production. This is more of an elaboration on, than a departure from Althusser’s thinking insofar as it agrees with Althusser on how ideology produces subjects who in turn reproduce ideology (or for

Bourdieu habitus) in the ways that they interact within the mental geographies of their existence, that is to say, in the way they inhabit these discursive and mental regimes. Habitus has appealed to a number of scholars of Canadian literary prize culture – such as Danielle Fuller and Julie Rak in “‘True Stories,’ Real Lives: *Canada Reads* 2012 and the Effects of Reading Memoir in Public” (2016), and Gillian Roberts *Prizing Literature* (2011) - because of the way it links peoples’ public performances of Canadian ideology and the literary economy.

Roberts invokes Bourdieu’s concept of habitus in her study of Canadian prize culture when she writes:

if a national habitus indicates a disposition towards the consumption of national cultural products, the notion of national capital suggests that nationality becomes a kind of currency in the cultural marketplace. The addition of national capital to the collision of the symbolic and the economic reinforces the literary prize’s function as a tool of popularization ... in Canada, the Governor General’s Award, the (Scotiabank) Giller Prize, and *Canada Reads* all work on some level to win the consent of the Canadian public to the valuing of Canadian literature. (21)

The fact that *Canada Reads* eliminates one book per day is a particularly clear example of the way the logic of elimination structures the unconscious strategies of national habitus. The dramatic entertainment value of *Canada Reads* is derived from this need to eliminate and survive. Elimination is a structure, not an event. It is the same structure that creates the marketability of reality television from *Iron Chef* and *American Idol* to *Survivor*.

Canada Reads, however, is also broadcast as a radio program, and as I have already noted, radio emphasizes the conviviality and value of curated conversation that appears informal and accessible to a broad audience. Although there are precursors to the CBC in the 1930s and 1940s, the CBC as a national broadcaster can trace its mandate to naturalize a national mental geography to the *Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences* of 1951 (Massey Commission) which states:

In Canada radio has a particularly important task. It must offer information, education and entertainment to a diverse and scattered population. It must also develop a sense of national unity between our two main races, and among our various ethnic groups, in spite of a strongly developed regional sense and of the attractions of our engaging and influential southern neighbour. (Massey Commission 1951, 18. Sec. 78, p. 300)

In its reference to “diversity” that must be brought into a sense of “unity,” we can see the antecedents of the structural paradox that shapes the discussions that take place on *Canada Reads*. On the one hand Massey’s mandate for radio anticipates a diverse and scattered population made up of “various ethnic groups,” while on the other hand insisting on a unity centred on “our two main races.” The logic of elimination is built into the conviviality of radio. In addition, *Canada Reads* contributes to the project of “national unity” by capitalizing on the Massey Commission’s perception of the nation-building potential of literature which it considered to be the “greatest of all forces making for national unity” (225). Writing on *Canada Reads* in 2004, Smaro Kamboureli, in “The

Culture of Celebrity and National Pedagogy,” underscores the pedagogical effects of the Massey Commission’s recommended federal funding for things like national institutions of radio and literature in the present.

Daniel Coleman’s *White Civility* provides an analytical model for thinking through the way nation-building literary projects have shaped the national pedagogy around colonial ideas of British civility. Coleman explores how the concept of “civility,” which “combines the temporal notion of civilization as progress ... with the moral ethical concept of a (relatively) peaceful order” (10), was tied in Canada’s formation to notions of white supremacy as a way of implicitly managing a diverse and conflicted settler-colonial society. Coleman contends “that civility itself is a positive value that is structurally ambivalent [this] is to say that at the same time that civility involves the creation of justice and equality, it simultaneously creates borders to the sphere in which justice and equality are maintained” (9). This border is visible in the Massey Commission’s explicit distinction between the “two main races” and Canada’s “various ethnic groups”: because unity remains the primary goal of this national pedagogy, the celebration of diversity is folded back into Canada’s project of white civility and the structure of elimination always remains unsaid. “For Canadians,” writes Coleman, “the performance of civility is a way to manage our traumatic history (a complex history usually involving the lower classes, first of Europe and later of Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean, being displaced from their homelands and in turn displacing Indigenous peoples in North America from their traditional lands)” (29). My project is to unpack this paradox between the celebration of diversity and the eliminatory pursuit of unity. I am

looking at *Canada Reads* not because I feel that it disingenuously tries to address social issues through literature, but because it does so only to have these issues co-opted by the large cultural systems that repeatedly reframe it in terms of the colonial project. An excellent example of this process can be found in the 2015 season of the show when the Artistic Director of the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), Cameron Bailey, successfully defended Kim Thúy's winning prose-poetry novel *Ru* (2012). Bailey's opening comments capture the tension and awkwardness bound up in characterizations of Canada as a refuge that pays lip service to ongoing colonial processes. "There are six of us sitting around this table," says Bailey; "five of us come from immigrant families" ("Day One," 2015, 00:16:49-00:16:53). He briefly pauses before turning to Kinew and says, "Thank you for having us on your land, Wab," to which Kinew replies with a quick "you're welcome" (16:55). What else could Kinew as host say? Given the convivial civility of *Canada Reads* he was in no position to remain silent or to say, "you're not welcome!" Indigenous peoples have never had jurisdiction over immigration policy in Canada. Bailey then makes a civil gesture to the conflicts of colonial history by suggesting that *The Orenda*'s victory the previous year highlights the "brutal cost" of the past "five-hundred years of migrants coming to this country" (17:00). He seems not to anticipate what it means to Kinew when he goes on to say that "Canada's not done yet. The original encounter between the French and the English and the Aboriginal people is just the beginning of it," and that now "a whole new generation of migrants" is "changing the face of Canada" (17:20). Bailey's intention to include Indigenous history in the ongoing story of how immigrants are reshaping the nation is framed by the civil

assumption of *Canada Reads* whose priority is always to “develop a sense of national unity between our two main races, and among our various ethnic groups,” a priority that must leave the logic of elimination always unsaid.

This exchange between Bailey and Kinew over Boyden’s *The Orenda* reveals a third manifestation of the structure of elimination, the elimination of the contents of the contest itself in the need to declare a winner. Each year what carries forward is not so much the debates about the various books but the triumph of the winner. *The Orenda*, shorn of the debates it endured the previous year, comes to stand in for the “brutal cost” of the past “five-hundred years of migrants coming to this country.” As previously mentioned, his winsome success with Boyden’s novel installs Kinew as the new host, and this is not insignificant for, as 2015 panelist Craig Kielburger notes, in an obvious tip of the hat, “unfortunately, when you buy *The Orenda* it doesn’t come with Wab Kinew at the dinner-table” (Kielburger 45:00/54:00). In effect, the success of the books and the panelists who represent them become cultural capital while the debates about these books remain in the archive. This is an effect of the conviviality of radio, but it also returns me to the point of my project. For the archives exist, and it is possible for scholars and others to return to the debates to reanimate these moments of critical disjuncture in an effort to expose and thus decolonize the structure of elimination.

Previous Research

The *Canada Reads* archive – by which I mean both the books associated with the show (including short and long lists) and the competition debates themselves – can be

loosely organized into two eras based on the show's production style. Early seasons of the show between 2002 and 2010 were pre-recorded, edited and then broadcast at a later date (CBC, "About" 2018). After 2010, the debates moved to a live broadcast format and began to experiment with the inclusion of online polling as a way of influencing panelists and (though never used so far) to break ties. Critical approaches to the *Canada Reads* canon evolve from academic suspicion over the serious impact of what at first seemed like a trivial gameshow to serious critical engagement with the readings performed on the show and how they circulate ideologies of reading in the contemporary Canadian market. A significant step in this evolution becomes visible in the publication of Danielle Fuller's 2007 article "Listening to the Readers of 'Canada Reads.'" Up to this point, critiques of the show typically examined its ideological and cultural significance or commented on the gap between academic and non-academic reading practices performed by the celebrity panelists. Fuller's essay marked an important development in scholarly considerations of the show by calling for increased attention to what these readings and debates can tell us about changes in the way Canadian literature is being used in a culture of popular media. Since then, a study of the readings of Boyden's *Three Day Road* on the 2010 season by Anouk Lang and a study of the 2012 season of the show by Fuller and Rak follow the methodology set out by Fuller in 2007 by looking at the way the readings on the show attest to the evolution of national reading culture in Canada. As the show evolves and becomes a permanent fixture of the Canadian literary and cultural economy, so too does the criticism evolve.

Early work by Laura Moss and Smaro Kamboureli represent two of the first academic responses to the show. Writing on the 2002 and 2003 seasons, both Moss and Kamboureli argue that *Canada Reads* is much more than a low prestige literary game. Moss interrogated producer Talin Vartanian's claim that *Canada Reads* is "just a game" to argue that scholars and critics should "take this game seriously," and in so doing set the stage for further scholarly work by pointing to the way this game is "played with cultural, social, and economic consequences" (10-11). Kamboureli points directly to the role of *Canada Reads* in the cultivation of a "public memory" and locates it in a larger project of national pedagogy – the process by which citizens are taught the cultural structures of the imagined community (39). "National pedagogy," she writes, "[is] an imperial project with at once a decidedly imperialist lineage and a globalizing intent" (45).

Danielle Fuller's and DeNel Rehberg Sedo's "A Reading Spectacle for the Nation: CBC and 'Canada Reads'" provides an "ideological analysis of the cultural work that *Canada Reads* performs" (5). Fuller and Rehberg Sedo describe the program as "both a mass reading event and a media spectacle that reinforces the 'blockbuster culture' of contemporary Canadian literary publishing" (5). This study of the show is significant because their identification of *Canada Reads* as a mass reading event allowed them to examine how the popular discussions about books on the show presented what they call a conservative model of nation. That is, this model recirculates conservative images of Canadian-ness in which there is still room for liberal "creative resistance" in the show's multiple modes of dissemination (5).

The following year, Fuller published a study of the show with a distinctly different perspective from the studies that preceded it. Up to this point, “academic readers have been preoccupied with the wider cultural, ideological significance and structural situation of ‘Canada Reads,’” she argues, “and, perhaps surprisingly for people whose training privileges textual criticism, they have been rather less concerned with the actual content of the show, the on-air discussions and the books selected” (26). In response, Fuller asks: what can reading the readings performed by panelists and viewers on and off air (what she calls “vernacular reading practices”) tell us about the way popular reading cultures and media formats are reshaping the “use” of Canadian literature (13)? Fuller ultimately points to the importance of “developing nuanced analyses of non-academic reading practices and theories capable of explaining the pleasures, politics, and social relations that reading practices both shape and resist” (31). Though *Canada Reads* and the digital public sphere have changed dramatically since 2007, Fuller presciently observed that there is immense opportunity for scholars “to participate more directly, more provocatively, and more creatively in popular readings of Canadian literature” (31-32). This approach to *Canada Reads* is taken up by Kathryn Grafton in her 2010 PhD dissertation, “Paying Attention to Public Readers of Canadian Literature: Popular Genre Systems, Publics, And Canons.” Grafton’s “comparison of the 2005 and 2006 *Canada Reads* debates shows that panelists’ process of elimination and selection is far from ‘arbitrary’ or impulsive” (91). She concludes that *Canada Reads* “conjures a public with dispute utilized not as a force to drive public participants apart but a catalyst to gather them together,” an early identification of the paradoxical structure of *Canada Reads*, a

structure which, on the one hand, invites diverse celebrations and critiques of the nation and its literature, while on the other hand reducing this diversity into a single book that can be read to unifying effect. In her shift toward a reading of *Canada Reads* as a hyperbolic instance of canon-making, Grafton points to the way the show both reflects and participates in Canadian cultural production and cultural nationalism.

More recent studies of *Canada Reads* by Anouk Lang in 2010, and Fuller and Rak in 2016 follow the methodology set out by Fuller in 2007. Lang argues that instead of interpreting a novel's victory on the show as a sign of Canadians' approval of a "book's recuperation of previously submerged histories" as symptoms of "a wider set of issues in present-day Canada still to be resolved," the show's treatment of these issues "indicate[s] a different kind of interpretation entirely: a sense of satisfaction at the telling of a history that can be appreciated uniformly across the nation" (122). Lang's critique of Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road* examines how readers on-air and online "celebrate" and "critique" the books featured on the table in the 2006 season. It is on Fuller's "vernacular reading practices," as well as the online responses, that Lang bases her own critical readings of the debates featured on the show.

Lang's study is significant because it provides a model for making sense of the paradox by which *Canada Reads* opens a space for both celebration and critique even as it re-asserts unity by choosing one book all of Canada should read. Moreover, Lang introduces the presumption that readers' diverse critiques are bound by "a specific habitus in which interpretive habits have been developed, and through which readers have been socialized into foregrounding some textual features in favour of others" (120). Lang's

reference to habitus is compatible with Grafton’s invocation of Mikhail Bakhtin’s claim that “all speakers are oriented toward ‘an actively responsive understanding’” (Bakhtin qtd. in Grafton 100). Like Grafton and Lang, mine builds upon Fuller’s methodology of reading the double articulation of “vernacular reading practices.”

The most recent study of *Canada Reads* considered in this project is Fuller’s and Rak’s “‘True Stories,’ Real Lives: *Canada Reads* 2012 and the Effects of Reading Memoir in Public” (2016). This article examines the way the 2012 season of the show blurred the lines between entertainment and reality. The 2012 season featured a work of biography for the first time, which as the authors argue, extended the boundaries of the show beyond the talk-show’s format of contestants around a table to the thousands of listeners beyond. Fuller and Rak examine, in particular, the way panelist Anne-France Goldwater’s description of Carmen Aguirre as “a bloody terrorist” made the (winning) author the target of public anger off the show. In particular, the authors make clear just how far some people will go to police the boundaries of the nation as it is celebrated and critiqued on the show. I agree that the authors trace not only what is said on the show through the format of the game, but they also consider the way this dialogue participates in ongoing conversations beyond it. Fuller and Rak ultimately argue that the

focus on ‘true stories’ and the effects of reading the genre of memoir resulted in a rupturing of the nationalist ideology and the liberal notion of multiculturalism that drives the purpose of [the show]...[and] that, rather than unifying Canadians and ‘enlightening’ them about each other through the medium of a shared reading experience of Canadian stories, the effects of reading memoir in public on the

2012 show exposed the dangerous naivety of that ideal and the requirement for more ethically responsible ways of reading. (41)

While my own analysis of *Canada Reads* follows a methodology similar to Fuller's and Rak's, their argument provides an opportunity for me to make an essential distinction. What Fuller and Rak consider to be a "rupturing of the nationalist ideology" in this moment of *ad feminam* violence on the show, I think that what is exposed in a moment like this is the ongoing violence embedded in the show's structure of elimination. While it may have been more visible on the 2012 season, this violence is present in every season's assumption that the nation endures to be critiqued again next year — indeed, that the nation thrives upon this critique.

Previous *Canada Reads* studies have collectively provided the vocabulary for my analysis here. Of these studies, Fuller's 2007 work most clearly directs my reading. Focusing on one half of the paradox of *Canada Reads*, Fuller's (self-described) "minor study" of online readers suggests that "some readers are not simply imagining a unified Canadian community; they are, in many cases, questioning that nationalist construction" (31). This raises the question: how do we develop this interrogation of nationalist construction? To answer this question I have had to confront my own critical biases and pretensions about the value of literary critique (in which I am trained) over cultural studies (to which I am relatively new), and in so doing have attempted to internalize Fuller's call for literary scholars "to be self-reflexive about our own position, power, and responsibility within processes of knowledge production and consumption" in the hope of enabling "us as 'professional' readers to participate more directly, more provocatively,

and more creatively in popular readings of Canadian literature” (31-32). This approach means that, rather than approaching the debates on *Canada Reads* as “unprofessional” vs. “professional” literary engagement, I take the debates seriously for the ways in which they reveal the habitus or mental universe in which all engagements — professional or not, creative or provocative — participate.

Chapter Summaries

In each chapter of this dissertation, I compare the arguments about the winning book to arguments about the book by an Indigenous author at the table. Throughout my comparisons I consider two guiding questions. First, what is each panelist’s strategy for winning the game? Second, how does the national habitus of the show shape the double articulation of these panelists’ strategies? In Chapter One I examine the 2014 season of *Canada Reads*, which saw Joseph Boyden’s *The Orenda* (2013) win as both the book all Canadians should read and “the one book to change the nation.” I ask how defender Wab Kinew presents *The Orenda* through a mainstream rhetoric of reconciliation to win the game. I then ask how the national habitus of the show – its predilection for certain critiques and celebrations of the nation over others – reproduces the structure of elimination by representing colonization as a historical event. Using reconciliation as a focal point of panelists’ discussions, this chapter engages in close readings of the winning novel, reviews about it, and the debates featured on the show to illuminate the way the colonial logic of elimination assimilates the novel’s potential to outline Indigenous sovereignty within a Canadian rhetoric of apology and social justice.

Chapter Two examines the 2015 season of *Canada Reads* whose theme is “one book to break barriers” and asks how TIFF Artistic Director Cameron Bailey’s reading of Kim Thúy’s *Ru* as a vehicle for empathy was transformed by the civil discourse of the show into the values of inclusive multiculturalism. Bailey’s call for Canadians to be more inclusive of immigrants is framed by the national premise of the show to include all marginalized and racialized members of Canadian society. I contrast Bailey’s reading of *Ru* with Craig Kielburger’s arguments for *The Inconvenient Indian* (2012), a book of nonfiction by Thomas King, to argue that what is eliminated in Bailey’s rejection of racial stereotypes of Indigenous peoples *within* the national community are any assertions of Indigenous sovereignty that resist inclusion within the Canadian body politic.

This chapter looks at the way a conversation about which book best breaks barriers gets turned into a conversation about the best way to combat racism. By comparing the rhetoric of Bailey’s and Kielburger’s arguments, I argue that inclusive multiculturalism can be understood as a socio-cultural project that manages and undermines Indigenous priority on the land. To do this, I examine Sunera Thobani’s *Exalted Subjects* (2007) as a frame for making sense of Canada’s debates about immigration and use it to read the way King’s book upsets the civility of the show by suggesting that Indigenous peoples do not want to be included within a multicultural framework. Thobani’s tripartite model of Canada’s hierarchy, from exalted white citizens to multicultural immigrants and finally marginalized Indigenous wards of the state, helps us see why Kielburger’s defence of King’s book was unable to convince the other panelists that colonization is an ongoing process and that, while there may be equivalence

between common experiences of global diasporans and Indigenous people, there are complications in Canada's settling refugees on contested Indigenous territory. Instead, debates about King's book focused on the way its content would unsettle Canadian sensibilities and, rather than break barriers, more deeply entrench them.

Lastly, Chapter Three examines the 2016 season of the show which featured the theme "starting over" and ended with the triumph of Lawrence Hill's *The Illegal* (2015), defended by Olympic multi-medalist Clara Hughes. The conversation on the show was dominated by the global refugee crisis and debates over Canada's obligations to act as a refuge; however, the focus on the role of Canada as part of a transnational community shifted the focus of the debates away from Canada as a literal, geographical place and toward Canada as an imagined community disconnected from the land itself. This shift was emphasized by Hill's novel being set in a fictional, imagined place, not in the real world, so discussions about the novel as "Canadian" had to imagine a kind of Canadian-ness that floated in abstract global space disconnected from the literal land of Canada.

In this chapter I ask how Hughes's strategic reading invokes a national concern in a transnational setting to argue that Canadians as a people with diverse national allegiances have an ethical responsibility to provide refuge to global refugees. I argue that the double articulation of this rhetorical narrative eliminates the active role *terra nullius* continues to play in the tension between ongoing land claims and assertions that Canada is relatively open as a place of refuge. I compare Hughes's reading to Poon Tip's defence of Lindberg's Indigenous novel, *Birdie*, to show how seeing Canada as part of an international community obscures Indigenous claims to land by focusing on an imagined

community deliberately abstracted from that land. What is eliminated by the seeming universality of Hughes's strategic reading is the assertion of power that comes from being able to decide who is or is not welcome to Canada, and the violence obscured by overwriting ongoing Indigenous claims to land.

In each chapter I examine the way the program was framed by that year's theme, and I then provide a close reading of the dialogues that led up to the selection of the winning book to illustrate how the civil discourse of the show points to the national habitus that celebrates particular perspectives while eliminating others. Each chapter focuses first and foremost on the dialogues of the panelists, their responses to the questions posed by the host, and their opening and closing statements. I consider the way these panelists relate their comments to examples from the books, and the way these reflect strategic readings that are meant to win the competition. Within this framework I consider the double articulation of panelists' arguments to point to the constrained universality of the program's paradoxical structure, which reveals the predilections of both panelists and the show's format for some celebrations and critiques over others. I argue that analysis of the show's civil discourse reveals the borders of the space that it claims to open up for critique and points to the eliminatory structure perpetuated by the national radio show's mandate to develop unity.

Conclusion

Expanding an awareness of how the colonial logic of elimination continues to influence Canadian modes of thinking in cultural contexts can help Canadians to more

accurately understand colonialism as a structure as opposed to an event. I argue that we can understand the paradoxical expressions of colonial logic by tracing them within the structure of phenomena such as *Canada Reads* where debates are subject to a double articulation: on the one hand panelists talk about books around a table, while on the other hand that talk is about the nation and is listened to by thousands of people across Canada. Within this double articulation we can more clearly see the paradox between the show's focus on themes of social justice for "a diverse and scattered population" even as it is driven by its mandate to unify all Canadians. This constrained universality necessitates a language of civility that is compressed into terms such as reconciliation, inclusive multiculturalism, and global refuge—the key terms of each of my chapters.

This project seeks to continue the shift toward a decolonizing discourse in Canadian literary critique, and furthermore to develop a critical awareness of the influence of the logic of elimination in Canadian cultural production. I argue that an awareness of the paradoxical structure of the national habitus, as it is expressed on *Canada Reads*, can help us recognize and consider the ways even strategic arguments for social justice recirculated through the founding assumptions of the existing nation-state can perpetuate the logic of elimination. But the logic of elimination has not eliminated Indigenous peoples nor their critical presence, so that Canada as an imagined community predicated on the perpetuation of a Euro-American world view is increasingly being undermined by its own contradictions. Under the weight of its unsettled expectations and faulty metanarratives, Canada's national habitus (the formation it imagines for itself) is increasingly exposed as a structure of ongoing colonization. In an age of environmental

destruction, mass migration, and climate change, humans have an unprecedented opportunity – and dire need – to develop new ways of talking about the narratives that prop up the nation and help rationalize the state.

Chapter One

Canada Reads (2014) *The Orenda*: Elimination in the Discourse of Indigenous and Settler Reconciliation

As I mentioned in the introductory chapter, on the second day of the 2014 season of *Canada Reads*, Anishinaabe panelist Wab Kinew posed the question: “Do we own the land or does the land own us?” (Kinew, “Day Two,” 2014, 00:13:00-00:13:05). Kinew’s question encapsulates the fundamental root of Indigenous and settler conflict in Canadian society. The question is one of epistemology. If people believe that they own the land then they may decide to exploit it in any way that they choose; as a piece of property, the land in no way obligates its owner. However, if we believe that the land “owns us,” then we must acknowledge that there are major obligations and responsibilities if we wish to continue to live on it. As a question of epistemology, how we position ourselves in relation to our world defines what we believe to be possible and impossible. Similarly, Canadian society and politics assume a Western epistemology and are based on a right to private property. Canada’s metanarrative of frontier settlement as a historical event, as opposed to a structure, reproduces an ignorance of ongoing colonial processes and limits what is imagined as possible when Canadians discuss Indigenous and settler conflict. In the past, the terms of this negotiation have been overshadowed by colonial narratives of *terra nullius* – no man’s land – that claimed Canada was empty when settlers arrived, or that, if Canada was not inherently empty, then Indigenous peoples were doomed to extinction. However, the obvious fact of Indigenous existence in the past and the present challenges the historical narratives and juridical foundations of the Canadian nation-state

and, as a result, the public discussion of Indigenous and settler conflict. As a way of mitigating the anxiety caused by the political implications of Indigenous resilience, mainstream narratives of reconciliation attempt to fit Indigenous peoples into the framework of the nation, ignoring Indigenous sovereignty and reproducing colonial structures that seek to eliminate conflict rather than negotiate autonomous co-existence. This chapter examines the 2014 winning book, Joseph Boyden's *The Orenda* (2011) and Kinew's defence of it, to illustrate the way Kinew's readings play to mainstream narratives of reconciliation to win the radio gameshow. In particular, I evaluate the way the double articulation of these narratives on CBC radio reproduces the logic of elimination by representing colonization as a historical event as opposed to an ongoing process and reconciliation as an opportunity for renewed national unity.

This chapter examines the perpetuation of the sanctioned ignorance of Indigenous cultures, politics, and knowledge systems embedded in the national narratives of reconciliation performed on the show. Effectively, the perpetuation of sanctioned ignorance occludes the epistemological foundations necessary for redress on equitable terms and prevents Canadians from considering *if* one can own the land. In the nationalist context of *Canada Reads*, panelists are encouraged to debate *who* owns the land because of the central position private property plays in Western epistemology, and so the assertion of colonial power – the power to define the terms by which redress is negotiated – is passed down through the national predisposition for unification over understanding. By not distinguishing who he means by “we,” Kinew's question, “do we own the land or does the land own us?” assumes the constrained universality of reconciliation: it does not

assign either of the two questions to a different collective epistemology or community of knowledge, but assumes that all Canadians can come together to a similar understanding of the disjuncture implied by these questions. Subjective experience of the land by Indigenous peoples and settlers, alike, opens up the possibility of approaching land as a subject rather than an object, but when that experience is framed by a colonial epistemology that only pays lip service to diverse Indigenous world views, it undermines the opportunities posed by multiple perspectives on a shared sense of place. In effect, Kinew's question reminds Canadians that the terms and goals of reconciliation are not mutually agreed upon and therefore constitute a challenge to the very idea of resolution.

During the 2014 season Boyden's novel became part of a nationalist dialogue about reconciliation and its socio-political meaning. Panelists were instructed by the program to select not only the book all Canadians *should* read but also the "book to change our nation." Hosted by CBC Radio One personality Jian Ghomeshi, the panelists in 2014 were activist and former NDP leader Stephen Lewis; journalist, activist, and hip-hop artist Wab Kinew; actor Sarah Gadon; Olympic 100m gold-medalist Donovan Bailey; and TV satirist Samantha Bee. "[Celebrities] represent typical ways of behaving, feeling and thinking in contemporary society," writes Richard Dyer, "ways that have been socially, culturally, [and] historically constructed. Much of the ideological investment of the star phenomenon is in the stars seen as individuals, their qualities seen as natural." They are therefore "embodiments of the social categories in which people are placed and through which they have to make sense of their lives, and indeed through which we make our lives" (15-16). As such these celebrities emphasize the radio show's double

articulation. They speak more than just as individual Canadians around a table; their personas also become symbolically loaded with the social, cultural, and political aspirations of the audience.

The books that panelists chose to defend were quickly linked to topical social justice conflicts. Lewis's book, *The Year of the Flood* (2011) by Margaret Atwood, was briefly linked to "environmental issues" before it was voted off on Day One. While Atwood's speculative novel about dystopian futures certainly conveys environmental degradation, in the debates, Kinew was able to absorb the concern for "environmental issues" into his argument for *The Orenda*. The panelists collectively agreed that the environmental focus of Atwood's novel was "covered" by the Indigenous worldview conveyed in Boyden's novel. Donovan Bailey defended the only book on the 2014 season set outside of Canada. Esi Edugyan's *Half-Blood Blues* (2011), a historical novel about jazz musicians living in Berlin in the years leading up to World War II, was deemed unreadable as a Canadian experience because of its European setting. Despite Bailey's defence that Edugyan's treatment of race directly applied to Canadian society, it was nonetheless voted off on Day Two. Gadon's defence of Kathleen Winter's *Annabel* (2010), tied to gendered and trans experiences in Canada, was ultimately voted off on Day Three after a debate about the real versus metaphorical significance of Winter's ending. Bee's book, *Cockroach* (2008) by Rawi Hage, about an impoverished immigrant living in Montreal, was tied to the "immigrant experience," but against Kinew's invocation of reconciliation, Bee was unable to survive the vote, leaving Boyden's *The Orenda* as the winner.

Kinew's appeal to the mainstream rhetoric of reconciliation leaves a holistic understanding of Indigenous and settler conflict undefined. This lack of definition is crucial because the rhetoric of reconciliation produced by redress projects – like that in response to the Japanese–Canadian internment announced in 1988 – has predisposed Canadians to a particular idea of what reconciliation can look like. This appeal to social justice rhetoric manages Canada's benevolent image by publicly acknowledging violence perpetrated by the state. The absence of Haudenosaunee – Wendat epistemologies from the rhetoric of reconciliation in the show's discussion of a book set in Haudenosaunee – Wendat territory demonstrates the paradoxical nature of *Canada Reads*'s objective to critique colonization within a national framework. We can see how the national habitus perpetuates the settler colonial logic of elimination even as it seeks atonement for its violence – specifically as a historical event, not an ongoing structure. The reproduction of stereotypes about Indigenous peoples in Boyden's novel, and the way Kinew strategically reads these on the show, suggest that the end goal of mainstream reconciliation is not mutual understanding, but rather the *elimination* of conflict between Indigenous and settler peoples.

In this chapter I examine how Kinew's strategy for winning *Canada Reads* reveals the constrained universality of reconciliation as it appears in the paradoxical context of the show. Moreover, I point to the ways the colonial logic of elimination aligns with national habitus alluded to in the debates. I read Boyden's *The Orenda*; Anishinaabe scholar Hayden King's "Critical Review of Joseph Boyden's 'The Orenda': A Timeless, Classic Colonial Alibi" (2013); and Wab Kinew's defence of the book on *Canada Reads*

2014 to question the evacuation of Indigenous epistemologies from the narratives and discourses of Indigenous and settler redress. I track and evaluate the mainstream version of reconciliation that Knew turns to in his defence of Boyden's novel, and how this discourse is limited by, and predisposed to the assumption that Indigenous peoples can be reconciled *within* the existing arrangements of the Canadian nation-state. Furthermore, I suggest that a key part of this version of reconciliation omits the TRC's insistence that colonization is ongoing, and thereby perpetuates an image of the colonial project as complete. Such an arrangement demonstrates an assimilatory logic that treats Indigenous knowledge systems as supplementary to, rather than incommensurate with, the Eurocentric assumptions of the settler-state.

The Orenda is Problematic

Most copies of Joseph Boyden's *The Orenda* since 2014 sport three small badges on the cover. One of the most prominent of the three is the one featured top-center which reads "*Canada Reads* 2014 Selection." The badge is a symbol of the book's cultural capital and marks a point of exchange for the *Canada Reads* canon, where the capital bestowed by the literary award is transacted into sales for the publisher and royalties for the author. The cultural capital of the show is a floating value that depends on the entertainment value of the show as a whole, as well as the nationalism that it imagines in its audience. The result in 2014 was winning book criticized on and off the show as "a colonial scribe and moral alibi" (H. King) by the Director of the Centre for Indigenous Governance at Ryerson University, Pottawatomi academic Hayden King. King's "Critical

Review of Joseph Boyden’s ‘The Orenda’: A Timeless, Classic Colonial Alibi” in *Muskrat Magazine* on September 24, 2013 was highly critical of Boyden’s novel “for the perpetuation of outdated narratives of Native people, which have been used in the past to justify civilizing policies... amount to a tale about the inevitability of colonization” (2013). Kinew’s successful use of a mainstream rhetoric of reconciliation to defend *The Orenda* points to the predisposition of the show for narratives of redress that imagine Indigenous and settler conflict as a historical event, even while state reports like the TRC attest to colonization’s ongoing structure. The juxtaposition of *The Orenda*’s victory on *Canada Reads* and King’s condemnation of the novel points to the paradoxical structure of the show, which attempts to reconcile diverse Indigenous worldviews within a framework that presumes the dominance and continuation of the nation. *The Orenda*’s victory as “the book to change our nation” seems much more socially progressive than it may actually be.

The discussion of Boyden’s *The Orenda* that took place on the show highlights how the discourse of Indigenous and settler reconciliation in Canada is fraught with ignorance about the history, culture, and knowledge systems of First Nations. Despite the prominent position of the Haudenosaunee in both Boyden’s novel and Canada’s political history, the Haudenosaunee Great Law of Peace is completely missing from the *Canada Reads* 2014 dialogues. What this absence inadvertently points to is the predisposition of national narratives to favour colonial minimizations of Indigenous presence even while debates like reconciliation appear to recognize the increased significance of this presence. The tension between reconciliation’s claim to seek meaningful resolution and its

methodological assertion of colonial dominance ultimately mirrors the paradoxical structure of the show itself, which eliminates some knowledge systems in place of others. I consider the way the Haudenosaunee concept of Condolence and the epistemology that it is part of offer new ways of framing reconciliation beyond the frameworks of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2008-2015) and the residential school apology (2008), and toward new ways of understanding socio-political relationships between each other.

Anouk Lang's 2012 critique of Boyden's *Three Day Road* and its appearance on the 2006 season of *Canada Reads*, provided an example for critiquing the readings featured on the show. My critique of Kinew's reading of *The Orenda* follows Lang's observation of the danger of "inverting the discourse of savagery" which risks "uncritically mobilizing the Gothic sensationalism traditionally used to render Native aggression" (Visvis qtd. in Lang 121). This chapter begins by arguing that Kinew's strategic reading of *The Orenda* and his use of a mainstream rhetoric of reconciliation tap into a cultural proclivity for such Gothic sensationalism and threaten to reproduce stereotypes of Indigenous savagery.

The Orenda itself is a historical novel depicting the final days of the Wendat (Huron) confederacy and their war with the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) confederacy shortly after the arrival of French explorers and Jesuit missionaries. "The book takes place in Wendaki, or contemporary central Ontario," explains King; "it covers the last years of the Huron Confederacy, after they've formed a trade relationship with the French and on the eve of their dispersal by the Iroquois" (H. King). Boyden's narrative is divided into three parts which are prefaced and concluded with prophetic choruses from the

omnipotent perspective of the “Sky People.” The narrative is told from the first-person perspective of the three main characters: a Wendat warrior named Bird whose wife and children were killed by Haudenosaunee warriors in a raid; Snow Falls, a captured Haudenosaunee (Seneca) girl whom Bird adopts and raises as Wendat; and Christophe, the Jesuit missionary from France who has come to convert the Wendat and establish a mission. The plot is driven by the increasing ferocity of the final battles between the Wendat and Haudenosaunee, which is connected to the politics of the fur trade and the interests of their European allies.

The climax of the novel comes after the Wendat refuse to negotiate for peace, are weakened by a pandemic, and are ultimately forced from their villages ahead of a large Haudenosaunee army. Bird and Snow Falls, among others, seek refuge at Christophe’s Jesuit mission which now is guarded by French soldiers from Quebec. At the mission, the army led by the Haudenosaunee chief Tekakwitha overruns the defences, killing or capturing the defenders. In the chaos of the closing chapters, Snow Falls converts to Catholicism and is then poisoned by sacramental wine, while her infant daughter is adopted by Tekakwitha, implying that the child will grow up to be Saint Kateri. Bird escapes into exile with the Anishinaabe, while Christophe, who remained behind as the mission was overrun, is captured and ritualistically tortured over several days, acting out in first-person perspective the martyrdom of Saint Jean de Brébeuf. The novel concludes with an anti-colonial lament from the chorus of Sky People that the Wendat did not see the Jesuits to be as dangerous as history has proven them to be.

Lost Wampum, or Unbalanced Reconciliation

In this chapter, I consider how the version of reconciliation Kinew activates to win the game differs from the culture of redress, which addresses colonization as a systemic and ongoing structure. As Jennifer Henderson and Pauline Wakeham observe in their “Introduction” to *Reconciling Canada* (2013), engaging with this form of social justice rhetoric as a “culture of redress” recognizes “the fact that historical injuries are framed and redress claims made in language and discourse: claims necessarily...subject to the disciplining pressures of discourse but...whose meanings can proliferate without respect for origins or intentions” (15). The double reading of *The Orenda* that Kinew articulates on the live radio debates is a testament to the way these “meanings can proliferate without respect for origins or intentions.” Perhaps more clearly, the seeming universality of redress as a discursive space was tested in 1988 when two members of Parliament read excerpts from Joy Kogawa’s *Obasan* (1981) to support their testaments to state violence against Japanese Canadians (Henderson and Wakeham 18). The use of Kogawa’s novel in Parliament reflects a clear connection between literature, culture, and politics, illustrating the way these discourses inform each other in the public sphere to influence the actions of the state. The Kogawa reading reflects the way redress can be generated by narrative and can evoke a range of interpretive responses. This is, however, where the similarities between *The Orenda* and Kogawa’s *Obasan* end; redress for Japanese Canadians was premised on different, distinct relationships from the history of treaties that foreground Indigenous and settler reconciliation.

A major part of the colonial logic of elimination requires the evacuation of key pieces of information about Indigenous political institutions and their histories from Canada's historical and socio-political consciousness. The way wampum is depicted in Boyden's novel, for example, is almost completely cut off from the epistemological and political structures that would have been commonplace in the fifteenth century. As Seneca-descendant Penelope Kelsey describes in *Reading the Wampum* (2014), Haudenosaunee wampum participated in a culturally specific "visual code, a set of mutually understood symbols and images that communicate culturally-embedded ideas to the viewer" (xii). In the case of Boyden's novel, wampum's visual code is left completely disconnected from its epistemological roots. Tuscarora scholar Richard W. Hill Jr. describes the origins of Condolence in the Great Law of Peace and the application of wampum strings in bringing people back to the power of reason so that they may negotiate peace. Hill summarizes the ancient story this way:

Lost deep in the grief over the death of his daughters, Hyenwatha sat dejectedly in the dark woods ... As he stared at Mother Earth, special word-thoughts came to his mind. As he strung together tiny, tubular shell beads that he had found those word-thoughts began to fall into sequence, creating a rhythm of healing.

'This would I do if I found anyone burdened with grief even as I am. I would take these shell strings in my hand and console them. The strings would become words and lift away the darkness with which they are covered. Holding these in my hand, my words would be true,' Hyenwatha said to himself. ... To this very day a man is appointed to speak those same words of healing for the sake of those who have

been mourning the loss of a loved one The speaker is helping people recover from their loss, renewing their spirit and lifting the mental anguish they have been burdened with This restorative process has been called the Requickening ... Through the Requickening, the grief of the past is laid to rest, the hearts and minds of the grieving are uplifted, and people can find their way back to a place of productivity This Requickening concept is part of what is called the *Edge of the Woods Ceremony* whereby a new leader is installed with the Confederacy Council of Chiefs. More properly, it is about being near the *thorny bushes* after a difficult journey, in need of restoration, refreshment and uplifting of the spirit. (“The Restorative Aesthetic” 3, emphasis in original)

Condolence conceptually positions “sympathy, empathy and hope” (Hill 3) at its centre as a means of “bringing people back to the power of reason” (Alfred 17). Completely disconnected from these ceremonies and epistemological frameworks, wampum in Boyden’s novel is unrecognizable as a potential way of reconciling individuals, groups, and nations in the interest of peace. While Condolence and Requickening are based on the epistemological foundations of the Haudenosaunee constitutional code known as the Great Law, the emphasis these ideas place on one’s mental health, the necessity of reason, and the goal of developing and maintaining peace, is easily understandable by Canadian readers. Yet these Haudenosaunee concepts are absent from both Boyden’s depiction of wampum in his chapter “Lost Wampum” (103-114), and from the dialogues about reconciliation that featured on-air. In short, the exclusion of these extremely relevant Haudenosaunee knowledge systems from Boyden’s novel highlights how Kinew’s

strategic readings of *The Orenda* via mainstream reconciliation were successful because they do not challenge the colonial premises of the show beyond the expected comfort of the national audience.

Boyden's chapter "Lost Wampum" depicts a negotiation between the Wendat warrior Bird and a Haudenosaunee envoy that deteriorates into a violent ambush. The diplomatic meeting is called in an earlier chapter by the Haudenosaunee who send their ultimatum to the Wendat with a dismembered prisoner. The violence of the message is clearly received by the Huron council who urge Bird to make peace. On the journey to the meeting, Christophe, who as a European does not understand the diplomatic significance of the wampum, unwittingly loses it when he gets himself lost. The reader is given some sense of the significance of this blunder when Bird laments that the Haudenosaunee will see this as "a great insult...when [wampum] is precisely what has been requested and what custom must allow" (104). As ominous as Bird's lament is, his regret fails to capture the truly central political role wampum played between the Haudenosaunee and other Indigenous Nations.

As the Mohawk elder and community scholar Ray Tehanetorens Fadden explains, "Wampum guaranteed a message or a promise. Treaties meant nothing unless they were accompanied by wampum.... No Iroquois individual or nation would think of breaking a word or treaty if the treaty was made over a sacred wampum belt" (12). As Kelsey further explains, "wampum belts are fundamentally related to the other records of Iroquois visual code, and...have intrinsically politically-charged content as wampum belts were the method that [Haudenosaunee] chiefs and clan-mothers used to record international

diplomacy and treaty agreements” (xiii). Bird’s narration about the wampum affirms the historical evidence that “a range of north-eastern nations, including Anishinaabeg, [and] Wendat...used these belts to affirm friendships, record agreements, and send messages about international affairs (i.e., calls to war, pleas to remain neutral)” (Kelsey 28). Therefore, the Wendat, and more specifically Bird, would have understood the significance of wampum in diplomatic relations and its connection to the Great Law of Peace. However, without the Edge of the Woods Ceremony and Requickening, the grief Bird feels for the loss of his wife and two daughters to the Haudenosaunee clouds his judgement and incites him to violence.

When the leader of the Haudenosaunee remarks that Snow Falls is not present, Bird replies, “Let’s talk about what’s really important...there will be no wampum...and for this I deeply regret” (107). He goes on to say that

the wampum we were to present him took our most talented artisans weeks of intense work, the weaving of our stories and of our hopes and wishes and especially our promises, each single, hand-polished bead cut and shaped from foreign shells, drilled for the thread to pass through, each bead glittering and weighing almost nothing but immeasurable in price when it’s chosen and sewn next to the other so that our hopes and our history emerge into something that can be held, that can be weighed in the hands, to be passed around and explained.

This, I realize, this wampum, our story meant for these people who are our enemy, has been lost. I have lost... my gift to the ones who are our enemy, in the hope of changing that course. (107-108)

The value of the wampum belt is explained in connection with Wendat “stories... hopes... wishes... promises... [and] history” alludes to its role in the social and political fabric of these Indigenous nations. By describing “each bead glittering and weighing almost nothing” as nonetheless “immeasurable in price,” Boyden represents the wampum as an aesthetic object that is in some way a “story meant for... [an] enemy... in the hope of changing that course.” At best, it is possible to glean that the wampum is a symbolic object, but Boyden leaves out the background of Haudenosaunee visual code necessary for readers to understand its cultural and political significance.

The political significance of wampum, as outlined by Kelsey, highlights the absence of key Indigenous frameworks from the meeting that Boyden imagines in his fiction, as well as from the debates that take place over Kinew’s strategic reading of this novel. In this case, ignorance of Indigenous knowledge systems took a diplomatic meeting and turned it into an ambush. Boyden’s novel was criticized by King, among others, for his representation of Indigenous violence. But rather than dealing with the way Indigenous political customs are represented, Kinew engages with the potentially unfair demonization of the missionaries.

On Day Three, Lewis critiques Boyden’s depictions of torture, and in defence Kinew suggests that Lewis’s disgust is a product of Canada’s historical predisposition for viewing Indigenous ceremonies as barbaric and primitive. The argument Kinew makes on Day Three highlights the reproduction of ignorance within the colonial project and ultimately demonstrates the role narrative plays in the shaping of social and political discourses of redress. Kinew recalls “talking to the Archbishop of Manitoba about [*The*

Orenda],” noting that “he said ‘you know, Wab, I was really afraid to pick this up because I thought the missionaries were going to be demons, and they were going to be oversimplified’” (“Day Three,” 2014, 00:20:40-00:20:45). “But no,” Kinew claims that “Boyden has allowed them to be fully fleshed out human beings. So too on the Indigenous side, we’re not utopianized or idealized. We are also shown with our faults, warts and all” (“Day Three,” 2014, 00:20:40-00:20:45). Kinew’s commentary highlights the range of assumptions that govern his characterization of Boyden’s book – as part of Kinew’s strategy for winning the game – assumptions that see the novel as equitably representing all parties – missionaries, Haudenosaunee, Wendat, women, men, children, etc.

Kinew discursively positions the Archbishop of Manitoba as an authority on misrepresentation (at least, of missionaries) and then uses that approval to suggest that Boyden’s narrative represents a “fair” depiction of both Indigenous and European peoples. It is, however, difficult to accept the argument that *The Orenda* is a novel so “post-postcolonial” that it depicts the missionaries as marginalized peoples at risk of being “oversimplified.” Kinew’s retelling of his conversation with the Archbishop implies that the nation is losing its taste (or maybe patience) for narratives that connect the violence of colonization to modern Canadian society. Kinew’s strategy implies that the violence of Boyden’s narrative is more palatable to a national audience than the “demonization” of white Europeans.

Kinew uses the civility of the *Canada Reads* show to position the Archbishop as an authority figure worthy of judging the fairness of Boyden’s novel, and in so doing

reveals the unspoken boundaries between what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate depictions of early colonial violence. Kinev plays up the fact that Boyden does not misrepresent or “demonize” the good intentions of early Europeans to somehow redeem what Lewis called its “pornographic” depictions of torture.

Haudenosaunee scholar John (Sotsisowah) Mohawk lends some legitimacy to settler anxieties about being misrepresented in anti-colonial assessments of history, in particular the idea that their material privileges suggest settlers are somehow inherently racist, hegemonic, and genocidal. Sotsisowah addresses this point in “The Obvious Fact of Our Continuing Existence” (92-102), in which he argues that the colonization of North America relied on “landless peasants who were driven by desperation rooted in their own history” of feudalism who drove “the Indians off the land by force” (97) as a symptom of their desperation to survive, seeing them as economic refugees fleeing their own histories of extortion and persecution under the feudalistic dynasties of Europe. He is, however, careful to point out that the cultivation of this survival drive was one of many tools for colonial domination, along with conversion and assimilation (97). Kinev’s attempt to reframe the perceived maliciousness of another one of these “many tools for colonial domination” – conversion – reflects a similar logical stance: that despite the violent results of missionary work and colonial settlement, the intentions behind these projects are understandable if not excusable. Kinev’s strategy reveals the popularity of reconciliation as a narrative of shared responsibility between Indigenous and settler peoples for the ugly events of history, as opposed to a recognition of the way ongoing

colonial structures continue to exert colonial power through the elimination of Indigenous history, culture, and knowledge.

Perverse Ignorance and Constitutional Reconciliation

In “Towards a Redefinition of Indian Education,” Chickasaw scholar Eber Hampton defines what he calls “perverse ignorance” as “a particular form of the defence mechanism of denial,” which he says, quoting Norma Haan, is “compelled, negating, rigid, distorting of intersubjective reality and logic, allows covert impulse expression, and embodies the expectancy that anxiety can be relieved without directly addressing the problem” (Haan qtd. in Hampton 36). Hampton’s description of perverse ignorance echoes Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Gayatri Spivak’s separate uses of the term “sanctioned ignorance,” but whereas their usage emphasizes the systemic sanction of particular kinds of ignorance, Hampton emphasizes the perversity of ignorance as a mechanism of denial. Since the residential school Apology and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Canadians have developed an increasing anxiety about the nation’s colonial history, and in particular its disruption of Canada’s reputation for benevolent social justice. Perverse ignorance relieves the trauma of this colonial history by limiting Canadians’ responsibility for reparation in order to secure the continuity of the Canadian nation-state. Its perversity is that it recognizes specific damages of colonization, while reproducing ignorance about the Indigenous sovereignty ruled out by that colonization. By this means, perversity becomes sanctioned. This covert impulse expression works subtly and at the level of language to manage the cognitive dissonance

between the nation-state's material wealth and the history of its accumulation, and it is manifested in paradoxical configurations of Indigenous nationalism imagined perversely within the bureaucratic framework of the settler state.

During the Question and Answer period following Day Four, Ghomeshi asks Kinew a question embedded in the kind of perverse ignorance that cannot see the oxymoron at its centre: “what does an Indigenous Canada look like to you?” (“Day Four Q&A,” 2014, 00:07:20-00:07:25). The oxymoron “Indigenous Canada” reveals how the national assumption of the show is predisposed to favour critiques that leave the unity of the nation untroubled as a model of imagined community. Indigeneity is always perversely imagined *in* Canada. Kinew's response is a double articulation of both the assumptions of mainstream reconciliation rhetoric and of the limits of discussing Indigenous and settler redress through a national framework like that of the show. He points to what can and cannot be said about colonization if one wants to win *Canada Reads* and signals the idea that the audience imagined by the panelists and producers are not equipped to consider Indigenous sovereignty on Native terms. Kinew's uptake of “Indigenous Canada” is a double articulation that presumes certain kinds of sanctioned ignorance in the panelists and listeners and fits the CBC's mandate to unify diverse populations of Canadians perfectly:

I think that the key hallmark of an Indigenous perspective is unity. It's not that we are on opposite sides, or it's not that we can only occupy one side, that we can only be pro-environment or pro-development. But rather, I think the Indigenous world view is always one of unity, that you can be both, that you can be nuanced,

that you can understand the person on the other side of the table from you. And I think that that is the key thing that we could learn in this polarized age is more understanding and empathy for the ones on the other side of the issues from us, and a commitment to working together to sorting them out. Whatever they are.

(Kinew, *Canada Reads*, “Day Four Q&A,” 2014 00:07:26-00:07:32)

The “unity” that Kinew advocates for is articulated through a message of empathy – seeing things from the perspectives of others – a meaningful call for co-operation and ongoing redress. Kinew does not define what he means by unity exactly, and it’s possible that the unity he speaks of is not the same as the unity signalled in the Massey Commission’s recommendations for Canadian public radio. Whatever he says on the panel, nonetheless, circulates among the thousands of CBC radio listeners who are accustomed to radio’s mandate of “unity” (derived from Massey) and who are likely to read Kinew’s reference to “unity” accordingly. By this means, the double articulation of Kinew’s response suggests that “an Indigenous world view” is in fact aligned with the very goals of the CBC’s national project. The result is the affirmation of the colonial assumption that Indigenous peoples and their conflicting worldviews can be reconciled within existing arrangements with Canada.

Critiques by Chickasaw and Cheyenne political scholar James Sa’ke’j

Youngblood Henderson and Dene scholar Glen Coulthard clarify the structures of elimination reproduced by the pursuit of “an Indigenous Canada.” These scholars help unpack the paradox of genuine redress projects imagined within inherently colonial frameworks. Kinew’s “commitment to working together” to sort out issues “whatever

they are” leaves no room for the reality that there are Indigenous epistemologies that are irreconcilable with state development projects, and Indigenous sovereignties that do not acknowledge the jurisdiction of Canada over their lands. Conversely, the civil discourse of the show suggests that Kineo’s commitment to working together requires a renewed effort on the part of Indigenous peoples to be more reasonable and realistic in their acceptance of Canada’s invitation to “inclusion.”

Henderson’s idea of “constitutional reconciliation” as set out in “Incomprehensible Canada” (2013) argues that any treaty held between First Nations and the Canadian government constitutes a nation-to-nation relationship that recognizes the legitimacy of these nations’ constitutions. If one were to apply his reasoning to Ghomeshi’s question on Day Four, Henderson’s essay would point to the incomprehensibility of Canada’s attempts to reconcile Indigenous sovereignty within a system that prefers the settler state’s primacy over land while appearing to honour treaties within its constitutional framework.

Perverse ignorance about Indigenous peoples, their histories, and their systems of governance is seen in Supreme Court decisions which ultimately affirm the judicial power of the Canadian constitution over those held by First Nations, specifically, the Canadian Constitution Act (1982), 35(1). Section 35 (1) recognizes and affirms “existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada” (Constitution Act 1982. II. 35 (1)). Henderson says that “constitutional reconciliation grounds the process of reconciliation between Aboriginal peoples and the Canadian state in the juridical recognition of Aboriginal and treaty rights” in a way that respects “sui generis and treaty citizenship”

which “...recognizes Indigenous peoples’ autonomy and prevents their incorporation into a colonial national schema” (115). The incomprehensibility noted in the title of the essay comes from the inherent contradiction in 35(1)’s recognition of First Nations constitutions in the making of treaties but not as markers of ongoing sovereignty. So we can see how “an Indigenous Canada” is incomprehensible in Henderson’s sense because it implies Indigeneity within a Canadian framework, rather than Canadian-ness framed by its network of relations with Indigenous peoples.

Coulthard clarifies this incomprehensibility in *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (2014) in which he asserts that Canadian “recognition” of Indigenous nationhood expresses an assimilatory logic that accommodates “Indigenous identity...[through a] renewed legal and political relationship” with the settler state (3). The politics of recognition as Coulthard describes it reflects a unilateral relationship that defines Indigenousness through a series of colonial assumptions and Western cultural frameworks. Since Kinew’s response to the question must conform to the national presumptions of the radio program, he is in no position to correct Ghomeshi on the colonial aggression that the phrase “Indigenous Canada” represents. Instead, Kinew is set up to articulate a perverse image of reconciliation that takes settler recognition of the existence of diverse Indigenous worldviews as a milestone of social justice. What else can Kinew do but reaffirm the value of recognizing that Indigenous peoples are not rebellious Canadians but rather *peoples* “on the other side of the table”? The potential for Kinew to disrupt this presumption is bounded by the conventions of the radio show which articulates a major disruption as rude, and yet

tolerates Indigenous nationhood – which quietly implies their disruptive power – under certain conditions. Kinew is therefore limited by the reality that the national habitus prefers that Indigenous nationhood conform to the parameters of settler state sovereignty. The mainstream reconciliatory rhetoric Kinew plays to softens the hard limits of Canada's benevolent attitude toward Indigenous and settler redress which cannot countenance assertions of Indigenous autonomy. In this way Kinew's rhetoric points to the way Indigenous challenges to the dominance of the Canadian state are regularly eliminated from the nearly universal range of critiques available to panelists on the show.

If, as I argued in my Introduction, what cannot be challenged in the context of *Canada Reads* is the future of the nation, then Henderson's characterization of Canada as constitutionally incomprehensible violates that boundary. In effect, Canada's duplicitous political relationship with Indigenous peoples undermines its own claim to authority and makes Canada incomprehensible to itself. What Henderson highlights by calling attention to this incomprehensibility is the dialogical relationship between discourses of redress that recognize Indigenous sovereignty and those that do not. "Constitutional reconciliation," concludes Henderson,

establishes a vital and required model for broader forms of social, political, and economic reconciliation between Aboriginal peoples and the Crown within patriated Canada. This model hinges political action and mutual negotiation on complex issues rather than assimilative gestures of supposed reconciliation that seek to re-embed Aboriginal peoples within the bounds of an ostensibly repentant and yet ultimately controlling settler state. (123)

In this way, Henderson calls direct attention to the interplay between our understanding of the political relationships between Canada and First Nations at the constitutional level, and the way Canadians imagine the parameters of redress in popular social and cultural discourses. Henderson points to the balance between the necessary reproduction of ignorance about this constitutional relationship and its actual role in land claims settlements. Canada's socio-cultural discourse has a profound influence on "political action and mutual negotiation on complex issues." For example, the events in Boyden's chapter "Lost Wampum" make logical and even militaristic sense for readers without the knowledge of the Great Law that would have completely changed the context of those events. The way the wampum is emptied of its major diplomatic significance limits the novel's potential to be a story about Indigenous protocols for reconciliation.

Perhaps most interestingly, in relation to Henderson's essay, Kinew's reading of Boyden's novel strategically overrides these critiques to argue for *The Orenda's* socially progressive style over its narrative shortcomings. Boyden's chapter "Lost Wampum" highlights how distortion of Indigenous epistemological frames perpetuates colonial stereotypes by foregrounding narratives that anticipate conflicts tied to colonialism. Together, Boyden's mishandling of Haudenosaunee ceremony and Kinew's strategic reading of Boyden's narrative as inherently reconciliatory demonstrate the way the perverse ignorance about Indigenous peoples in a national context leaves panelists and audience members predisposed to understand colonization as an event rather than a structure.

Panelists on Day One were asked to locate their rhetoric within the matrix that Ghomeshi laid out in his introduction to the program: between “the one book all Canadians should read” and “the one book to change Canada.” Kinew’s opening statement is particularly interesting:

Reconciliation with the Indigenous nations is the biggest social justice issue awaiting confrontation, and a big reason why, is ‘cause the gifts from Native hands go unacknowledged in K through College in our home and native lands. I mean Canada? Kanata? This country is named for a Haudenosaunee word, but most Canadians don’t know who Haudenosaunee are. That’s absurd. CBC asked me: ‘Wab, what should Canada read?’ ... [*The Orenda*] is not the myth of a missionary. This is confession for colonization that gives voice to the Indigenous so we can have a new conversation. Without that: no truth, no reconciliation and that’s why *The Orenda* is the book to change our nation. (“Day One,” 2014, 00:13:28-00:14:00)

Kinew’s poetic response alludes to multiple perspectives which variously define “the biggest social justice issue awaiting confrontation.” For example, the line “our home and native lands” signals two distinct discourses depending on one’s relationship to the land. From the Canadian perspective, Kinew is quoting a line from Robert Stanley Weir’s 1908 English lyrics for the national anthem “O, Canada” (1880). However, for an Indigenous person like himself, Kinew’s line registers equally clearly as an indictment of Canada’s occupation of sovereign Indigenous territories. The “our,” in this example, connotes “native,” meaning it is their “home,” their “lands,” and not Canada’s. Kinew’s double

entendre performs a symbolic representation of the conflicting significations of “reconciliation” in Canada’s culture of redress. More specifically, depending on how readers define and then locate themselves in relation to ideas of “nation,” “home,” and “native lands” can drastically alter the way reconciliation signifies earlier in Kinew’s sentence. This example alludes to two discourses which are characterized by their configurations of colonization and the respective rights and responsibilities of Indigenous and settler peoples to the land.

Constitutional reconciliation is premised on the understanding that Indigenous peoples have and continue to maintain their own constitutions, and that these constitutions are the foundation for treaties held between First Nations and Canada. The centrality of wampum in the history of Canada and First Nations makes it difficult to read the elimination of Haudenosaunee epistemological structures from both the discourse of reconciliation and Boyden’s “Lost Wampum” as mere coincidence. The Two Row wampum and Covenant Chain are international treaties struck between the Haudenosaunee and the Dutch around 1613, then again between the English and the Haudenosaunee in 1667. The Two Row represents a multilayered example of Haudenosaunee visual code framed by the concepts conveyed in the Condolence ceremony and the Great Law in a nation-to-nation discourse. The wampum itself consists of two parallel purple lines on a field of white: specifically, three rows of white beads with two beaded rows of purple separating them. “That these lines don’t intersect and do not share a common origin is pivotal” (Kelsey 2) because it “creates a visual symbol of the separate nations, equal in respect and rights, traveling the same direction, but not

crossing each other's path" (Hill 156). Kelsey summarizes how the symbolic meaning of the belt is representative of its political significance:

In this belt, the Hodinoshoni' are informing the Dutch that as long as the Hodinoshoni' stay in their canoe, and the Dutch stay in their ship, as long as the Hodinoshoni' retain their own language, culture, government, and spirituality, and the Dutch their own language, culture, government, and religion, the two groups will be able to coexist peacefully. More specifically, as long as the Dutch do not force their way of life on the Hodinoshoni' and as long as they concede the common ground...as Iroquois normative, the two will cohabitate in peace.

(3)

These principles have formed the foundation for all further treaty-making between the Haudenosaunee and European nations since the seventeenth century, including the British crown. The sovereignty that the Two Row represents is obviously antithetical to the Canadian nation-state's historical programs of assimilation and therefore has become part of the discourse between Indigenous and settler peoples obscured by sanctioned ignorance embedded in our language. The centrality of the Two Row and its epistemological influence in treaty-making processes contrast with the assimilatory logic of reconciliation in which Indigenous people are configured as citizens of the state. The absence of the Two Row, and wampum more generally, from the novel and from the discussions on *Canada Reads* highlights the evacuation and exclusion of Indigenous epistemological structures from the rhetorical structure of mainstream reconciliation. Colonial histories that premise redress and rationalize Indigenous sovereignty are left out

of the discourse of reconciliation which cannot make sense of definitions of sovereignty threaded between First Nations and the Canadian settler-state.

Kinew's call for a commitment to work our issues out "whatever they are" is transformed by the national premise of the show into an elimination of moments when Indigenous sovereignty asserts itself through an unwillingness to negotiate their autonomy with the state. Kinew's inability to upset the colonial assumptions of the show are further clarified by the absence of Haudenosaunee concepts like the Good Mind, which are appropriate to the discussion. The absence of Indigenous knowledge systems from the purview of the panelists around the table and the presumed broadcast audience means that the kind of cooperation that Kinew advocates for in his response can only allude to the principle of the "Good Mind," which according to John Mohawk teaches that "reason is the power of the human mind to make righteous decisions about complicated issues" in the perpetual pursuit of peace. "Peace" is "defined not as the simple absence of war or strife, but as the active striving of humans for the purpose of establishing universal justice" (Mohawk, *Basic Call* 33). Kinew is powerless to convey this level of nuance in the context of the show and is instead limited to the same mainstream rhetoric of reconciliation that made him so successful during the competition.

As mentioned in my Introduction when I discuss how Kinew is compelled to tell Bailey in 2015 "You're welcome" to "my" land, the civil discourse of the talk show makes it very difficult for him to refuse to address the oxymoron in the question of what an Indigenous Canada looks like. Kahnawake Mohawk scholar Audra Simpson argues in her book *Mohawk Interruptus* (2014) that the politics of refusal draws attention to the

structures of power that position one subject as recognizable to another. “This position,” she explains, “then manifests as calculated refusals of the ‘gifts’ of the settler state, and vexed determinations of...belonging in that state” (12). In short, while Kinew’s commitment to cooperation is evocative of the reason behind Good Mindedness, such Haudenosaunee concepts are left out. From this perspective, Kinew’s refusal to speak would have been a refusal to participate in ameliorating the historical trauma of assimilation and a protest against the colonial aggression symbolized by settler control over the terms of colonial redress. In this way, reconciliatory gestures that seek to negotiate without leaving the terms of that negotiation open, are recognizable as logically assimilatory. Refusal, therefore, functions under a parallel (Two Row) discursive logic in which true reconciliation would acknowledge the duplicitousness of seemingly reparative gestures as they are exchanged between Indigenous and settler epistemologies.

“A Comforting Narrative for Canadians,” or Critics vs. Friends

On Day Four of the 2014 season, Ghomeshi read reviews of the remaining books — *Cockroach* and *The Orenda* – before posing a summarizing question to the entire group. For panelists Bee and Kinew, who were representing the final two books, Ghomeshi’s question came across as an attack late in the game that demanded a rebuff.

Drawing on a combination of quotations from Hayden King’s review of *The Orenda*, Ghomeshi reads: “*The Orenda* is a comforting narrative for Canadians about the emergence of Canada: Indian savages, do-good Jesuits and the inevitability (even

desirability) of colonization” (*Canada Reads*, “Day Four,” 00:22:05-00:22:14). He then poses the question “Does *The Orenda* unwittingly or not reinforce dangerous stereotypes?” (*Canada Reads*, “Day Four,” 2014, 00:22:14-00:22:20). A comparison of Lewis’s and Kinew’s responses to this question reveals differences in their discursive orientations. While both panelists agree that Boyden’s novel is anti-colonial and that reconciliation for Canada’s “original sin” is the “biggest social justice issue awaiting confrontation” in Canada today, their allusions to reconciliation highlight two different configurations of reconciliation that are homogenized by the program’s narrative frame. Lewis’s response does not immediately answer Ghomeshi’s question, but rather rearticulates it in a way that moves away from a focus on stereotypes and toward a discourse of Indigenous and settler politics at the level of the Canadian nation-state. Lewis makes a claim to position reconciliation as the central social issue in Canada:

I’ve been thinking intensely about this ... we’re at a historical moment in time when it may be possible to overcome the history with which *The Orenda* deals ... I agree with everyone around the table that there's no hierarchy of issues here, we can deal with race and identity and gender and immigration and environment; but what makes *The Orenda* different, is *The Orenda* is the original injustice in the country. *The Orenda* is the original sin from which everything else flows. You cannot resolve the other issues until you address this issue, and I think this is the time to do it. (Lewis, “Day Four,” 2014, 00:24:35-00:24:45)

By identifying “the history with which *The Orenda* deals” as “the original injustice in the country,” Lewis seemingly contradicts his own assertion that “there’s no hierarchy of

issues here.” However, this seeming contradiction marks a rupture on the show: by claiming that Indigenous and settler conflict pre-empts and catalyzes other equity-seeking projects, Lewis is subverting the narrative of equality configured by the terms of social justice discourse. Lewis exposes the tension between various campaigns for justice and the reality that the logic of colonialism flows through these other seemingly disconnected projects in ways that prevent their compartmentalization. His characterization of *The Orenda* as the “original sin from which everything else flows” shifts the focus of the debate away from the books and toward the social justice conflicts related to them.

For his part, Kinew neutralizes some of the intensity of King’s review by saying “I consider Hayden a friend” (“Day Four,” 2014, 00:25:05-00:25:07), which makes King’s critiques of the novel’s dangerous colonial themes appear casual, patronizing them as a minor dispute between friends. Kinew’s reaction to King’s comments fulfills the conviviality of the radio show format perfectly. Kinew not only side-steps the awkwardness of King’s remarks but also the awkwardness of considering these condemnations alongside celebrations of the book during the debates. Kinew rebuts:

I disagree with him on this. I don’t believe that this is a justification for colonization. I believe it is precisely the opposite. If you read all the anti-colonial scholars... what they say the key decolonizing project to undertake is to reclaim history, to reclaim the narrative, and to re-insert the voice of the Indigenous, of the other, of the Middle Easterner, of the African, into that story. Right? And that’s what Joseph Boyden has done with *The Orenda*: he has marched into the center of

empire and he has reinserted an Indigenous voice into that narrative. (“Day Four,” 2014, 00:25:07-00:25:25)

Kinew’s statement suggests that the key act of decolonial resistance worth noting in Boyden’s novel is not the content of the narrative, but its role as a place holder for an “Indigenous voice” where none existed before. Kinew is put in an awkward position between rebutting King’s undeniable critique without upending it entirely. So rather than blindly defending Boyden’s narrative *carte blanche*, Kinew considers the value of Boyden’s novel as the injection of Indigenous presence into a place where it had previously been eliminated. As a compromise, Kinew is obligated to use the idea of an “Indigenous perspective” as a pivot for illustrating the significance of Boyden’s narrative in the context of global postcolonial theory. In this case, Kinew is more concerned with resisting the elimination of Indigenous peoples from Canadian historical consciousness, than he is concerned by the risk Boyden’s novel poses to eliminate them by reproducing them as stereotypes.

The spectre of the social-Darwinist narrative pointed out by King’s review featured strongly during the discussions on Day Three. The opening remarks on this day were organized differently from the previous two days as panelists listened to recorded excerpts from the remaining three books, and the defending panelists were given one minute to comment. The excerpt from *The Orenda* read by Indigenous actor Billy Merasty was the final chorus spoken by the Speakers in Sky World. The following excerpt captures the melancholic tone that weaves the sections of Boyden’s narrative together:

We had the magic, the orenda, before the crows came. We'd never questioned this before their claws first grasped our branches and their beaks first pecked our earth. Most of us will admit we were taken aback by how quickly the crows adapted. When you fall asleep laughing in the evening, it's difficult to awake crying in the sun. But this isn't about sadness, or pity, or blame. (487)

“The un-named Sky People,” writes Hayden King, “observe the carnage below and conclude the grim history was pre-determined partly because of the selfishness, arrogance and short-sightedness of the Huron.” In conjunction with the other choruses (Boyden 4, 154, 322, 487), Boyden’s Sky People frame the narrative with the question of who is or is not to blame for the events of history. They claim, “the past and the future are present” (487), and they ask who is to blame for “what we now witness, our children cutting their bodies to pieces or strangling themselves in the dark recesses of their homes” (4), and conclude early that “it’s unfair, though, to blame only the [Jesuits] ... It’s our obligation to accept our responsibility in the whole affair” (154). While it is impossible to know exactly what Boyden is implying, his rhetorical questioning and key words such as “sadness, pity,” and “blame,” paradoxically imagine colonialism as a series of historical injustices for which both Indigenous and settler peoples in the present must be accountable. Sharing “responsibility in the whole affair” in the context of mainstream reconciliation downplays the ongoing power disparity perpetuated along colonial lines. In other words, the political, cultural, and material legacy of colonialism that is threaded through Canada’s historical narratives is limited by mainstream reconciliation’s portrayal of colonization as an event.

When the Sky People ask who is to blame for the tragedies of colonization, Boyden suggests that not only is this colonial history settled, but that the results were inevitable. He suggests through his writing that part of colonial redress involves Indigenous peoples taking some degree of responsibility for the way history unfolded, but he is unclear as to what this looks like. What is left unsaid is the way sharing responsibility for colonization alters the relationships between Indigenous and settler peoples, and brings with it a change in the obligations implied in colonial redress. Whereas the residential school Apology clearly separated survivors from perpetrators, a shared responsibility for the colonial project prohibits particular responses to the prospect of negotiation. Simpson's politics of refusal is based on the constitutional sovereignty of the Haudenosaunee derived from their treaty relationships with the British crown. It is on this legal foundation that the Haudenosaunee resist the continued advances of colonization by claiming that they have no obligation to accept any responsibility, nor to negotiate at all. A shared responsibility for the colonial project overlooks Simpson's politics of refusal by suggesting that reconciliation obligates both groups to each other, characterizing an unwillingness to negotiate as nonsensical. The implications of what Boyden's Sky People say through the double articulation of the radio show are subtle but far-reaching. Kinew's strategic reading of *The Orenda* fails to distinguish between the civil imperative to work together and the way this imperative exercises colonial power by misrepresenting the parameters of the conflict being reconciled. In this way, the show transforms a commitment to work together from equitable negotiation to equal responsibility.

Cultural Experience, Misreading, and Stereotypes

The critical debates between Kinev and Lewis on Day Two of *Canada Reads* 2014 illustrate how the discourse of reconciliation anticipates and reproduces colonial antagonisms by racializing conflicts between Indigenous and settler peoples. For example, after Lewis said he wanted *The Orenda* “to be a book which would rally Canada to Aboriginal issues as never before,” he ultimately conceded “that it would be difficult for Canadians to rally to the book because they would be so deeply unnerved by the explicit nature of the torture” (“Day Two,” 2014, 00:18:50-00:20:22). This is a critique he is drawing from Hayden King’s review, wherein the torture is described as “excessive,” and “the violence and torture is both the exclusive domain of the Indians and endemic in their societies since time immemorial” (H. King). Lewis makes an allusion to King’s review when he asserts that he “would not impose Western moral relativism on the book,” and that his concerns are shared by “major Aboriginal critics” (“Day Two,” 2014, 00:22:00-00:22:22). Lewis’s deferral to Indigenous critiques of Boyden’s novel highlights how colonial critique is limited to those with lived experiences of colonization and a reading perspective shaped by Indigenous community. In other words, it’s not enough for Lewis to argue that the violence is extreme because the history of white men judging Indigenous ceremony as “barbaric” is loaded with historical baggage. Lewis’s instinct to buttress his observation with reference to “major Aboriginal critics” signals a national predilection for race as a signifier for historical experiences of colonization. This configuration points to the role of national taste in framing the discursive space set aside

for Indigenous and settler conflict on the show. Rather than framing colonization as a present and ongoing structure of Canadian society, something that is experienced (varyingly) by both Indigenous and settler peoples, *Canada Reads*, as Lewis responds to it, imagines colonization as lived experiences only for those who were its primary target. What this configuration eliminates, or at least leaves little room for, is the opportunity for the beneficiaries of ongoing elimination to become more personally involved in equity-seeking projects. Through this simple rhetorical gesture, Lewis passively acknowledges the implicit racial and colonial borders that delineate the seeming universality of *Canada Reads*'s literary critique. In the end, Lewis's concerns about the novel's violence is contained by his inauthentic relation to lived experience, while Kinew is positioned by the same calculus to provide a rationale for Boyden's authenticity.

Boyden's final scene of Christophe the Crow's torture at the hands of Haudenosaunee Chief Tekakwitha features the kinds of images Lewis claims Canadians find unnerving and helps to explain the challenge to Canadian sensibilities that Kinew's reading overcame on the show. Boyden writes:

They smashed my toes with rocks and pushed me into the fires they'd built and shoved burning sticks into my orifices...one walked up to me and twisted a finger until it snapped, then took his knife and cut it off, staring into my eyes...he looks at me in the eye and then cuts deep into my sternum. I can feel his hand enter my chest...I glimpse what he holds in his hand. He bites into it. (473-478)

Lewis's criticism of *The Orenda* suggests that Canadians will find it hard to rally to the book as a pillar of social change because of the “*explicit* nature of the torture” (18:50). Not the fact of the violence itself, but rather the visceral nature of its narration.

Kinew's response grapples with Lewis's distinction in a way that tries to reframe Boyden's representation of Indigenous savagery as a colonial misrecognition of Indigenous worldviews:

The violence I think is key to understanding the message of *The Orenda*. If we look at the violence, the torture scenes in the book strictly from a Western perspective then of course we're going to arrive at the same conclusions as people did 400 years ago: that 'these people are savage,' that 'these people are beneath us.' Why, for instance, does Joseph Boyden choose to use the word 'caress' when he's talking about the torture victims? It's because he's implying that there's a different approach, that these people are engaged in a relationship with each other...for us to understand that we're tossed into a... worldview where suffering is key to achieving something meaningful. (Kinew, “Day Two,” 2014, 00:20:22-00:22:00)

Kinew's rebuttal clarifies the way Indigenous and settler conflicts are divided by epistemological differences. In this example, Kinew reads the violence in Boyden's novel as a representation of Indigenous cultural difference. Playing into the double articulation of the show, which consciously positions Kinew and Lewis within a racial and cultural discourse of power, Kinew strategically undermines Lewis's critique based on the limits of his personal perspective as a non-Indigenous, white reader. Kinew frames the argument

in such a way as to discredit Lewis's critique of the violence by characterizing it within a history of colonial erasure that has traditionally misrecognized Indigenous epistemologies as symptoms of barbarism. Using the word "caress" as a focal point, Kinew attempts to pivot between Indigenous and Western ways of reading. In this shift between worldviews, Kinew transforms the torture from senseless atrocity, and toward spiritual, ceremonial intimacy. Through his reading he characterizes Lewis's couched arguments – and by extension King's review – as a continuation of four-hundred-year-old colonial attitudes. Lewis's argument, that Canadians would not be able to stomach the grotesque violence, is characterized by Kinew as an affirmation that Indigenous peoples are "savages" and therefore "beneath" Canadian society. Rather than suggest that Boyden's representation of the torture inadvertently reproduces Indigenous stereotypes, Kinew argues that Canadians lack an understanding of Indigenous worldviews wherein "suffering is key to achieving something beautiful."

Kinew argues that there is something about lived Indigenous experience that characterizes Boyden's novel not as a potential reinforcement of Indigenous stereotypes but as an "insider's" view of an Indigenous worldview. The result is a rhetorical position that is apparently anti-colonial and yet reproduces colonial stereotypes, which are silenced in Kinew's attempt to win the show, and the greater prize of inserting an Indigenous perspective into an imperial canon.

While Kinew does not claim this worldview to be pan-Indigenous, let alone universal, its defining characteristic – sacrifice and redemption – is analogous to the story of Jesus's crucifixion – a narrative Boyden depicts using the character of the Jesuit

Christophe to allude to Saint Jean de Brébeuf. Yet Kinew uses the depictions of torture in the book to talk about sacrifice as if it is a distinction between Indigenous and settler ways of thinking, strategically forgetting that it is the Jesuit tellingly named Christophe who undergoes the Indigenous “caress” and gives up his life with dignity and courage. Instead, Kinew positions Canada’s unwillingness to accept aspects of Indigenous worldviews that fail to line up with Western perspectives read as demonstrations of an ignorant reading public, as opposed to a clichéd representation common to colonial histories:

It’s very easy for us as Canadians to get along with Indigenous paradigms and Indigenous world views if they line-up with our own: ‘Oh, Indigenous people want to protect Mother Earth? Well, I care about the environment too so that’s great!’ But all of a sudden when Indigenous people stand for something different, when we have a different approach, then all bets are off. But I invite you to really consider the other view brought in through the torture scenes, you know, and this is something that is still alive in our cultures today. (“Day Two,” 2014, 00:20:22-00:22:00)

On the one hand, Kinew is correct in his assertion that Indigenous worldviews may differ drastically, while on the other hand, Kinew makes this argument from the position of “us as Canadians.” Recalling Kinew’s ambiguous allusion to who he means by “we” in his question “Do we own the land, or does the land own us?” Kinew’s use of “us” in this example equally plays on the ambiguity provided by the radio format and its double articulation of panelists’ chatter. By identifying his own intersectional position between

Canadian society and Indigenous affiliations, Kinew further argues that Boyden's depictions of torture are misunderstood in a way that illustrates the paradox of attempting to rationalize Boyden's narrative choices through the limited scope of mainstream reconciliation. In this case Kinew is obligated to make explicit distinctions between Canadian epistemological frameworks and Boyden's portrayal of Indigenous violence as *an example* of the colonial predisposition to read Indigenous custom as barbaric. Rather than drawing attention to the potential of wampum in Boyden's novel to signal an Indigenous epistemology of peace, he wraps Indigenous violence in a language of mainstream reconciliation, and by doing so, Kinew inadvertently signals the incommensurate task of negotiating Indigenous and settler reconciliation through a national radio program and literary award predisposed to celebrate narratives that reaffirm colonial stereotypes. So Kinew is caught between the opportunity to represent Indigenous and settler conflict on a (virtual) national stage and the limits imposed by the colonial assumptions of the national audience and its predisposition for stereotyped historical narratives.

Despite his allusions to the environment and "Mother Earth," there is no mention of the way Indigenous views of land, specifically, are often more politically unsettling than the shock of stereotypical savagery. The rhetorical structure that Kinew uses to defend *The Orenda* highlights multiple conflicts that are perversely obscured by his and/or his audience's sanctioned ignorance about Condolence and the Great Law of Peace. Similarly, by positioning himself as part of Canadian society, Kinew risks glossing over ongoing resistance to any form of Indigenous nationhood imagined within the socio-

political boundaries of the nation-state. More specifically, in this example, stereotypes about violent Indigenous peoples are tied to “something that is still alive in our cultures today,” as opposed to practices that are outdated and yet misrepresented in historical accounts to justify Canada’s assimilatory policies.

The discourse of reconciliation in which Kinew participates reveals the way colonization is imagined in Canada within a multicultural framework and discussed in a racial discourse which presumes the national identity or at least citizenship of participants to be Canadian. For example, Lewis’s invocation of “major Aboriginal critics” – i.e. Hayden King – prompts a response from Kinew that elucidates the grounds on which one must stand to speak with authority on behalf of an Indigenous worldview:

The flaw in those critiques is that they accept Western assumptions and they leave them unchallenged...and here’s the real problem with that approach, whether it’s coming from you or whether it’s coming from one of “*those*” critics, the problem with that is this: reconciliation is the greatest social justice issue facing this nation but reconciliation must not be a second chance at assimilation. Right? So in order for it to change, people have to be unsettled. They have to be challenged ... They have to be forced outside of their comfort zones to experience something different. (“Day Two,” 2014, 00:22:22-00:23:25, my emphasis)

In his effort to win the gameshow, Kinew needs to undermine Lewis’s authority by questioning his use of “major Aboriginal critics” whatever the accuracy of Lewis’s and these critics’ views. He then turns Lewis’s dependence upon these critics to his own advantage by trumping Lewis’s vulnerable dependency with his own lived experience and

the radical assertion that “people have to be forced outside of their comfort zones to experience something different.” In effect, Kinew’s rebuttal gives the entire exchange an additional level of symbolism as Lewis’s reading of Boyden through King is put up against Kinew’s reading of Boyden with reference to his own lived Indigenous experience. Thus while the mainstream reconciliation Kinew describes appears to be an all-encompassing conversation about the role of Canada in colonization, the rules of the gameshow contain that conversation in a contest over the authenticity of subject positions. When Kinew says “reconciliation must not be a second chance at assimilation,” he seems to preclude the possibility that his version of reconciliation could be anything but transformative.

Truth and Retribution, or Grace Without Condolence

The critic Matt James roughly outlines the limits of mainstream reconciliation. He describes the way that the TRC, while comprehensive in scope, is part of “an official routine of predictable commemorative procedure...[that] helps to quell potentially unwieldy debates about past conduct and contemporary responsibility” (38). Following Day Two, during the Q&A, Lewis and Kinew further discuss reconciliation in Canada, and the two panelists reflect on the debates during the live program. Their discussion reveals how reconciliation works to quell potentially unwieldy debates about past conduct and contemporary responsibility, just as James says. Because the nationalist underpinnings of *Canada Reads* are predicated on the omission of Indigenous political and judicial sovereignty, Lewis and Kinew struggle to articulate a common understanding

of reconciliation in their discussion about the Haudenosaunee and violence in Boyden's novel. This is why the TRC, which assumes Indigenous nationhood within the terms set by the Canadian nation-state, becomes the central reference point for the discussion of reconciliation on *Canada Reads*. "Wab, can I be personal for a moment?" Lewis asks,

When I went as an honorary witness to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the women in their 60s and 70s came to me to testify and they talked about the physical and sexual violence at the age of five and six I couldn't believe what I was hearing — I mean I spent two years observing and attempting to deal with the consequences of the Rwandan genocide, speaking to hundreds of the victims and I've never experienced anything like the testimony of those women before the commission What they said was staggering to me, and I'll tell you the truth: I came away saying to them that this shouldn't be the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, this should be the 'Truth and Retribution Commission,' because you really have to think hard about reconciliation and our capacity for it under the circumstances that we are talking about. ("Day Two Q&A," 2014 00:14:07-00:14:25)

Lewis not only draws a comparison between the victims of residential schools and the 1994 Rwandan genocide, but he also claims that his experience of dealing with the aftermath of the one-hundred-day slaughter that left nearly one million people dead left him unprepared to deal with "the testimony of those women before the Commission." When he suggests renaming the TRC the "Truth and Retribution Commission," he is

challenging “reconciliation and our capacity for it” in a way that calls into question the logic of the discourse and its imagined goals.

The connection Lewis draws between the Rwandan genocide and the TRC, in particular his emphasis on “retribution,” betrays his own despair about what the TRC can and will achieve. Lewis’s spin on the Commission’s title implies a sense of distrust of the TRC as part of “a relatively small number of specific, temporally confined, and extraordinary acts” (James 37) consciously constructed to neutralize political and public fallout. For a witness of the TRC to suggest that “retribution” is a more fitting title than “reconciliation” repositions reconciliation as a form of commemorative heritage redress, which “transforms Canadian histories of wrongdoings from potential tools of national self-criticism and into paternalistic occasions for congratulating victim groups” (James 38) as opposed to a meaningful way of addressing colonial trauma. Kinew’s rebuttal, however, draws the conversation back to reconciliation as a response to specific personal and systemic violence emanating from the historical legacy of the residential school program:

The counterpoint to that is the strength that I saw in my late father, Phil Fontaine, Caroline Briere, and the residential school survivors who went to the Vatican or who have greeted their former tormentors with grace and with love and with kindness... “Truth and Retribution?” You know, I think that is the first reaction, but when we examine what our true human ideals are and what we aspire to, it is reconciliation that is what we strive for and I believe, you know, that [*The Orenda*] is... it’s not transformative completely; you read this, the world is not a

better place tomorrow, but it starts a conversation and it pushes people towards that better view of humanity. (“Day Two Q&A,” 2014, 00:15:00-00:15:10)

Kinew’s reference to the former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Phil Fontaine, and his work in the establishment of the TRC, as well as his journey to the Vatican, ties reconciliation back to a set of relationships between the Church, the state, and survivors of the residential schools. However, Taiaiake Alfred, for one, is critical of Fontaine in *Peace, Power, Righteousness* (1999), for attempting to “right historical wrongs by equalizing [Indigenous peoples’] material conditions” (13). Alfred asserts that the “focus[] on the gross abuses of residential school authorities toward individuals” obscures the nation-state’s history of systemic violence “in an attempt to make us forget that the schools were part of an attempted psychological and cultural assassination inflicted on [Indigenous] people as a whole” (13). The fact that a group of residential school survivors, including Fontaine, traveled to the Vatican shows that the sharing of power between Church and State in the schools has meant that each institution can strategically defer responsibility in the reconciliatory process.

What is particularly important in this exchange is Kinew’s eventual turn to a more theological discourse whereby he recycles the Christian language of the novel to articulate reconciliation. His rhetorical strategy reflects the strength of religious frameworks for talking about forgiveness in a national context. Indeed, the discourse of reconciliation Kinew uses asserts that responding to violence with “grace,” “love,” and “kindness,” as opposed to Lewis’s retribution, is reflective of “our true human ideals.” Kinew’s turn to a specifically Christian register of forgiveness reflects a predisposition

for forgiveness through a spiritual framework that is not reflective of the country's multicultural population. So while Kinew's strategy is fruitful in the context of the show's civil discourse, the awkwardness of forgiveness in a Christian framework suggests that there is a more appropriate approach that is being excluded.

The Haudenosaunee Condolence ceremony is an obvious example of such a framework for forgiveness that is notably absent from both the *Canada Reads* conversation and Boyden's novel. Condolence, here, offers viable alternatives to "grace" and to mainstream reconciliation. Through the Edge of the Woods Ceremony both parties at the meeting actively acknowledge grief and the need for reason. This process allows humans to work out solutions to complicated issues, which when focused on the pursuit of peace, helps them achieve a state of Good Mindedness necessary for a healthy society. The discourse of reconciliation used to communicate between the residential school survivors and the representatives of the Vatican have many similarities to the Haudenosaunee Condolence ceremony. There is, however, one key difference. "Peace, as the Peacemaker understood it... flourished only in a garden amply fertilized with absolute and pure justice... (which requires that people cease abusing one another)" writes Mohawk in *Basic Call* (34). Forgiveness, on the other hand, can only exist in the absence of that justice.

Condolence, Requickening, and the Edge of the Woods Ceremony described by Hill collectively compose a conceptual framework that provides a decolonial alternative to the mental universe of Christian forgiveness and its vocabularies. As opposed to "grace" and "kindness" which require acts of altruism, Good Mindedness seeks out

justice that recognizes peace as more than the absence of conflict. By contrast, in the Edge of the Woods Ceremony, the group that is strong uplifts those who are in a state of grief so that they may reason together in the interest of peace. Accordingly, Indigenous epistemologies like the Great Law offer holistic alternatives to “grace” for rethinking Indigenous and settler reconciliation as an ongoing structure as opposed to an event. Condolence is interested not in forgiveness, but in the assuagement of grief in the interest of returning to the power of reason. The Requickening acknowledges that psychological distress can impede the ability of humans to reason in the interest of peace.

Collectively, Boyden’s historical narrative, Kinew’s commentary, and King’s review highlight the confusion caused by the evacuation of key vocabularies from the language of redress. I have drawn on Sa’ke’j Henderson’s definition of constitutional reconciliation as a political manifestation of redress governed by a decolonial logic. By contrast, the penitent gestures of reconciliation that seek to provide material compensation while refusing to engage with Indigenous-settler conflict, a logic that imagines reconciliation within the mental universe of its current arrangements with Canada, is by nature a continuation of the colonial project. The history of colonization that the TRC deals with seeks to compensate Indigenous peoples with a concept of equality envisioned through a capitalist lens. Reconciliation along the lines of the TRC posits that the equality that comes from redress signifies as “equality of opportunity to compete in the market,” which Jennifer Henderson explains “is the only real form of equality” recognized by the state (64). While any gesture of apology, or material compensation, represents a hard-fought victory for Indigenous peoples, such material

compensation is underpinned by the fact that the most common way people are made to lose their freedom is economic (Mohawk, *Basic Call* 95). Mohawk echoes this view in “Our Strategy for Survival” (*Basic Call* 119-125) when he explains “colonialism, as we know it, was the product of centuries of social, economic, and political development in the West.” Colonization “is still taking place today, although it has been refined to the point where the exploitation is in the hands of huge multinational corporations that continue to reap profits at the expense of the world’s poor” (122). Between John Mohawk, Sa’ke’j Henderson, and Jennifer Henderson, the impact of these discursive logical frames clarifies the compartmentalization of colonization by Canadians as a historical event, disconnected from ongoing global economics. These critics suggest that colonization cannot be “resolved” simply by the elimination of conflict, financial compensation, nor the pursuit of peace through cultural projections of the state’s soft power.

Kinew’s opening remarks on the final day of *Canada Reads* 2014 suggest that a generation of children who have internalized the lessons of *The Orenda* will make up “a Canada that acknowledges Indigenous people without demeaning the newcomer, that stands for the environment while acknowledging the need to have an economy” (“Day Four,” 2014, 00:11:40-00:11:45). Here we can see how Kinew’s mainstream version of reconciliation involves reconciling Indigenous people to the Canadian economy. The unwillingness of Indigenous peoples to concede control of environmental resources registers in an argument like this as an unwillingness to acknowledge the “need to have an economy”—as a rude politics of refusal. This moment reveals how any potential for

autonomous Indigenous sovereignty is contained by the economic assumptions of seemingly benign rhetorics of empathy and reconciliation.

Conclusion:

The Orenda's success on *Canada Reads* 2014, as well as its subsequent spike in sales, suggest the continued popularity of historical narrative in Canada. In the case of the mainstream rhetoric of reconciliation that Kinew strategically employs, sanctioned ignorance about First Nations means that the circulation of his comments through the double articulation of radio is limited by the audience's incomprehension of Indigenous knowledge systems. Without a pre-existing knowledge of Indigenous cultures and knowledge systems, the audience risks misinterpreting Kinew's strategy because of the way official discourses of reconciliation have been framed within an understanding that has been assimilated to existing colonial arrangements between Canada and First Nations. Kinew's strategic deployment of mainstream reconciliation in 2014 constitutes the first of my examples in this thesis of how equity-seeking projects that challenge the nation are recuperated by being framed within that national narrative. In this way, *Canada Reads* reproduces an image of Canadian benevolence that camouflages the structure of elimination which drives the reality-TV format of the show and of the colonial logic of the state itself. Contrastingly, Henderson's theory of "constitutional reconciliation" advocates for a parallel logic that grounds the discourse of Indigenous and settler redress not in a historical narrative and commemorative redress, but in a commitment to building political and juridical structures for new relationships between First Nations and Canada.

A parallel logic of reconciliation acknowledges that for the negotiation of Indigenous and settler conflict to be successful – or rather peaceable – then the terms of that negotiation must themselves be mutually agreed upon. Otherwise, the negotiation of Indigenous and settler conflict breaks down into the imposition of a resolution which is not interested in peace, but rather the elimination of conflict. At the level of language, the subtle differences between colonial and decolonial ways of thinking become obscured by a rhetoric of social justice which perpetuates a benevolent image of commemorative redress without a commitment to a new constitutional relationship. The gameshow’s strategy of discussing literature, culture, and politics by means of the assimilatory discourse of reconciliation evacuates the Great Law and its principles of Good Mindedness from a sociopolitical dialogue where it would have been not only productive, but essential.

As innocuous as it may seem, the badge commemorating *The Orenda*’s victory says a lot about the way the Canadian national habitus shapes the representation of Indigenous peoples and their relationship with Canada. How Canadians imagine this relationship has a profound impact on the way they imagine resolutions to Indigenous and settler conflict, and at the center of this conflict is the land. The ambiguous first-person plural pronoun in Kineo’s question: “do we own the land or does the land own us?” tends to assimilate parallel logics before they can be articulated. The reproduction of sanctioned ignorance has obscured the nature of this question so as to eliminate the existence of competing epistemologies that challenge the basic assumptions of Eurocentric thinking. The sanctioned ignorance of elimination as an event as opposed to a structure marks out a barrier to viable (mutually agreed upon) vocabularies for redress. As a result, settler

peoples are unable to see the interconnectedness of the issues, unable to hear the reason of an epistemologically pluralistic world, and therefore unable to speak in the interest of peace. Without Condolence, without Requickening, without a break in the perpetuation of sanctioned ignorance, Canadians cannot hope to find peace in an ongoing history of violent accumulation.

Chapter Two

Forgetting the Colony, Settling the Refuge: Debating Racialization and Inclusive Multiculturalism on *Canada Reads* (2015)

The 2015 season of *Canada Reads* sought out the “one book to break barriers.” This season saw a familiar face return to the table. Wab Kinew stepped in as moderator and host on this season, replacing Jian Ghomeshi. While the theme of the 2015 season, “one book to break barriers,” was meant to bring Canadians closer together, one soon wondered who had established the barriers, and whether they had been erected for self-defence or to contain others. Barriers between Indigenous sovereignty and inclusive multiculturalism, as well as between citizenship and belonging featured on this season. What started out as a seemingly straightforward discussion of the way books overcome or resist boundaries of marginalization, racism, and privilege became a multifocal examination of the exalted position of whiteness in Canadian society. Nonetheless, the show ended with little sense of resolution and with the uneasy feeling that while the implicitly exalted position of whiteness had been exposed, the rhetoric of multiculturalism that dominated the season remained intact.

This chapter examines panelist dialogues and debates leading up to TIFF Artistic Director Cameron Bailey’s successful defence of Kim Thúy’s *Ru* (2012). Thúy’s work of prose-poetry beat out Kamal Al-Solaylee’s *Intolerable: A Memoir of Extremes* (2012), defended by TV actor Kristin Kreuk; Raziel Reid’s *When Everything Feels like the Movies* (2014), defended by *eTalk* Anchor, and celebrity gossip-blogger Lainey Lui; Jocelyne Saucier’s *And the Birds Rained Down* (2011), defended by singer-songwriter

Martha Wainwright; and *The Inconvenient Indian* (2012) by Thomas King, defended by the founder of Free the Children and philanthropist Craig Kielburger.

Bailey's strategy for winning the 2015 season involved aligning *Ru* with the idea that reading helps to cultivate an increased sense of empathy in readers. However, during the course of the debates, Bailey's point about empathy was shoehorned into a multicultural framework that reduced Thúy's narrative of Vietnamese refugee experience to a narrative about national inclusivity. Notably, Bailey's strategy for the 2015 season reveals the predilection of the national habitus to read narratives of immigration and refuge in particular ways. Contrastingly, the response of panelists to King's work of non-fiction demonstrated the distaste for narratives that challenge the civility of the show's seeming openness to critique. Compared to Boyden's *The Orenda* the year before, King's book did not fit into the reconciliatory discourse of the show and instead directly pointed to the role of white settlers in ongoing colonization, a major taboo of the program which seeks to keep the language of race and colonialism separated. The rejection of King's book, despite the popularity of reconciliatory dialogue the previous year, suggests that the nationalism as expressed on the show is predisposed to narratives of inclusive multiculturalism over those of Indigenous sovereignty. As panelists openly critiqued xenophobia, racism, colonialism, homophobia, transphobia, and ageism within Canadian society, the nationalist presuppositions of the program absorbed these critiques into implicit reproductions of the relations of power between Indigenous, settler, and immigrant peoples within a multicultural framework. The rudeness of King's book acted as a counterpoint to Bailey's aesthetic of empathy.

This chapter reads the debates of the 2015 season through two critical lenses that together offer a dialectical model for critiquing the connections between Canadian literature, civility, inclusive multiculturalism, and ongoing colonization. Firstly, critical race theorist Sunera Thobani's concept of "exaltation" from *Exalted Subjects* (2007) highlights the way national subjectivity is framed by implicit racialized hierarchies that reproduce or "exalt" whiteness as Canadian-ness. As mentioned in my introduction, it is this implicit understanding that white civility is "Canadian-ness" that is reproduced by the national habitus to favour particular forms of critique over others in the context of *Canada Reads*. Thobani's critique of exaltation lays bare the techniques of power that reproduce racialized hierarchies through national narratives of inclusive multiculturalism, thereby revealing the constrained universality of this narrative.

Second, this chapter draws on critical concepts from Eva Mackey's *Unsettled Expectations* (2016), such as: "settler fantasies of possession and entitlement" and a critical approach to decolonization she calls "treaty as verb." In particular, Mackey's concept of treaty as verb brings historical narratives of colonization into the present by recognizing treaties as physical representations of ongoing relationships between "treaty peoples," as opposed to simply historical or legal objects that are frozen in law and in time. In this way, to treaty as verb destabilizes the notion that the colonial project is settled and undermines the legitimacy of white civility which relies on the disappearance of Indigenous peoples as its logical foundation.

My analysis clarifies the way multicultural narratives of inclusion fold colonial critiques into a dialogue about race and culture. I consider the way panelists read and

defend their books when the narratives of benevolence that circulate within Canadian literature come face-to-face with ongoing colonial violence perpetrated by the Canadian state. Finally, I compare the strategic readings of the books performed by Bailey and Kielburger to highlight the way elimination resists critiques of the nation even as the show celebrates and invites these critiques.

Exalted Settlers and Inclusive Multiculturalism

Panelist Cameron Bailey's opening statement on Day One of *Canada Reads* 2015 highlights the way the civility of the show's radio discourse, and its preference for nationalist narratives of inclusive multiculturalism that reflect the CBC mandate, are predisposed to configurations of Indigenous peoples as one of the nation's many equity-seeking groups. Indigenous scholar Bonita Lawrence and immigrant scholar Enakshi Dua argue in "Decolonizing Antiracism" (2005) that the antiracist rhetoric framed by the nation, such as inclusive multiculturalism, "ignores the ongoing colonization of Aboriginal peoples in the Americas [and]... fails to integrate an understanding of Canada as a colonialist state into antiracist frameworks" (123). On Day One, Bailey's opening statement attempts to base his strategic reading of *Ru* on the rhetorical argument that reading makes us more empathetic. Within the structures of the gameshow, and the CBC's objective to unify diverse groups, Bailey's opening statement reveals the paradoxical nature of the show's eliminatory structure. His language in this example is demonstrative of the kind of subtle rhetorical shifts that fold colonization into other racialized forms of marginalization. I gestured to Bailey's comments briefly in the

introduction to this thesis, but his opening statement in its entirety reveals the logical underpinnings of his argument:

There are six of us sitting around this table, five of us come from immigrant families...thank you for having us on your land, Wab. [Kinew interjects, “You’re welcome”] ...You know, last year when *The Orenda* won, I think we got a deeper understanding of the brutal cost of those five-hundred years of migrants coming to this country trying to find their place here, trying to determine what this country’s going to be. But Canada isn’t done yet, I think the original encounter between the French and the English and the Aboriginal people was just the beginning of it. What’s happening now is a whole new generation of migrants that are changing the face of Canada. But what about the heart and the mind and the soul of Canada? I think we need books for that and I think *Ru* is the book that helps us understand that. I’m one of those migrants. There are many of us, I’m sure, in this room. I loved what Kim Thúy did with this book. It’s beautifully written and it captures, I think, every migrant’s story as she tells her own story. And if we’re looking for a book that can break one of the most urgent barriers in terms of how we understand, this is it. (“Day One,” 2015, 00:16:49-00:16:57)

Bailey puts the “original encounter between the French and the English and Aboriginal people” front and centre. His monologue is certainly premeditated and makes a concerted effort to address not only the realities of the present but the traumas of history. However, Bailey’s comments signify through the double articulation of the show’s radio format in a way that reveals the constrained universality of the debates. On the one hand, his gesture

to an inclusive summary of Canadian history highlights the fact that critiques of Boyden's novel were eliminated by its canonization as a *Canada Reads* winner. On the other hand, this example points to the way Bailey's gesture to Kinew – "thanks for having us on your land, Wab" – anticipates a civil response from the show's Indigenous host who is conflated with all immigrants' Indigenous hosts. Kinew's brief "you're welcome" reads as just an equally respectful gesture but it means more than that, it illustrates the limited ways that Indigenous sovereignty over land is understood within a national framework. Indigenous peoples have never had the power to determine immigrant policy and therefore to welcome – or deny – immigrants, so Bailey's strategic reading of *The Orenda* as a way of understanding the "brutal cost of those five-hundred years" of immigration reflects a miscalculated civility. What is left unexpressed by both Bailey's opening argument and his rhetorical gesture to Kinew is ongoing colonization itself. Bailey frames the history with which Boyden's novel deals as a series of migration events, waves of "migrants...trying to find their place here." Bailey's rhetoric reframes colonization in the context of the show so that it is less a critique of how settlers gained power over the land and more of an observation that Canada is now full of people who have come here from elsewhere.

While Bailey's argument acknowledges the historical and ongoing presence of Indigenous peoples, his rhetorical framing as part of the game eliminates the awkward power dynamics between "French and... English and...Aboriginal people" in a way that allows for narratives of inclusiveness based on personal appeals to empathy. His argument for *Ru*'s potential to develop a sense of empathy in Canadians obscures the

ongoing nature of colonization by placing its “brutal cost” in the past tense, as something that was dealt with “last year when *The Orenda* won,” which he distinguishes from “now” when “a whole new generation of migrants that are changing the face of Canada.” In this way, Bailey highlights the perverse ignorance that circulates on *Canada Reads* which presumes that the colonial project – which is predicated on the disappearance of Indigenous peoples – is in the past, despite Kinew’s presence as host.

His call for an empathetic response to a new wave of migrants based on his strategic reading of *Ru* helps to identify the “barriers” imagined by the show in its theme – “One Book to Break Barriers.” He alludes to the idea that preceding generations are not necessarily understanding of increased immigration, despite their own routes to this place, and suggests that Thúy tells “every migrant’s story” in a way that will make Canadians remember the struggle of that journey. Inadvertently, his observation motions to an undefined idea of who is represented by these previous waves of migration, as well as who is considered to be Canadian. Bailey’s rhetoric imagines a tripartite socio-cultural hierarchy within a national framework that can be more easily understood through the critical lens provided by Thobani’s *Exalted Subjects*. Thobani sheds light on the evolution of this hierarchy and the way it helps to reveal the relationships of power between the waves of migrants Bailey describes and Indigenous peoples. Thobani argues that English and French settlers consolidated their socio-cultural position in Canada’s transition from colony to nation:

Even when disparaged as ... gendered, sexed or classed... the [national] subject positively commands respect as the locus of state power... Having overcome great

adversity in founding the nation, these subjects face numerous challenges from outsiders – Indians, immigrants, and refugees – who threaten their collective welfare and prosperity... More generous representations of the nation's Others obviously also exist, but on the condition that their distinctive racialized experiences are denied, and the political claims arising from such experiences are cheerfully relinquished in their bid to claim a new hyphenated Canadian identity as beneficiaries of the nation's largesse. (4)

Here Thobani describes the “exalted” status of settler national subjects as based on the management of “outsiders” who threaten the ideological foundations of the nation state. Thobani makes sense of Bailey’s allusion to the constrained universality of Canadian narratives of benevolence and inclusion. The perverse ignorance built into the national assumptions of *Canada Reads* reflects the constrained universality of the show’s space for critique and celebration of the national literature, as well as the fairly narrow way national subjectivity is imagined. So on the 2015 season “the colonial violence that marks the origin of the national subject” is obscured and even contradicted by the elimination format of the game, “even as it mythologizes and pays obeisance to its national essence” (Thobani 10). The perverse ignorance reproduced by Bailey’s elimination of the violence between subsequent waves of migrants and Indigenous peoples reflects the civil discourse of the program which, as Mackey argues, fantasizes about the universalizing effects of inclusive multiculturalism, and its insulation of settler privilege by othering “waves of migrants.”

Mackey elaborates on this “fantasy” element which reflects settler entitlement to, and possession of, the land as secured, despite the destabilizing effect active forms of Indigenous political presence have on the actual legality of this entitlement and possession. By tracing the roots of settler possession out of the Doctrine of Discovery and through John Locke’s liberal philosophy – that labour entitles one to ownership over the fruits of their creation – Mackey illustrates the fragility of the logical foundations that prop up settler claims to land. She describes these “fantasies of entitlement” as the “legal *assumption*” that settler nationals’ “sovereignty is necessarily superior, stronger, and deeper than any claims of Indigenous peoples because *underlying title* belongs to the Crown” (9, emphasis added). These fantasies of entitlement recognize the implicit power of the Crown, as well as its role in the colonial process, and allow settlers to distance themselves from the violence by which that land was “claimed.”

Mackey’s critical approach, treaty as verb, is useful for identifying and disrupting the perverse ignorance on which settler fantasies of entitlement and possession rely, and illustrates the cognitive dissonance of settlers who see their ongoing benefit from the land as unrelated to ongoing structures of colonization. Mackey approaches Indigenous and settler relationships as a “historical and ongoing, exploratory and often uncertain process of building relationships for which non-indigenous people must also take responsibility and in which they must engage” (141). By framing treaty relationships between Indigenous and settler peoples as ongoing and present, Mackey “brings [the] material and social aspects of colonial pasts into the present in a manner that recognizes the ongoing autonomy of Indigenous peoples in the ongoing treaty relationships in which the settler

nation-state participates” (141). Rather than simply acknowledging Indigenous peoples as one of many groups now sharing Canada, Mackey’s “to treaty” as verb offers an alternative way of framing the relationships between these groups that does not rely on the altruism of empathy, nor the fantasies of the imagined community to make sense of the many competing and complementary equity-seeking projects in this place. Bailey’s image of Indigenous peoples and subsequent waves of migrants sharing Canada is, however, useful for thinking about the way treaty as verb positions Indigenous autonomy on par with that of Canadians, and as a result reconfigures the power dynamics between national subjects and immigrants as Indigenous peoples and an unranked nation of migrants.

Chickasaw scholar Jodie Byrd suggests in *The Transit of Empire* (2011) that using Kamau Braithwaite’s term “arrivants” to “signify those people forced into the Americas through the violence of European and Anglo-American colonialism around the globe” (Braithwaite qtd. in Byrd xix) can help to articulate “where diaspora meets settler colonialism” (Byrd xix). In the Canadian case, imagining English and French settlers as historical arrivants removes them from their exalted positions as “founding peoples” of the nation-state over subsequent waves of migrants. Byrd’s and Braithwaite’s concept of arrivants repositions race and migration in the national story by locating the state within a global history of colonization. By reframing the position of white settlers within a global era of colonial violence, settler-descendants are able to better understand their own role in Indigenous experiences of colonization in the present.

Kielburger begins his opening argument for King's *The Inconvenient Indian* by citing a *Maclean's* (2015) article which claims that in Canada "Aboriginal – non-Aboriginal conflict is worse than race relations in the United States" ("Day One," 2015, 00:14:10-00:14:20). Kielburger argues that Indigenous and settler conflict "is the five-hundred-year-old barrier that has to be broken" (Kielburger, "Day One," 2015, 00:14:20-00:14:25). Kielburger picks up Bailey's reference to Canada's "five-hundred year" history of Indigenous and settler conflict, and by not distinguishing exalted subjects from more recent "waves" of migrants, Kielburger characterizes both Canadians and immigrants as arrivants by refusing to disconnect that "brutal cost" from the present. King's "part history, part memoir," argues Kielburger, is "an accessible history, with biting wit and humor, compelling stories. An account that connects our past to our present-day reality" in a way that helps Canadians understand how this conflict has evolved ("Day One," 2015, 00:14:15-00:14:20). Mackey's description of "settler anxiety" helps explain the differences between Kinev's rhetoric of mainstream reconciliation from the previous year and Kielburger's strategic reading that tries to "connect our past to our present-day" realities. Mackey observes that settler anxiety emerges in response to challenges to the logical frameworks that prop up settler fantasies of exaltation. Settled expectations reflect a perverse ignorance of the ongoing nature of colonization, and requires narratives of Indigenous extinction to position the English and the French not as arrivants, but as natural inheritors of the role of Canada's "founding" peoples. Kielburger's attempt to convince his other panelists that King's *The Inconvenient Indian* is the book to break

barriers unsettles the colonial assumptions of the show and indicts the idea that Boyden's *The Orenda* provided a sufficient instance of reconciliation in Canada.

The success of Bailey's strategic reading of *Ru* illustrates the popularity of inclusive multicultural rhetoric in the national context of the show. His call for reading as a way of fostering empathy between and among Canadians fits the Massey Commission's recommendations to use culture to unite Canada's diverse populations. Despite the nuance of Bailey's argument, panelists slipped into a rhetoric of inclusive multiculturalism that reproduced white civility even while addressing its shortcomings. Compared to the speculative transnationalism that I discuss in Chapter Three, set in the border-policing rhetoric of the 2015 election debates, Bailey's appeals to an empathetic inclusiveness tends to reinstate exalted subjects not as arrivants but as those who can welcome the world's displaced peoples.

“The American dream,” or Colonial Economies of Immigration and Refuge

Certainly *Ru* presents a transnational story. In the book, An Tinh Nguyen grows to adulthood in Canada learning to live between languages, cultures, and histories. The reader follows the narrator through memories and tangential anecdotes that illustrate what it's like to live between two poles. Binaries of the past and present, communist and capitalist, East and West, French and English, citizenship and belonging routinely pop up in the narration as Tinh meditates on her family's history in Vietnam and their new histories in Canada. As an adult, An Tinh returns to Vietnam while working for a Montreal-based company. From the present, the narrator reflects on the way this trip back

influenced the way she has come to understand what it means to be of a place, to belong, to be recognizable as Vietnamese (and as Canadian). An Tinh begins to connect her family's past as Chinese immigrants to Vietnam, to her present life as a Canadian citizen and member of Québécois society, and again to the future with a hopefulness that Canada will someday feel more like home, and less like a place in-between.

The Vietnamese refugee of this book frames her immigrant story in pursuit of what she calls the “American dream” which is about the freedom of capitalism and so does not need to distinguish between Canada and the US. Differences between the two countries are ignored by the metanarrative of opportunity for immigrants to find a new, unfettered life signified by the American dream. On the one hand, Thúy's inclusion of Canada in this ideology highlights a shared capitalist logic that, to immigrants to the USA and Canada, is indistinguishable. On the other hand, Thúy's term points to the similarities in the expectations of immigrants to both these countries. Perhaps more indirectly, her generalization points to the foundational role of colonialism in the history of both Canadian and US economies; the conquest of Indigenous lands and resources lies at the heart of this Dream. The disappointment An Tinh articulates over the course of the novel illuminates the role of metanarratives like “the American dream” to manage the transition of peoples from immigrant or refugee to citizen, and then from citizen to national subject. The American dream purveys the illusion of an insubstantial, unsatisfying national subjectivity whose history one does not know and to which one cannot belong. Consequently, the disappointment that An Tinh describes highlights the conceptual distance between economic success and belonging as a national subject.

Thúy provides an example of this disappointment in *Ru* when An Tinh recounts how her race marks her as outside of Canada's imagined community. "My employer," she recalls, "who was based in Quebec, clipped an article from a Montreal paper reiterating that 'the Quebecois nation was Caucasian,' that my slanting eyes automatically placed me in a separate category, even though Quebec had given me my American dream, even though it had cradled me for thirty years" (79). Despite the narratives of inclusion that An Tinh believed to be part of the American dream, she is shocked to realize how the racial architecture of Canadian society blocks that pursuit. The divide between participation as an economic citizen and as a national subject is traceable through the colonial anxieties that exacerbated the "crisis of legitimacy confronted by the Canadian state in the 1960s" (Bannerji qtd. in Thobani 150). Thobani explains that it was "A crisis that was sparked by the increasing demands of Francophones in Quebec; the class and gender-based political movements of the period; and the increasing demands of people of color for full citizenship" (150). This example of the employer in Montréal illustrates the way narratives of belonging to the nation through economic participation are implicitly framed by the racializing discourse of inclusive multiculturalism and the symptoms of ongoing colonization. "Seeking to transform itself from a settler colonial state," observes Thobani, "into a liberal-democratic one, and hence claim legitimacy as guarantor of the interest of all these various sectors, official multiculturalism became 'a diffusing or a muting device'" (Bannerji qtd in Thobani 150) for various challenges to the foundations and boundaries of the nation.

Bailey registers a similar kind of disappointment with the way race frames the immigrant experience of Canadian society. In his response to Kinew's prompt on the opening of Day Two, Bailey recalls that Thúy came to Canada as a refugee, and was viewed as "the victim," and "Canada opened its arms to her" ("Day Two," 2015, 00:14:50-00:14:55). "When I came to Canada as an eight-year-old," Bailey says, "Canada also opened its arms, but there was racism, as well. I was called 'blackie.' I was called 'monkey' in the school yard. I was called 'nigger'" ("Day Two," 2015, 00:15:00/00:15:05). The explicit racism Bailey points out constitutes a moment of rupture on the show because its rudeness disrupts the show's code of civility and upsets the systemic invisibility of racism. But the moment is quickly bypassed as he uses it to move on to his next point. Whereas in this moment he draws a distance between his own experience and that depicted in *Ru*, this rupture is ultimately eliminated by Bailey's commitment to a civil rhetoric of inclusion and empathy permits him to take a wining stance. Bailey ties his own experience of prejudice to *Ru* by arguing that it illuminates the "rich histories" behind the face ("Day Two," 2015, 00:15:05-15:10:00). Despite their different experiences, Bailey argues that *Ru* does a good job of humanizing racialized Canadians, and in so doing reaffirms the value of inclusion for the "immigrant story."

Bailey's and Thúy's stories of racism in Canada illustrate the way the language of race is embedded in the discourse of multiculturalism that we see on the show. The civil discourse of the show's liberal imperative to unite Canadians necessitates that Bailey eliminate the distinction between his and Thúy's experiences and ties him to an optimistic reading of the book.

Polite Resistance in a Nation of Fragility, Uncertainty, and Fear

The “immigrant story” discussed on the show emphasizes narratives that celebrate the tolerance of settler Canadians while appropriating the economic and cultural successes of migrants to that story. Caught in a feedback loop of predatory affirmation, migrants’ success enhances the position of settler nationals, while blaming migrants for their own failures. On “Day Three,” Kielburger describes the “immigrant story” in a way that reveals it not only as a reflection of immigrants’ experiences of coming to Canada, but also of the expectations of Canadians about what coming to Canada means. The following examples highlight not only how these immigrant stories reveal national biases, but also how these biases instruct and supervise immigrants in the structures of exaltation. Kinev asks Kielburger: “does *Ru* break a barrier?” to which Kielburger replies:

it depends on the kind of barrier you’re trying to break. In my mind, I was thinking it had to be a hard barrier... a barrier of a hardship story, and I think what *Ru* does is ask a much softer question... Can we as a country be a compassionate country? Do we want to approach immigration from a place of scarcity or abundance? And I think that’s the most fundamental question at the heart of all of these books around the table, is what type of country do we want to be? (“Day Three,” 2015, 00:20:40-00:20:55).

Kielburger’s point reveals a deliberate slippage between economic barriers and emotional ones. He softens the question by replacing hardship with compassion in the economy of “scarcity or abundance.” What this does is quietly reintroduce the exalted national subject

as the treasurer of this economy. In this way, the barrier Bailey identifies in *Ru* between citizenship and belonging is reconfigured by empathy and compassion into the rhetoric of inclusive multiculturalism.

Kinew asks Bailey on Day Three “what *Ru* contributes to the Canadian public discourse that we need to hear?” (“Day Three,” 2015, 00:21:10-00:21:15). Bailey’s response picks up on Kielburger’s softening rhetoric and appeals to the show’s civil discourse by aestheticizing *Ru*’s way of breaking racial barriers:

There’s something in the quietness of the book that’s important. We’re talking here about books that break barriers, but I think what Kim Thúy sets out to do...is dissolve barriers instead She’s not banging with a hammer — and that’s because immigrants don’t get to do that ... we grow up having to do ‘better’ to be seen as even equals, that’s really what we were trained to do: you have to go out there, and study hard, and get to the top of the class, achieve more, just so you can be seen as equal to people who were born here. And so Kim Thúy is ... going to try to make the best, most beautiful book that she can: sometimes not telling just how hard the story was to get from there to here, but to do it in a kind of quieter way. (“Day Three,” 2015, 00:21:40-00:21:45)

Bailey advocates for *Ru*’s quieter, more “beautiful” way of “dissolving” the barriers of racism and xenophobia and in so doing suggests that part of his strategy is to negotiate the anxiety of white settlers’ position as gatekeepers of national identity. So while Bailey’s rhetorical argument connects a strategic reading of *Ru* to the civility of its aesthetic

achievements, what is eliminated is the rudeness posed by a direct challenge to white settler privilege: “immigrants don’t get to do that,” he reminds us.

Bailey’s comments also allude to the hegemony implied by the boundary between appropriate and inappropriate forms of equity-seeking behaviour. Plainly stating that there are kinds of public expression that “immigrants don’t get to do,” Bailey underscores the racialized hierarchies of Canadian society as they are manifested both systemically and individually. By configuring immigrants as being in opposition to “people who were born here,” Bailey highlights the power dynamics that are obscured by inclusive multicultural discourse. In this way, Bailey’s comments suggest that immigrants are forced to present their dissent through over-achievement suggests that the right to critique the boundaries of the national imaginary is earned through labour and not by citizenship alone.

Perhaps Bailey simply sought to draw his points about the invisibility of institutionalized xenophobia back to the book he was defending, but when we consider this example in relation to Kielburger’s comments about compassion, scarcity, and abundance, connections between the American dream and the immigrant story become more visible. In both narratives, labour is exchanged for opportunity, while the national subject is exalted through the provision of that opportunity. The subtle racialization of inclusive multiculturalism has rendered the national subject as post-racial, assumed to be white but ultimately invisible in the implicit, facilitating narratives of belonging in Canada that encourage labour in good faith while maintaining the high value of civility.

Bailey's defence alludes to the way the politics of inclusion are rooted in multicultural discourse. This inclusive politics seeks to balance the necessity of immigrant labour with immigrant claims to increased access to national subjectivity. Both Kielburger's rhetorical question of scarcity and abundance and Bailey's observation that immigrant claims to national belonging must negotiate the sensibilities of settler nationals allude to what Thobani calls an underlying "crisis of whiteness" (152). The Pierre Trudeau-era of the 1960s that preceded Thúy's flight to Canada saw intense social and political change "based on the overt recognition that the labor of people of color was absolutely indispensable to economic growth and to Canadian national prosperity" (152). "As people of color availed themselves of the new opportunities," Thobani notes, "they achieved significant socio-economic mobility and encountered nationals in the same sites and spaces...that nationals had previously claimed for their own" (152). As a result, "the proximity of people of color within these sites challenged white entitlement" by forcing settler nationals to rationalize their privilege, and answer the questions: "If 'they' are like 'us,' if they can become like us, can even surpass us in their notable and sometimes spectacular achievements, what makes us better? Who are we if they can become us?" (152).

An Tinh repositions the question of who can be a national subject in the novel by placing it in a scene where she is unable to pass as Vietnamese in Hanoi. Thúy's narrator describes the way the Vietnamese had come to redefine themselves in the wake of the communist revolution:

The first time I went to a restaurant school for young adults in Hanoi, wearing heels and a straight skirt, the waiter for my table didn't understand why I was speaking Vietnamese with him. At first, I thought he couldn't understand my southern accent. At the end of the meal, though, he explained ingeniously that I was too fat to be Vietnamese I understood later that he was talking not about my 45 kg but about the American dream that had made me more substantial, heavier, weightier That American dream made me believe I could have everything That I could live in the grand villa of an expatriate and accompany barefoot children to their school that sat right on the sidewalk where two streets intersected. But the young waiter reminded me that I couldn't have everything, that I no longer had the right to declare I was Vietnamese because I no longer had their fragility, their uncertainty, their fears. And he was right to remind me. (77-78)

An Tinh's observation that she could no longer call herself Vietnamese because she "no longer had their uncertainty, their fragility, their fears," can be read two ways. On the one hand, the narrator suggests that her absence during the years after the communist revolution has left her without the cultural memory necessary to imagine herself as part of the Vietnamese national community. On the other hand, An Tinh's observations can be read self-reflexively: if she no longer has "their" fragility, uncertainty, or fears, whose does she have? Thúy asks the reader to think through what kinds of anxieties connect people to their community, and she asks readers to think through the kinds of anxieties that define their own imagined community: "who are we if they can become us?" By

highlighting the narrator's inability to return to her status as a Vietnamese national subject, Thúy turns the mirror on Canadian national subjectivity and asks what collection of fragilities, uncertainties, and fears is shared by those who declare themselves to be Canadian.

Home, Unsettled Land; or The Problem of “Belonging” in Canada

At the end of *Ru*, An Tinh looks to the future and imagines a sense of belonging in Canada that she has not yet attained:

After thirty years I already recognize our old selves only through fragments,
through scars, through glimmers of light...as in a waking dream where the scent
of a newly blown poppy is no longer a perfume but a blossoming: where the red of
a maple leaf in autumn is no longer a colour but a grace; where a country is no
longer a place but a lullaby. (Thúy 140-141)

Thúy's passage emphasizes a transition between the life An Tinh had in Vietnam, with its own symbols and histories, and the life she has lived in Canada for thirty years. While the narrator implies that this transition will occur naturally, the way An Tinh articulates her sense of belonging in Canada is through the land. When Thúy recalls “the red of a maple leaf” in a meditation on belonging to place, and combines “country,” “place,” and “lullaby,” her narrator is articulating an affective relationship to the land that is mitigated by an alternative to nation tied to these ecological images. In particular, Thúy's lullaby metaphor captures the complex intermingling of feelings that comes to signify belonging. Thúy articulates how a place can change from a blur of disparate sensations and

memories to a more coherent and localized sense of belonging, a sense of comfort versus a sense of refuge. Combined with her observation that belonging means shared “fragility,” “uncertainty,” and “fears,” Thúy connects Canada’s image of benevolence to the shared anxieties of its imagined community.

The fears of the imagined community alluded to by the *Canada Reads* debates suggest that settler anxiety over entitlement and possession is a major part of what defines national subjectivity. For example, Kielburger opened his remarks on Day Two by paraphrasing an anecdote from King’s book that, to him, illuminated Canada’s “shocking racism problem” (“Day Two,” 2015, 00:12:35-00:12:45). The anecdote describes King’s experience of moving to Lethbridge, Alberta, where a flyer in his mailbox noted that a “treaty” family (that is, an Indigenous family) had moved to the neighbourhood and that homeowners should call if they wanted to sell. Kielburger goes on to recite a series of unattributed statistics that indicate that as many as a third of Canadians blame Indigenous peoples for their current economic, social, and political problems. *The Inconvenient Indian*, Kielburger argues, offers readers a chance to understand the underlying issues behind these problems: “five hundred years of treaty violations, assimilation, and today’s continued institutionalized racism. With [*The Inconvenient Indian*]” he proposes, “we can shift from blame to a shared sense of injustice, to a true partnership to break barriers” (“Day Two,” 00:12:50-00:13:00).

Kielburger’s argument positions Indigenous peoples in two ways that demonstrate the benevolence of inclusive multiculturalism by the presence of Indigenous land owners in the neighbourhood. On the one hand, in King’s example, the realtor reads the presence

of an Indigenous family's entry into the neighbourhood as a sign that the value of the area, or the social fabric of the community is being degraded and that homeowners should escape before it's too late. On the other hand, Kielburger's reading of King's example through an anti-colonial lens underscores the centrality of settler anxieties connected to Indigenous land acquisition, and by extension points to the colonial subtext of the realtor's message. Together, King's example and Kielburger's use of it introduce a colonial twist to the idea of 'white neighbourhoods' that on the show signals an affront to the inclusive civility of a free real estate market. He argues not only that Canada has a "shocking racism problem," but also that the use of "treaty" to politely signal Indigenous peoples and the effects they might have on property values suggests that the dominance of settler control over the land is not as secure as the doctrine of exaltation may suggest. The presence of Indigenous people in the neighbourhood suggests that the underlying title of the land is now in contention.

In his chapter "What Indians Want," King explains how Indigenous nations in the United States have resisted the colonial erosion of their territory by buying back land in the open market through profits generated by on-reservation gaming. King observes how Indigenous peoples are actively subverting the colonial and capitalist structures of the American dream to intervene in its processes of race management:

In upstate New York, the Oneida nation has used some of the money made from its Turning Stone Resort and Casino to purchase over 17,000 acres of land. In Minnesota, the Shakopee Sioux have taken money from their Mystic Lake Casino Hotel, have bought 750 acres, and are looking at another 1000 acres. The

Cherokee in Oklahoma have purchased acreage along the major highways in that state But instead of pursuing the American dream of accumulating land as personal wealth, the tribes have taken their purchases to the secretary of the interior and requested that the land they acquired be added to their respective reservations and given trust status So far, reserves in Canada have not tried to follow the American example. Any expansion of First Nation lands would have to come via land claim settlement or parliamentary decrees. (211-212)

King's observation that US First Nations have subverted the American dream by buying land collectively is somewhat ironic. The purchase of these lands and their subsequent conversion to trust status remove them from the tax-base, disrupting the flow of currency generated for the state by colonial occupations and intervening in cycles of institutionalized colonialism. On the other hand, by removing this land from the market and returning it to the communities that these nations represent, King's example demonstrates how the essential economic structures of the state, propped up by national narratives like the American dream, can be hijacked to disrupt cycles of colonial enrichment. King's examples, including the one Kielburger uses, point to the settler anxiety that is exposed by Indigenous claims to land, even when that acquisition plays by the rules of the colonial marketplace.

The rigidity of economic policy that has emerged in late capitalism has caught settler nationals between the cultural assumption that Indigenous peoples would be unable to participate in the economic system and the vulnerability of that system to subversion wherein anti-colonial efforts can be disguised as legal land purchases. Despite the

limitations of this anti-colonial model for Canada, as King notes, the acquisition of land by Indigenous communities through court challenges is no less significant to the processes of Indigenous intervention. The acquisition of land by Indigenous peoples in Canada, by any means, unsettles assumptions about the completeness of Canada's colonial project, and as a result, exposes the assumptions of *terra nullius* at the heart of settler nationals' claims to a superior claim through the crown. For example, the Chippewa of Point Pelee and Pelee Island in Ontario – also known as the Caldwell First Nation – were granted a land claim settlement that included no specified lands, but instead awarded them “\$23.4 million dollars for the purpose of purchasing 4,500 acres of land over 25 years” (Mackey 71). The resulting outcry generated by local non-Indigenous inhabitants of the Chatham-Kent region in Ontario has been both explosive and angry (71-72). The idea that a landless Indigenous band could begin to rebuild a territory in the present turns on its head the logic of elimination on which settler claims to land are based.

If Indigenous people are getting land back – albeit through a capitalist free market – then settler claims to a superior position based on the completeness of the colonial project are called into question. Such actions take on an eerily sovereigntist tone that distinguishes Indigenous nationhood from ethnicity or culture, and makes the politics of multicultural inclusion seem less secure. In cases like this, Indigenous peoples behave less like a “culture” in the Canadian cultural mosaic, and more like a “nation,” which suggests certain rights which are in distinction from the epistemological omnipotence of the Canadian nation-state. As King observes:

What remains distressing is that much of what passes for public and political discourse on the future of native people is a discourse of anger, anger that native people are still here and still a ‘problem’ for white North America, anger that we have something non-natives don’t have, anger that after all the years of training, after all the years of having assimilation beaten into us, that we still prefer to remain Cree and Comanche, Seminole and Salish, Haida and Hopi, Blackfoot and Bellacoola. (213-214)

In the face of such steadfast dedication to the Nations of Indigenous North America, settler nationals and their claims to Canadian identity appear vulnerable. On *Canada Reads*, Kielburger’s use of one of King’s examples taps into the undercurrent of settler anxiety that has been shielded from view by exaltation and a rhetoric of inclusive multiculturalism. King’s anecdote about racism exposes the violence beneath national narratives of benevolence; accordingly, Kielburger’s use of it exposes the gap between the inclusive dialogue of the show and Indigenous people’s everyday experiences of racism. What King describes as anger at continued Indigenous presence reads as a symptom of anxiety about the unsettled expectations settlers had over their own ties to the land, and the implications of these ties to their interpersonal and intercultural relationships. Kielburger’s use of King’s examples demonstrates the extent of Indigenous subversion of economic logic, such as the acquisition of land and resistance to assimilatory policies, and break the singular epistemological frame of Western imperialism. It does so by forcing settler nationals into negotiations with Indigenous worldviews and identities that remain resilient in the face of ongoing assimilation.

During his opening statements on Day Four, Bailey read a comment from then Member of Parliament for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, Ontario, Larry Miller, that displaces this settler anxiety through a distinction between national subjects and recent immigrants: “I’m so tired of people trying to come here because they know it’s a good country and then wanting to change things” (Bailey quoting Miller, “Day Four,” 2015, 00:11:15-00:11:20). Miller’s comment not only indicates exasperation at the necessity of continued cultural tolerance, but it also conveys the anxiety that Canada’s social hierarchies are permeable to manipulation by the nation’s Others. While his comments are obviously xenophobic, they simultaneously reveal his deep anxiety about the stability and permanence of settler exaltation. Bailey’s opening statement continues as he responds to Miller:

Well migrants do change things. The French and the English sure did. So did the Italians and the Ukrainians; the Chinese and the Punjabis; the Vietnamese, the Yemenis, and we can only hope, the Syrians. Every Canadian puts his or her stamp on this country. We always have. That’s our right. But Larry Miller said something important in that otherwise horrific quote: he said ‘I’m so tired.’ It’s fatigue, it’s compassion fatigue. A lot of Canadians have grown tired of being nice to newcomers, that’s the barrier that we’re trying to break, and *Ru* reminded me of why migrants matter: the stories that have shaped us - sometimes intimate stories, sometimes epic stories. And *Ru* did that with a deep and moving beauty. (“Day Four,” 2015, 00:10:55-00:11:30)

Through *Ru*, Bailey reads Miller's comments as a "horrific" misrepresentation of the role migrants have played in the evolution of the Canadian nation-state. Notably, Bailey reminds Miller that the "founding races" are themselves migrants, undermining their status as exalted settler nationals. Bailey's reading of Miller's comment as a marker of "compassion fatigue," recalls Kielburger's configuration of compassion as a way to negotiate nationals' sense of the country's "scarcity or abundance." Through this frame, Miller's comments can be read as increased scarcity on the part of settler nationals, and an underlying anxiety about the role the nation's Others play in threatening these resources. Bailey's observation that Canadians are tired of "being nice" ultimately reflects an anxiety about the security of Anglo- and Franco-whiteness as the "founding races" of Canada.

The fatigue that Bailey reads in Miller's comments implies that the narrative of benevolence that inclusive multiculturalism projects is in fact an extension of national tolerance. But Miller's comments also allude to the growing insecurity of the position of settler nationals. Therefore, Bailey's reconfiguration of "the French and the English" as migrants is symptomatic of the way the colonial roots of exaltation are increasingly exposed by globalization and international migration. The absent presence of the land in both Miller's articulation of "here" as a "good country," and Bailey's claim that all migrants have a *right* to make their mark presumes the land as settled and available. Despite their differing perspectives, Bailey's and Miller's claims to the right to either change or preserve Canada both assume the colonial dispossession of Indigenous lands.

The Orenda is Less Inconvenient

The way panelists justified dispatching *The Inconvenient Indian* illustrates how settler nationals justify their claims to land in the face of competing Indigenous claims. These rationales ultimately reproduce what Mackey describes as a defense of settler fantasies of entitlement. On the program, Indigenous and settler conflict raised by King and Kielburger is transmogrified by the show's nationalist discourse to signify through a racial, rather than colonial, register. This transmogrification belies underlying colonial logics that manage Indigenous peoples' claims to land and the political implications of their histories for settler national exaltation. Through the oppositional structure of the *Canada Reads* debates, King's critique of Indigenous colonial experience is forced to differentiate itself from the nation's cultural Others, while colonial discourses rationalizing that difference are subverted by a racial register. King's work of non-fiction brings colonization into the present day and unsettles the narrative of the disappearing Indian passively affirmed by works of historical fiction.

Panelist Martha Wainwright's argument on Day Two appeals to the civil conviviality of the radio show to critique the appropriateness of the tone of King's book rather than its content. In this way, it anticipates the discourse of softness articulated by Kielburger and Bailey later in the program. By suggesting that King protests too bluntly, she characterizes Indigenous colonial histories as no more or less tragic than any other experience of oppression. Minimizing Indigenous experience through this comparison, Wainwright positions colonization against other migrant or equity-seeking projects in a way that eliminates the distinctiveness of King's argument.

I think that's precisely the problem with the book. It states the obvious, you know. And in many ways it could be summed up in a few sentences, the whole tone of the book white men came here and ruined, ruined the lives of the people who were here first, and it's devastating, and it's true. But I almost feel like the way he wrote the book you could interject a lot of other situations that could apply to people who are disenfranchised and oppressed in their own way, just by the nature of the way he lists the events. So to me it seemed obvious, and in that way it doesn't break barriers. It would have been more surprising if it had had more subtlety in its ideas. ("Day Two," 2015, 00:40:41-00:40:55)

Wainwright's paraphrase of the "whole tone of the book" racializes King's colonial critique by reducing English and French settlers to the amorphous, yet gendered, category of "white men." Read together, Wainwright's rhetoric deploys a blunt reading of King's book to reduce the nuance of his point – about the many ways in which colonization is still happening – and reproduces the perverse ignorance that considers Indigenous peoples as one more oppressed group among many.

The Inconvenient Indian's ability to break barriers is undermined in the *Canada Reads* debates through a series of comparisons that remove King's book from its historical context and attempt to naturalize it as part of a global history of violence that is so immense as to be invisible. In short, Wainwright is arguing that since everyone has experienced oppression, then no one's claim to redress is any more valid than anyone else's. This argument undoubtedly benefits the position of exalted subjects by breaking

the link between the enrichment of colonial settlers (and subsequent waves of arrivants) and the impoverishment of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Wainwright’s “but” after her admission that what King writes is “true” clearly illustrates the political neutralization of Indigenous sovereignty when it is framed by the nation. Before the word “but” Wainwright enacts Coulthard’s politics of recognition by addressing the historical weight of the evidence as inconsequential to the goal of breaking barriers. After the word “but,” she side-steps the political implications of that recognition with a comment about the tone of the book separated from its content. Lui agrees with both sides of Wainwright’s comments: both with the truth of what she says and with the lack of subtlety in King’s writing. She argues that *The Inconvenient Indian* sends readers the message that “the white guy sucks,” and she suggests that this will provoke a defensive response from those readers who are prejudiced against Indigenous peoples (“Day Two,” 2015, 00:44:30-00:44:35). Kielburger responds by arguing that the defensiveness of those readers is exactly the reason King’s book “has to win *Canada Reads*,” because we need to “shift an entire generation of thinking about how we understand our history in this country” (“Day Two,” 2015, 00:44:50-00:44:55).

Lui contests Kielburger’s claim that Canadians need King’s book to win by noting that “*The Orenda* won *Canada Reads* last year” (Lui, “Day Two,” 2015, 00:44:55), and implies that Boyden’s novel already dealt with “how we understand our history in this country” (Kielburger, “Day Two,” 2015, 00:44:50). Kielburger quickly rebuts Lui’s implication by noting that “unfortunately, when you buy *The Orenda* it doesn’t come with Wab Kinew at the dinner-table” (“Day Two,” 2015, 00:45:05). Kielburger’s tip of the hat

to Kinew illuminates the way a civil discourse of courteous tone participates in the show's structure of elimination: Kinew's rhetoric of mainstream reconciliation is represented by panelists on the show as more welcome and effective than King's blunt criticisms. And Kielburger's sly reference to Kinew lifts the veil on the double articulation of the show by reminding us that what wins *Canada Reads* is not the quality of the book but the skills of the debater. His comment is a challenge to the canonizing effect of *Canada Reads* and calls out the way critiques, like those of Hayden King, are overwritten by Kinew's appeal to mainstream rhetoric.

Bailey picks up this comparison between King's work of non-fiction and Boyden's work of fiction by arguing that while he "learned a lot from reading *The Inconvenient Indian*," he nonetheless "understood so much more from reading *The Orenda*" ("Day Two," 2015, 00:45:05-00:45:10). "The depth of the fictional representation of Indigenous life in that book" explains Bailey, "was so much richer for me...but in terms of just the depth of understanding and empathy that's required to break barriers, I think a different approach might work better" ("Day Two," 2015, 00:45:05-00:45:10).

In using Boyden's *The Orenda* to support their choice to vote off King's book, panelists reveal the way reconciliation is treated like an event that can be adequately addressed by one book in one year and can now be discarded in favour of other narratives, in this case those of empathy and inclusion. In this way, panelists' strategy to look back to previous winners of *Canada Reads* as a way of supporting their argument highlights the increased cultural capital *Canada Reads* bestows on its winners and

illuminates the discursive cycles through which cultural nationalism reasserts itself. Lui's comment that the issues presented by King's book were covered by, and perhaps even improved upon, by *The Orenda's* victory the previous year reflects an assumption that Indigenous and non-Indigenous conflict, as a social issue, is over and done with.

In short, a book about conflict between the Haudenosaunee and Wendat confederacies, troubled by historical inaccuracy and colonial stereotypes, leads readily into a naturalization of the Canadian national narrative as it stands, with no revisions. Furthermore, the way Knew articulated mainstream reconciliation on *Canada Reads* 2014 was through a politics of inclusion that imagined Indigenous nationhood within the Canadian nation-state. Following Bailey's aesthetic defence of *Ru's* quietness, his claim that *The Orenda's* victory did a better job of contesting Canada's colonial history than King's book of non-fiction supports the idea that Canadians prefer the aesthetics of fiction. Boyden's fiction offers Canadians the reassurance that no matter how real or disturbing their role in the colonial story, it remains just that, an artistically wrought story that makes art of the realities of colonization. As a result, fictional representations of Canadian colonial history maintain the logic of elimination in the face of increasingly visible forms of Indigenous resilience. Ultimately, Lui's comment suggests that despite their differences in form, content, and topic, King's non-fiction critique of the colonial project in North America is less likely to change Canadian perspectives than Boyden's *The Orenda*.

The critiques that Wainwright and Lui provide about the tone of King's book reveal how the civil discourse of inclusive multiculturalism requires the elimination of

blunt Indigenous specificity. The “normalizing logic” (Mackey 14) of settler civility re-centres whiteness as the arbiter of multicultural inclusion and its courteous and civil tone. These logics connect courtesy to land ownership because, as Mackey would say, they are based on the “legal assumption” that settler nationals’ “sovereignty is necessarily superior, stronger, and deeper than any claims of Indigenous peoples because *underlying title* belongs to the Crown” (Mackey 9). These fantasies characterize Wainwright’s and Lui’s critiques of *The Inconvenient Indian* as defensive responses to the disruption of unconscious, socially embedded “expectations of long-standing, settled expectations through repeated experiences ... of being ‘centered and dominant’” (Bell qtd. in Mackey 10). The literary judgements that they perform in these examples appear at first to be just subjective literary assessments; however, when we see their comments as part of a multidimensional colonial project, their subjective critiques become re-assertions of settler claims to land. Their critiques illustrate not only a common aversion to the idea of ongoing colonization, but also the danger that Indigenous peoples pose to the show’s civil sensibilities. Indigenous challenges to settler control of the land have the potential to destabilize the logical foundations of settlers’ exalted position over the nation’s Others. Instead, Indigenous challenges are racialized and compartmentalized through the language of inclusive multiculturalism. In this way, the political volatility of Indigenous challenges to settler fantasies of entitlement are diffused among racialized claims to national belonging. Wainwright’s and Lui’s comments indirectly demonstrate that *The Inconvenient Indian* could not possibly break barriers in this setting because to do so

would undermine the discursive presuppositions of *Canada Reads*'s nationalist framework.

Terra Nullius: The Place Where We Can All Be Canadian

As the previous examples suggest, Indigenous claims to land undermine settler nationals' position as centred and dominant. By challenging the logical foundations of exaltation, anti-colonial discourses reveal the justifications that settler nationals use to rationalize their superiority over both Indigenous peoples and other Canadians. Reframing settler nationals within their continued conflicts over land with Indigenous peoples illuminates the way inclusive multiculturalism transforms Indigenous anticolonial critiques into one of many cries against racial marginalization in Canadian society.

An example of how Indigenous presence and colonial discourses inflect and undermine rationalizations of white privilege in Canadian society came to the fore on Day Three, which explicitly examined white privilege. Kinew asked: "which of the characters in any of the books featured on the program experienced the most privilege?" ("Day Three," 2015, 40:00-00:40:10). The speed with which panelists agreed on the white male characters of Saucier's novel laid bare the implicit understanding of whiteness's exalted position. When Kielburger points out that the protagonists of Saucier's novel came from a place of privilege, by virtue of their "limitless resources" ("Day Three," 2015, 00:41:15-00:41:20), Wainwright responds by suggesting that "I think that you're thinking that they are privileged because they are not Native American, or an immigrant, or gay ... and that might just be how you see it, but the thing is they escaped society for a reason ... the idea

is that they built those cabins with their hands, and with their bodies ... and did it all on their own, without the help of the state” (“Day Three,” 2015, 00:42:45-00:42:54).

Kielburger’s explicit racialization of Saucier’s characters’ privilege invokes a defensive response from Wainwright who positions the white characters in Saucier’s novel as victimized by an overreaching state. Wainwright does not back down from this narrative of independence and self-reliance, but rather reframes this narrative by arguing that “they escaped society for a reason.” In this way, Wainwright’s argument implies that the white protagonists are not the beneficiaries of systemic privilege, but rather the victims of a presumptuous government that seeks to pilfer the fruits earned by their labour. Framed in this way, this argument draws a parallel between the labour of the white protagonists and that of immigrants like those An Tinh discussed earlier in the program. This homogenization of white and immigrant experience through labour is recognizable as a rhetorical strategy to dispel the connection between whiteness and the privilege of “limitless resources.” This argument deploys Mackey’s settler fantasies which attempt to justify entitlement by virtue of possession (“they built those cabins with their hands”), which does not explicitly disclose its corollary belief that possession is nine tenths of the law.

Kinew immediately reveals the fantastical nature of the logic of this argument when he reminds Wainwright that Saucier’s characters “still cashed their government cheques” (“Day Three,” 2015, 00:44:55-00:45:01). Kinew’s sly comment catches Wainwright off guard for long enough that her pause reveals the double meaning of Kinew’s observation. On the one hand, Kinew has refuted her assertion that Saucier’s

characters were not privileged because their resources were built or accrued through independent labour, a narrative that presents “improving the land” as a justification for private ownership. On the other hand, Kinew’s words are reminders of the stereotype of Indigenous peoples as dependants of the welfare state. His comment critiques Wainwright’s denials of white privilege when it is revealed that Saucier’s characters, too, depend on government hand-outs. Stereotypes such as these, Kielburger noted in his opening statement on “Day One,” are shockingly pervasive as “one in five [people] in Ontario don’t want an Aboriginal living next door,” and on the Prairies that number is “over one in three” (“Day Two,” 2015, 00:12:30-00:12:40). What’s more, Kielburger continues, “a third of Canadians believe Aboriginal people are mostly to blame for their economic problems” (“Day Two,” 2015, 00:12:40/00:12:52), so the double meaning of Kinew’s point in the context of the program, as well as its inversion of typical racialized social hierarchies, serve to underscore Wainwright’s pause as an example of what Mackey calls unsettled expectations. Bailey reveals the politics of the show’s civility by stepping into the role of moderator when he tries to draw the conversation away from Wainwright’s moment of embarrassment and back toward the unifying goals of the CBC show itself. As a strategy for improving his position on the gameshow, his gesture to Wainwright situates him favourably to the other panelists and the thousands of listeners beyond.

In his final statements on Day Three of the show, Bailey notes that Lui “talked the other day about feeling like it would be better, at some point in your life, to be white,” and further expanded on this point to say that he thinks “a lot of immigrants in this

country feel that way” (“Day Three,” 2015, 00:45:15-00:45:20). “*Ru*,” he continues, “opens a space so that we can all be Canadian” (“Day Three,” 2015, 00:45:25-00:45:35). Bailey’s explicit connection between race and national subjectivity highlights an ideal “space” where immigrants and settler nationals can find community in a shared history of being arrivants. It is telling that he identifies it as a “space” rather than a place, because his use of “space” is abstract, removed from being grounded in literal land. This rhetorical move forcibly includes Indigenous peoples in an inclusive multiculturalism premised on *terra nullius*. It regenerates the perverse ignorance whereby the land on which nationals, immigrants, and Indigenous peoples meet is detached from the history of how settler nationals gained those lands through colonization. Bailey’s utopic “space” where “we can all be Canadian” highlights a sanctioned ignorance about Canada’s colonial past which must be challenged if nationals and arrivants are to build a more equitable sense of community with Indigenous people.

When Bailey rescues Wainwright we can see clearly how the discursive structure of the gameshow, with its presuppositions of the nation as a civil space, papers over moments that connect the social architecture of race to settler expectations of ongoing *terra nullius*. By contrast, “when approached through relational autonomy,” Mackey suggests, “knowing how to think and relate may at times seem frightening and uncomfortable, because expected practices no longer work Expectations are unsettled Such moments of uncertainty and discomfort may indeed be productive and potentially decolonizing” (167). Wainwright’s moment is one such “uncomfortable” moment, and Bailey’s courtesy re-contains it within an abstract national space.

Mackey describes an alternative way of thinking about “this space” based on Haudenosaunee concepts embedded in the Two Row and Covenant Chain treaties described in the previous chapter. She invokes a space reminiscent of Bailey’s by focusing on the three rows of beads between the Two Row’s two purple bands, which represent the three links of the Covenant Chain that bind Indigenous and settler peoples as they share the river of life. Mackey suggests that part of the process of developing this space means shifting how settlers understand treaty relationships. By shifting from a static idea of treaty as a noun to treaty as a verb, Mackey reframes the relationship between these three categories – settler nationals, immigrants, and Indigenous peoples – as one between treaty peoples. By attending to the land and the treaties about land on which this “space” “where we can all be Canadian” is based, Mackey returns us to a concept of relational autonomy that recalibrates the hierarchies of inclusive multiculturalism. By placing the land as the centre of these relationships, settler peoples and arrivants can begin to understand their responsibilities not only to Indigenous peoples, but to the land to which Indigenous peoples seek to exercise their own responsibilities.

Thomas King provides a clever example of how re-centering land exposes the assumptions of white settler nationalism. In the opening to “As Long as the Grass is Green” (King, *The Inconvenient Indian* 215), King poses a fairly common question in Canadian national discourse, “What do Indians want?”:

Great question. The problem is, it is the wrong question to ask. While there are certainly Indians in North America, the Indians of this particular question don’t

exist. The Indians of this question are ‘the Indian’ that Canada and the United States have created for themselves. As long as the question is asked in that way, there will never be the possibility of an answer But I’d just as soon forget the question entirely. (215-216)

In a subversive literary move, King reframes this question so as to expose two things at once. He reveals the colonial logic that imagines Canadian space abstracted from literal land and outlines the racial hierarchy assumed in that (white) space. He continues:

There’s a better question to ask. One that will help us to understand the nature of contemporary North American Indian history. A question that we can ask of both the past and the present. What do whites want? ... The answer is quite simple, and it’s been in plain sight all along. Land. Whites want land The issue that came ashore with the French and the English and the Spanish, the issue that was the *raison d’être* for each of the colonies The issue has always been land. It will always be land until there isn’t a square foot of land left in North America that is controlled by native people. (215-216)

King reframes the question of what Indigenous people want from one of Euro-Canadian discourses of reconciliation to one that interrogates the intentions of reconciliation (to gain more land) and that makes explicit the logic of elimination implied by a stuck-in-history idea of treaty-making. Bailey’s comment imagines the concept of “Canadian” as a space where disparate peoples can find a sense of belonging, whereas King’s question re-grounds that “space” on the land with its history of violent accumulation. This re-

grounding shifts the paradigm from the inclusivity of multiculturalism to the kind of relational autonomies that would be negotiated if we understood “treaty” as a verb.

Conclusion:

So what does *Ru*'s victory mean? Bailey's defense of *Ru* on Day Four left a lot unresolved, which made the victory seem less conclusive than in other years. The debates of the *Canada Reads* 2015 season demonstrate how strategic readings of Canadian literature circulate through the double articulation of radio to win the game. *Ru*'s victory, and the debates that led up to it, point to the way the discourse of inclusive multiculturalism reproduces hierarchies of power that manage challenges to the exalted status of white civility. The claims of Indigenous peoples to land, which potentially destabilize Canada's narratives of benevolence, are transformed by the civil discourse of inclusive multiculturalism into claims for greater social and political inclusion. Indigenous challenges to ongoing colonization are shifted into the language of race, which minimizes their political volatility and maintains an image of cultural democracy where no marginalized group has priority over any other. In this way, the image of Canadian benevolence is reproduced and reaffirmed by its circulation between the panelists sitting around the table and the mass Canadian audience listening in.

Explicitly, *Ru*'s victory highlights a sense of dissatisfaction where there should be resolution, and by extension points to the paradoxical structure of *Canada Reads* itself. Rather than the comforting sense that “progress” has been made, that a barrier is now ready to be broken, *Ru*'s victory reaffirmed a tired and disillusioned narrative of

inclusivity and multiculturalism. By placing Bailey's and Thúy's victory in a dialogue with Kinew's and Boyden's victory the previous season, we can see patterns emerging in the way the national habitus reflects particular predispositions for a discourse of Canadian literature that addresses social justice topics of racism, sexism, xenophobia, and homophobia in ways that presume that Indigenous sovereignty no longer exists.

The kind of critiques that King poses in *The Inconvenient Indian* versus the kind of imagined history that Boyden depicts in *The Orenda* are distinguishable by the way they variously implicate the reader and the nation in the violence of colonization. On the one hand, Boyden's fiction alludes to a history of explicit elimination in the violence between Indigenous peoples that, as fiction, leaves room for interpretation. On the other hand, King's non-fiction leaves no room for this kind of historical interpretation in a way that is obtrusive to Canadian sensibilities. The presumption that panelists, and by extension the Canadian listening audience, are here with the best of intentions is rudely contradicted. More notably, the differences between these two seasons illuminate where particular discursive paths have been closed off or left unpursued. The treatment of these texts over two consecutive years contrasts with the well-worn discursive paths of reconciliation or multiculturalism that Canadian readers travel to make sense of colonial history and experience. Seeing the way colonial discourse is funneled into either inclusive multiculturalism or reconciliation reveals ongoing processes of race management that seek to collectively maintain a colonial logic of elimination and imagine Indigenous nationhood within the socio-cultural matrix of the Canadian nation-state. By interjecting new ways of imagining the peoples on the land that make up Canada's imagined

community, it is possible to disrupt the reproduction of these discursive logics and instead begin to articulate new ways of relating to one another as we share this space. By engaging with the realities of ongoing colonial violence and embracing the colonial intimacies shared by Indigenous peoples and arrivants, Canadians can begin to think outside of the racial and ethnic nationalisms rationalized by inclusive multiculturalism. Rather than reproduce white civility through narratives of benevolence and equality, it may be possible for settlers to reimagine themselves as refugees whose ancestors anxiously sought to protect themselves as the first victims of systemic marginalization in Europe. Perhaps there is a chance that settlers will stop responding to Indigenous sovereignty out of fear and instead reject the systems of power that reproduce their continued anxiety. Perhaps at this point we can begin to imagine the society that was envisioned in treaty relationships, opening up our discourse to other worldviews and not just paying lip-service to an abstract idea of the nation as an all-inclusive civil space.

Chapter Three

Canada Reads (2016), Not India Reads, or Location, Location, Location

Canada Reads 2016 featured a new host, radio personality Gill Deacon, and a new Prime Minister after Justin Trudeau's electoral victory the previous October. Unlike the previous year in which the fearmongering of Stephen Harper's campaign bled into the discussions in the studio, this season featured a palpably optimistic outlook from panelists gathered around the table. The language and tone of the 2016 season fit the program's theme, "Starting Over," like a glove. The premise reflected a sense of renaissance in part due to the conclusion of Harper's eight-year term as Prime Minister, and in part due to the stark contrast that Justin Trudeau's election symbolized against the hyper-conservative rhetoric of the US election flooding the Canadian media.

Panelists on the 2016 season included actor and director Vinay Virmani; Olympic multi-medalist Clara Hughes; travel entrepreneur Bruce Poon Tip; feminist philanthropist Farah Mohamed; and former-WWE wrestler Adam Copeland. Despite the competitive atmosphere, these panelists debated the theme of "Starting Over" with a tone of optimism and conviviality that exemplified the program's civil discourse. The books featured embodied "starting over" in a variety of ways. For example, Michael Winters's novel *Minister Without Portfolio* (2013) is about a Canadian man who runs away from a bad break-up to join the military before returning to Canada to start a new life. Lawrence Hill's *The Illegal* (2015) explicitly engages with starting over by following an elite marathon runner and refugee, Keita Ali, from persecution in the fictional country of Zantoroland to the precarious life of an illegal alien living in the much wealthier New

Freedom State (NFS), then finally as a citizen of NFS. Hill's novel brilliantly illustrates the guiding theme through a speculative narrative that explores international displacement and mass-refugee movement through fictional countries in the (then) futuristic year 2018. Other books spoke to the theme on a more personal level. *Bone and Bread* (2013) by Saleema Nawaz, and *The Hero's Walk* (2000) by Anita Rau Badami both grappled with "starting over" by exploring the personal experiences of overcoming family tragedy and personal prejudice. Similarly, Tracey Lindberg's *Birdie* (2015) reflected the 2016 theme through the story of Bernice "Birdie" Meetoos as she moves between the Cree dream world and the nightmares of Indigenous womanhood in contemporary Canadian society.

This chapter examines the double articulation of the debates that led up to the victory of Lawrence Hill's *The Illegal*, defended by Clara Hughes. I track and evaluate the constrained universality of the show's shift toward a transnational sense of imagined community which I will call speculative transnationalism. Speculative transnationalism as I am using it here is a form of nationalism that appeals to the way globalization fosters multiple simultaneous national identities that transgress (but also refer to) the geopolitical boundaries of traditional nation-states. In the *Canada Reads* debates of this season, the contestants repeatedly project a nationalist discourse of multiculturalism on to a global and cosmopolitan stage, a gesture beyond Westphalian nationalism that is in fact contained by a traditional configuration of citizenship.⁶ I examine the way a transnational

⁶ There are large bodies of critical literature pertaining to several of the terms that I have used here, including: cosmopolitanism, globalization, and transnationalism. The 2016 panelists on the show are not engaging with these bodies of thought. I call their gesture to this domain "speculative transnationalism" because it abstracts from the literal geographies of nation-states and their interrelations, and imagines Canadian multiculturalism as constituting a universally appealing global refuge.

framework of Canadian-ness foregrounds panelists' debates over the roles and responsibilities of the nation-state to the global community, and in particular in response to the Syrian refugee crisis. Unlike in previous seasons where books not set in Canada were seen as "less Canadian," on the 2016 season, narratives that related Canadian identity to a model of white civility, or whose topics were seen to concern too narrow a scope of Canadian society (despite their domestic setting) were seen as exclusionary. In effect, the disappearance of narratives about white settler protagonists and about Indigenous experience in Canada reinforced the structure of elimination inherent in the show's shift from diverse critiques of the nation toward a universal narrative of Canada as a refuge.

I consider Gillian Roberts's observation that through the export of cultural products and the import of international prestige, Canadian literature and culture solidify and legitimize themselves through the global marketplace. It is through this interaction with the international community that I argue Canadian transnationalism projects a sense of itself that imagines ongoing colonization as settled. This projection is problematic because it reproduces the structure of elimination present in national debates about inclusive multiculturalism while heading off Indigenous sovereignty claims on the international stage. I argue that this elimination perpetuates the legacy of *terra nullius* through a narrative of benevolence that obscures Indigenous sovereignty and projects an image of Canada as settled. More specifically, I argue that the debates about Canada as a global refuge abstract the nation from the geopolitical borders of the state and shift that focus toward the network of international affiliations shared by Canada's immigrant

population. I argue that the appeal to a transnational Canadian narrative that wins out on this season overwrites the inherent conflict between Indigenous sovereignty and Canadian identity with an international image of Canada as a coherent safe haven.

By attacking the notion that the colony is settled, thoughtful criticism can develop a transcolonial, rather than transnational, perspective that holistically reflects both the obligations of Canada to the global community as well as the inherent violence of acting on this obligation without a clear sense of Indigenous sovereignty. By removing the nation as the model for imagined community, it is possible to reframe the conflict in such a way as to foster relational autonomy in ways that can resist the violence of elimination.

This chapter is broken down into four sections that read examples from the debates about *Minister without Portfolio*, *The Hero's Walk*, *The Illegal*, and *Birdie* as double articulations of panelists' strategic appeal to their Canadian audience's desire to see Canada distinguished in a transnational context by its treatment of refugees, and the way this desire obscures the question of land and Indigenous rights in Canada. While transnationalism seems more inclusive and universal than multiculturalism, the shift toward a speculative transnationalism in this season points to the way the national focus of the show's debates nonetheless imposes borders on this seeming universality, and suggests the continuation of structures of elimination by maintaining an abstracted link to colonial territories, while eliminating Indigenous and settler conflict from our projections of benevolence.

Speculative Transnationalism: Putting Canada in the World

Virmani's opening statement on Day One emphasizes the importance of Canada in a global context. He claims, "the map of Canada today is the map of the world" ("Day One," 2016, 00:09:15-00:09:20), a claim shared by Hughes who rebutted Poon Tip's assertion that the more Canadian books are those set in Canada by clarifying that "A Canadian writer is a Canadian writer" ("Day Two," 2016, 00:34:20-00:34:25) regardless of where the plot of the novel takes place. Furthermore, Hughes clarifies her stance by noting the multicultural and multinational demographics of her hometown: "I'm from Winnipeg, I'm from a cornucopia of humanity, my hometown represents the entire world and it's in Canada, so for me [setting is] not a factor" (Hughes, "Day Two," 2016, 00:34:20-00:34:25). Both panelists explicitly articulate the nation through its intimate connections to a multi-national, multi-ethnic, and otherwise intersectional global community. I argue that this discourse reflects a long history of Canada turning to the international community for a clarifying sense of itself. "International prizes have everything to do with the increasing confidence in 'CanLit's' exportability," writes Gillian Roberts; "these celebrations generated outside the nation ultimately sold, and fed, the nation back to itself, as Canadian readers were encouraged by external arbiters to cultivate a taste for their own nation's products and to welcome their own culture and its consumption" (16-17). For example, Margaret Atwood's fame in Canada has been enhanced by her global sales success. In fact, Atwood, among others, directly benefited from federally sponsored programs that injected Canadian authors into international literary markets as a project of cultural diplomacy. The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade's (DFAIT) Understanding Canada program (UC) (mid 1970s-

2012), for example, increased the international reputation of Canadian authors by making their books widely available (and affordable) in translation. Surprisingly, little funding flowed to international scholarship on Canadian literature, and as Christl Verduyn notes in her critique of one such program, “international scholars of Canadian literature produced and published important work despite the exclusion of literary studies as a priority funding area” (25).⁷ The international and domestic reputations of Canadian authors interact with one another through the discourse of a Canadian cultural nationalism that is explicitly funded by the state. As a result, programs like UC clarify the links between literature, culture, and global trade priorities in a way that underscores the similar motivations between ongoing colonization and a sense of unity within a diverse and transnational population. Returning to *Canada Reads*, Virmani’s and Hughes’s arguments reflect a strategic reading which, in the national context of the show, speculates a transnational perspective through a multicultural framework of liberal nationalism.

Virmani’s metaphor goes so far as to imprint the “map of the world” on the geopolitical boundaries of the country in a way that lays bare the quasi-tangibility of transnationalism in the national imaginary. To pick on Virmani’s reductive metaphor for a moment, the claim that the world is in Canada implicitly suggests the inverse: “the map of the world today, is the map of Canada.” The distinction is not immediately obvious, but the idea that Canada is a microcosm for the world is quite different from suggesting that the world is a microcosm, or macrocosm, of Canada. The inversion of Virmani’s

⁷ See Tanti et al., *Beyond Understanding Canada* (2017) for more information.

metaphor, while not obvious in the context of the show, underscores the disappearance of the land itself as an explicit signifier of Canada, and instead demonstrates a shift toward a nationalism that looks “beyond the nation... in order to rethink, rework, and resist what global capitalism has meant for those excluded from the dominant within nation-states, since the nation-state and neo-liberal models of globalization are evermore similar” (Dobson xvii-xviii). The success of a speculative transnational discourse among the panelists at the table, compared to the relative failure of Copeland’s invocation of white civility and cultural authenticity and Poon Tip’s settler-colonial critique, suggests that the emphasis on social unity and a universal sense of humanity limited the visibility of both whiteness and Indigenous sovereignty in ways that fit this narrative.

‘He is Canadian’ and Other Oversimplifications

The end of Day One and the voting off of Michael Winters’s *Minister Without Portfolio* demonstrates the way that the 2016 season’s transnational focus highlights the unpopularity of patriarchal whiteness in conversations about the benevolence of Canadians. Panelists’ reactions to Copeland’s evocations of white masculinity point to a taste for characterizations of the nation as multicultural and globally conscious, in ways that go beyond clichés of authenticity. Moreover, in this example inclusive multiculturalism is proposed by the other panelists as a viable replacement for white civility, despite the privileged social position of whiteness in Canadian society. Copeland opines:

Well I feel like the most Canadian book was eliminated ... I truly feel like the most Canadian book is now gone. It doesn't take place in another country for the entire book. It deals with real issues. People don't choke on chicken bones and die; people don't soil beds while they go on dream quests; people don't run marathons to get their sister out of the Pink Palace; and don't complain about themselves and their lives the entire book What Henry did was look at himself in the mirror and realize he's very flawed in a very real way ... it's real conversation and it's written that way. It's not sensationalistic: you would meet Henry on the street. I don't know how many of these other characters you would actually meet on the street. He *is* Canadian. You'd see him in the bar. You'd watch hockey with him. He's very relatable, at least to me. ("Day One," 2016, 00:51:10-00:51:25)

With an emphasis on the clichés of Canadian national symbolism, Copeland leans on old understandings of national subjectivity that appear to position whiteness as the standard type. Copeland's references to the normativity of the protagonist and the accessibility of the narrative underscores the exaltation of whiteness as the dominant national narrative. Meanwhile, Copeland's denunciations of the other books at the table as not representative of "real issues" seek to degrade these narratives as something other than Canadian. Copeland's allusions to a framework of national and socio-political authenticity reflect the same sense of cultural anxiety as settler fantasies of entitlement and possession; Copeland's argument focuses on the question of who is most Canadian and jealously guards it against other national identities brought together by globalization. Copeland

points to the ill-fittingness of both confident assertions of national identity and the nation as a system for adequately responding to the realities of global migration. His claim that going to the bar and watching hockey represent acts of pure nationalism underscores the regional focus of conservative Canadian-ness that, while supported by the CBC mandate, constrains ways of understanding whiteness in Canada outside (or beyond) a colonial frame. Finally, Copeland – a former wrestler and a physically imposing figure of white masculinity – ties himself to Henry, and by extension Canadian identity, by claiming that “he’s very relatable, at least to me.” Embedded in Copeland’s reasoning is a configuration of the nation and the kinds of identities it can bestow. For one thing, Copeland conflates the nation with the geopolitical boundaries of the state, and alludes to – or presumes – performances of nationalism that reflect the dominant population of that conceptual territory.

Furthermore, in response to Deacon’s question — should the winning book be set in Canada? (“Day Two,” 2016, 00:29:45-00:29:55) — Copeland replies: “it’s a tough question. I feel like the book could take place anywhere, but I feel like a book that takes place in Canada is obviously more Canadian, though, just due to geography.” (“Day Two,” 2016, 00:30:10-00:30:15). Copeland’s synonymizing of geography with nationalism ignores the way *Birdie* (also set in Canada) troubles the settled-ness of whiteness on the land. Copeland’s comments illustrate the way reconciliation, as it is figured in this discussion of the nation, compartmentalizes and contains the challenges posed by Indigenous presence to narratives of white settler possession. The comments from other panelists illustrate the balancing of mainstream reconciliation, like Wab

Kinew's in 2014, with narratives of Canada as a global refuge by ignoring ongoing colonial conflicts. Reconciliation and immigration, on this season, are configured as completely unrelated topics.

Poon Tip's, Mohamed's, and Virmani's considerations of Lindberg's *Birdie* illustrate the way views of the nation from a transnational perspective minimize Indigenous challenges to ongoing colonization by assimilating Indigenous peoples as "Canadian" in the context of Canada's international relations with other nations abroad. These examples highlight the way Canadian colonial violence is effectively neutralized by narratives of imagined community that emphasize the global presence of Canada but eliminate the contested nature of the land that country occupies.

Poon Tip, in his defence of *Birdie*, argues that Indigenous peoples are obscured from critical view like neglected family members – using the same universal kinship metaphor that Hughes uses to win the game – and he argues that without a sense of kinship, Canadians will continue to misunderstand reconciliation. Mohamed, in contrast, is concerned that Lindberg's novel perpetuates negative stereotypes of Indigenous women as chronically downtrodden, suggesting that there was an opportunity to highlight positive narratives of Indigenous women instead. Virmani roots the topicality of *Birdie* in a legacy of racism and sexism but suggests that literature is not the way to engage with these problems. In this case, Poon Tip is calling attention to the literal and figurative disappearance of Indigenous women and girls from national and international view. Mohamed's and Virmani's rebuttals of Poon Tip's strategy point to Lindberg's writing style to argue that the issue could be represented better by another author, and that

literature is not an adequate response to this issue. Virmani advocates for the universality of familial bonds as a means of “starting over,” but on such a personal level that the pervasiveness of missing and murdered Indigenous women becomes difficult to see. Alternatively, Poon Tip’s reading of *Birdie* does not fit the transnational perspective of the 2016 season because Indigenous peoples disrupt the implied universality of occupying multiple national identities simultaneously. *Birdie* forces panelists to account for Indigenous presence in their representations of Canada as a global refuge, and reminds panelists that benevolence is an exertion of power, the same power that is enhanced by the continuation of colonial systems that leave Indigenous women particularly vulnerable to elimination.

Poon Tip’s introductory defence of Lindberg’s novel on Day One characterizes reconciliation as a national issue but struggles to explain how the colonial roots of the Canadian nation-state can be reconciled with Indigenous sovereignty. Despite the dominance of rhetorical arguments about the responsibilities of Canadians to global refugees, *Birdie* briefly forced panelists to shift their perspective from Canada as a refuge to Canada as a country obligated by unresolved colonial relationships. Poon Tip notably attempts to insert his argument into the universalizing discourse of the debate by incorporating an Indigenous understanding of kinship. He argues:

Reconciliation is one of the biggest social and cultural issues we face as a nation. It is also misunderstood by the vast majority of Canadians. One of the central messages of *Birdie* is *Wahkohtowin*; that all human beings treat each other like relatives, that we have a reciprocal obligation to take care of one another, as if we

were universally bound by family ties. This book humanizes us. It humanizes Indigenous women and young Indigenous girls so that we think of them as relatives because we care about our relatives. We don't let our relatives get murdered or go missing. *Birdie's* not just a book, it is a call to action on a national level, and it took Tracy Lindberg 20 years to write it. It is without a doubt the book every Canadian should read. ("Day One," 2016, 00:13:45-00:13:55)

While certainly well intentioned, Poon Tip's opening classification of reconciliation as one of many "social and cultural issues" limits the implications of Indigenous and settler redress to configurations within the existing arrangements of the nation-state. Poon Tip's introduction of the Cree word *Wahkohtowin* can be read as an attempt to give Canadians a new way of thinking about reconciliation that is as yet unrepresented in English. Poon Tip clarifies a conceptual distance between Indigenous knowledge systems and Canadian ones, but Canadians' relative ignorance of these knowledge systems makes them unable to gauge how they would use such Indigenous concepts for rethinking the relationships and responsibilities of a differently imagined Canada. Poon Tip's reference to *Wahkohtowin* risks being misunderstood because in the context of the radio show he is unable to address the many national presumptions that make it useful to his argument. The way other panelists draw on the concept of kinship in their own arguments suggests that they are limited to Western conceptions of the family unit or otherwise depend on broad generalizations of "community." As Farah Mohamed explains near the end of Day One, "*Birdie* surprised me the most. I was really hoping, while I think it's an important piece of literature ... I was really hoping that it would be a book that would not be like

the stories we've heard. I'm so desperate to read a story about an Aboriginal woman who doesn't necessarily go through all this" ("Day One," 2016, 00:41:40-00:41:50).

Mohamed's desire for a narrative about Indigenous women that is more positive ignores and eliminates the very real experiences that *Birdie* represents: "all the positive stuff that happens in the aboriginal community is what I was hoping this book would be about ... I think it was a missed opportunity not to talk about some of the positive stuff that happens in Aboriginal communities across this country that we all need to know more about" ("Day One," 2016, 00:41:40-00:41:50). Her concern that *Birdie* perpetuates negative stereotypes about Indigenous peoples is not without reason, but Mohamed's lament for the missed opportunity that is Lindberg's novel uses "positive stuff" to eliminate the positive potential of Lindberg's representation of Indigenous women's resilience.

Lindberg's novel, both in content and form, is not meant to reassure Canadians that "positive stuff" happens in Indigenous communities; rather, *Birdie* addresses a systemic issue that right up until the 2016 program had been regarded by the Harper government as a "criminal" problem rather than a "sociological" one. In the context of the show, however, Mohamed's comments on the one hand celebrate the resilience of Indigenous women, and on the other hand encourage the idea that the marginalization of Indigenous women is improving, and is therefore not as pressing as other equity-seeking projects.

As Dobson notes, "with the proliferation of what has been called 'minority' writing, the margins are used not only to identify an 'Other' to the nation ... but also to change in the nation itself. This writing, while disrupting norms, recognizes that racial privilege persists and even proliferates, although the function of this writing may be

changing anew in today's Canada" (xiii). This is something Anouk Lang describes in her article on Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road* and its appearance on the 2006 season of the show. In her analysis, Lang suggests that when featured on *Canada Reads* books are recontextualized "within a nationalist multicultural framework," a "generally reassuring" image of the nation in which Canadians see their "differences ironed out" (124). While Mohamed's critique highlights Lindberg's potential over-reliance on stereotypes of Indigenous poverty and incivility, her comments risk circulating through the panelists and audience in ways that reinforce conservative national narratives of Indigenous and settler relations as overdone, as no longer reflective of the multicultural realities of the contemporary population.

Deacon asks: "Is *Birdie* an accessible enough read for readers in order to make [reconciliation] happen?" ("Day Two," 2016, 00:35:40-00:35:45). Mohamed's and Virmani's responses demonstrate an ambivalence toward Lindberg's novel that makes clear the underlying criteria for determining the book all Canadians should read. The question imagines reconciliation as a response to colonization, itself positioned here as a commemorative event as opposed to an ongoing action. The issue with *Birdie*'s approach to this task, they argue, is its unconventional narrative style.

The panelists of this season generally agree that the winning book must first and foremost be "beautiful" or "well written." The way panelists interpret what qualifies as a "well written book" seems to be a vague combination of plot and narrative style that is also poetically beautiful. Second, the winning book must be topical. In other words, the winning book should be relevant to current social and cultural politics, and it should be

accessible to Canadians with various levels of reading knowledge. Finally, the topicality of the winning book should respond to the season's guiding premise. Mohamed's and Virmani's critiques of *Birdie*'s accessibility underscores the kinds of aesthetic biases that pre-empt writing styles outside of a Western English tradition. As Mohamed replies to Deacon's question:

No, I don't think it is. I think it's an important book ... but ultimately, I think that if you strip away some of the issues in the book like reconciliation, I don't know if that would be the story of most Indigenous women ... I don't know that most people could relate to this book. I found it very hard to relate to. I found it very difficult to read ... I think that to be a book that is relatable, it's got to be an issue that's really important, and this book raises a really important issue, there's no doubt about it, but does it represent? Does it capture? ... I don't think it does, and I think most people would struggle with this book, and I had to struggle to get to the end of this book, and that doesn't mean that I'm a bad reader or a good reader, it just says a lot about the book itself. ("Day Two," 2016, 00:35:45-00:35:55)

Echoing her response from the previous day, Mohamed's comments point to a major concern of the show: if Canadians do not enjoy reading (or cannot get through) the book in question then how can they be expected to appreciate (or even understand) its topicality?

Virmani's response to Deacon's question about the accessibility of *Birdie* on Day Two exemplifies this concern. While a book by an Indigenous author defended by an argument about protection for Indigenous women is topical, the writing limits its

competitiveness on a literary award show. The disruptive presence Indigenous peoples pose to a transnational framework is eliminated by critiques of the writing that use a Western understanding of “fiction” to rationalize subjective claims. Like Mohamed, Virmani feels that Lindberg’s novel is not well written and that it draws too much on the topicality of reconciliation. Virmani argues:

While disorientation can be a very powerful storytelling tool, this book relies on far too many devices. I felt the narrative was messy. I felt it was chaotic ... The first hundred pages are very difficult to get through— let’s be clear about one thing here: we’re talking about books. We’re talking about fiction Let’s leave topicality aside for a second, Bruce, because I feel like a lot of your arguments are just how topical your book is ... Let’s talk about narrative; talk about characters ... Let’s talk about accessibility. Let’s talk about these books as works of fiction. ... I believe *Birdie* brings up such an important issue — it is a national disgrace. Absolutely, it is. The plight of Indigenous women is a national disgrace that is deep rooted in racism, in sexism ... [but] we are talking about fiction ... and you’re relying far too much on this one book ... I’m afraid people will not invest in the issue ...” (“Day Two,” 2016, 00:36:45-00:36:55)

Like Mohamed, Virmani’s argument begins by suggesting that while *Birdie* brings up an important issue, it doesn’t represent it well. Instead, Virmani lists and re-lists the essential elements of an ostensibly “good” and “accessible” representation of this issue. The focus Virmani pays to elements of storytelling drawn exclusively from Western literary tradition underscores the narrowness of the range of expression open to Indigenous

authors writing in English in Canada. *Birdie*'s unconventional narrative form is set up to fail in Virmani's evaluation of good writing. *Birdie* is stylistically resistant to Western modes of thinking embedded in English literary traditions. As Poon Tip argues in defence of Lindberg's novel,

The path to reconciliation for us is compassion. You know we're a charitable nation in Canada. We throw money at things when we want to fix them. Compassion is very different. Understanding how other people live is what *Birdie* gives you the opportunity to do – to understand the real life of Aboriginal women. It gives you a window into that. *Birdie*'s not going to change or make reconciliation happen overnight, but it's going to be a path for people to understand how Indigenous people live in this country. But in defense of how you read it ... Indigenous people are descendants of nomads; they don't look at time the same way as we do; the amount of their time based on places; and the way they felt. So for you to read it in a certain way and expect a linear story as a script is colonizing the book, trying to make the book to respond how you want it to respond. ("Day Two," 2016, 00:38:25-00:38:45)

However well we may follow Poon Tip's explanation of Indigenous relationships to time and place, he makes clear the colonial subtext of Mohamed's and Virmani's critiques. Poon Tip places debates about reconciliation and missing and murdered Indigenous women in conversation with acts of colonization. By combining these elements in his defence, Poon Tip illustrates how Indigenous relationships to time and place disrupt the seeming universality of the 2016 season's transnational discourse. By reframing

accusations of “bad writing” as attempts to colonize the book, Poon Tip illuminates the way the elimination structure of the show limits the visibility of missing and murdered Indigenous women as a topic of debate in a national context. Unlike Mohamed, Virmani characterizes the “plight of Indigenous women” as a “national disgrace” deeply rooted in “racism and sexism.” His comments register in the discourse of racialized marginalization endemic to the incorporating and settling effect of inclusive multiculturalism. By removing the “plight of Indigenous women” from the intergenerational effects of colonial violence and instead framing it in registers of race and gender, Virmani’s argument obscures the roots of that racism and sexism to focus on the symptoms rather than the disease. Moreover, Poon Tip’s assertion that Mohamed’s and Virmani’s critiques of *Birdie* represent attempts to colonize the book turns the mirror on the colonial assumptions that frame their arguments as panelists and the assumptions they project about the CBC audience.

It’s worth noting that Virmani’s defence of *The Hero’s Walk* relies firmly on the acceptance of a transnational perspective that is unbound by links between the nation, land, and conflicts over that land. He describes Rau Badami’s novel as “a timeless piece of writing ... a generational story ... because it deals with the problem of acceptance and tolerance and the universal problem of ... empathy. It teaches us first to look inward, to accept our own, to accept our family” (“Day One,” 2016, 00:37:25-00:37:25). Virmani’s reliance on an idea of universalism calls into question the objectivity of his desire to neutralize *Birdie*’s topicality by focusing on writing style. Since Lindberg’s novel explores the dislocated and fractured familial experiences of her protagonist, Bernice, her

representation of the familial experience, so valued by Virmani, reveals the speciousness of his argument. The focus that *Birdie* places on the effects of colonialism shifts the discursive register of the conversation away from the universalisms implied by “transnationalism” and back toward a discourse of nationalism tied to the land and its histories.

Virmani’s perspective requires a disconnection between transnational configurations of nationalism, an extension of Benedict Anderson’s ideas of the nation as based in imagination rather than literal place, and place-specific thinking. We can see this very clearly when Virmani argues that it doesn’t matter “whether it’s the Bay of Bengal or Brampton” (“Day One,” 2016, 00:37:27-00:37:34). By equating Brampton and India, Virmani’s allusion to the transnational population of the former community inadvertently overwrites the presence of Indigenous peoples whose histories are obscured by this version of transnationalism. Furthermore, Badami’s novel takes up Indigenous environmental politics in India, so Virmani’s strategic deployment of transnationalism must distance itself from the elements of the novel he is defending. Daniel Coleman argues this point in “Indigenous Place and Diaspora Space: Of Literalism and Abstraction” (2016) through a reading of the ways in which diasporic spaces can colonize Indigenous place through an abstraction of the land. Traditionally the territory of the Wendat, Haudenosaunee, and Mississauga peoples, Brampton as it is presented by Virmani’s transnational rhetoric as both a settled “Canadian” city and a location inflected by the diasporic consciousness of its population. Yet Virmani’s connection breaks down when one considers the exclusion of Indigenous forms of nationalism from a transnational

framework. The result of this exclusion is to suggest that the global and multicultural rhetoric of Virmani's comments implicitly participates in an ongoing colonial project. In this example, Brampton is both a location and a transnational population, one that assumes the elimination of Indigenous peoples from this space, concretized as both unquestioningly Canadian and as a space that is concerned with how people identify through multiple national communities. The cosmopolitan logic of Virmani's comment makes visible the way in which speculative transnationalism abstracts the land while nonetheless signaling the importance of place as part of a negotiation between the international and the local through the rhetorics of cosmopolitanism.

Collectively, these examples suggest that the discourse of the *Canada Reads* 2016 program is governed by a transnational perspective that obscures Canadian colonial violence in exchange for a multicultural, globalized perspective. Poon Tip's argument for a Canada "starting over" through *Wahkohtowin*, coupled with his assertions for anti-colonial readings of *Birdie*, illustrate the way transnational discourse is disrupted by the inclusion of Indigenous narratives. Lindberg's novel puts the lie to arguments for universal experiences that transcend national communities and geopolitical boundaries. In particular, the way *Birdie* resists Virmani's claims to a universal familial experience reflects the same colonial assumptions as a characterization of the novel's style as "messy" and "chaotic." The panelists' treatment of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples is discursively undermined by the program's discourse of cultural nationalism which transmogrifies Indigenous understandings of kinship – which extend beyond human-to-human relations – into Western models of kinship, most dominantly through

the image of the nuclear family. This transmogrification is a clear example of the continuation of the colonial logic of elimination which has embedded the once-explicit projects of assimilation – attacks on traditional Indigenous cultural and familial systems – into the modes of cultural production and consumption that today reproduce normative models of national subjectivity.

This is *Canada Reads*, Not *India Reads*

Like Copeland, Poon Tip argued on Day Two that the winning book should be set in Canada. What is notable about Poon Tip's reply to Deacon's question is the way he explains his position using a language of social justice. Poon Tip responds:

I think this is *Canada Reads*. I think the books should be relevant to Canada. I think that it's a big responsibility to be on *Canada Reads* because the higher purpose is finding a book that every Canadian should read. [It] should have the power to move the dial, somehow, in Canadian society, and I think [setting is] just relevant. I loved [*The Hero's Walk*] and she is an amazing writer, and I could critique things about the book because we all kind of read books to create defences ... it's a good book, but I think [being set in Canada] is a big deal ... this isn't 'India Reads' ... it's *Canada Reads*. (Poon Tip, "Day Two," 2016, 00:32:45-00:32:55)

As part of his effort to argue for *Birdie* against explicitly transnational books, Poon Tip suggests that a book not set in Canada may not be relevant to "every Canadian." Poon Tip's struggle to articulate a reason why he feels a book set in Canada is more likely to

“move the dial ... in Canadian society” reveals a lot about the oblique ways “Canada” registers. Poon Tip’s difficulty illustrates a discursive grey area between the transnational discourse of the 2016 season and the colonial discourse registered in *Birdie*. Poon Tip’s assertion that “this isn’t ‘India Reads,’ it’s *Canada Reads*” brings to a head the tension between transnational and national frameworks. The fluidity of the nation – whatever it is – is never directly addressed on the program. “What does Canada mean, in this case?” is a question that doesn’t get asked. Poon Tip’s task, to defend an Indigenous book, requires him to reassert literal place, but without Copeland’s nationalist gatekeeping, in the face of his co-panelists’ desire to imagine Canada in an abstract transnational framework.

Virmani’s response to Poon Tip’s comparison between *India Reads* and *Canada Reads* is an example of the way speculative transnationalism appears to loosen the domination of national subjects over the boundaries of Canadian identity. Canadian national identity, placed in the context of globalization, becomes one of many intersectional subjectivities through which citizens understand the world. However, as this example suggests, intersectional subjectivity comes with a fraught history of antagonisms that are forced to compete for attention in the transnational consciousness.

Virmani responds:

Virmani: “Ok well ... I’m not even going to go there – but I would just like to say one point that I’m from the movie world and a couple years ago there was a film – my father actually produced the film directed by the great Canadian director Deepa Mehta. It was a film called *Water*... Canada’s official entry into the Oscars and it got an Oscar nomination for Canada-”

Poon Tip: “An Oscar nomination? In the United States?”

Virmani: “It was submitted by Canada. It was chosen by Canada to represent

Canada and Canadian film to the world.” (“Day Two,” 2016, 00:33:25-00:33:45)

The parable Virmani uses to reject Poon Tip’s argument articulates a transnational definition of Canadian identity. The 2005 film, *Water*, directed by Deepa Mehta, garnered a nomination for Best Foreign Language Film at the 79th *Academy Awards* in 2007. *Water* is set in rural India in the late 1930s and follows the precarious lives of widows living under British occupation. As a point of comparison to *The Hero’s Walk*, Virmani relies on the international recognition of the filmmaking community—in particular, *Water*’s nomination for one of the most prestigious awards in the industry. In this example Mehta’s nomination means more than just recognition of a great film; it means external validation of non-English, non-white Canadians as national subjects and representatives of the nation. But of which nation? The story and characters represent India, but the director and production represent Canada. Virmani’s transnational response to Poon Tip alludes to the extent to which transnational arguments of multiculturalism and globalization break down when confronted by questions of geography. When Poon Tip interjects that the nomination came from a vetting body based in the United States, Virmani replies by asserting that “Canada chose” the film, that *Water* “represented Canada and Canadian film to the world.”

The exasperation with which Virmani delivers his assertion that an abstract “Canada chose” belies a sense of unity that is not there. While in his assertions that national identity need not be tied to territory, Virmani misrepresents the choice “Canada”

made as an active, rather than a passive, one. In truth, the film would have been “selected” through the Academy’s Oscar voting process, a process Virmani misrepresents as being undertaken by “Canada.” His rhetorical argument shifts the question away from “what does it mean to be Canadian?”, or “what is it that makes something more Canadian than something else?” and instead suggests that “a Canadian is what a transnational community chooses.” In this example, the national imaginary is untethered from the nation-state and is instead negotiated in relation to an international organization, such as the Academy. Effectively, Virmani’s arguments rely on a settling of the colonial foundations of the state in order to rationalize a transnational identity of which Canadian is a part. Virmani’s exasperation reveals a sense of insecurity in the structures of national subjectivity and belonging. By contrast, Poon Tip’s representation of *Birdie* disrupts claims to a firm sense of nationalism derived from the nation-state and undermines the stability of Canadian identity and the constitutive role of globalization in affirming that identity.

Virmani takes particular issue with the way Poon Tip flipped the title between “India Reads” and *Canada Reads*. While it may have been a small part of his argument, the symbolic weight of the inversion was great. “[*The Hero’s Walk*] was made by a Canadian – Just to talk about ‘India Reads’ – I’m Canadian. This book is written by a Canadian” (Poon Tip: “Agreed.”) (“Day Two,” 2016, 00:34:10-00:34:15). Virmani’s repetition of “India Reads” followed by “I’m Canadian” suggests that Poon Tip’s comments question Indo-Canadian claims to national subjectivity. Virmani’s indignation underscores the legacy of marginalization that Indo-Canadians have faced in Canadian

society. Poon Tip's comments highlight an exclusionary logic that positions post-confederation immigrants below settler Canadians, despite their shared history as arrivants.

Mohamed echoes Virmani at the beginning of Day Three by confronting Poon Tip over the harmfulness of his comments. Mohamed explains:

Yesterday was a difficult day but it was also a very disturbing day. You know, Bruce, you said yesterday that 'this is not 'India Reads' it's *Canada Reads*,' and by doing that, you know, as a woman, as an Indian, as a Muslim, it's a very disturbing point that you tried to make. You tried to elevate a community by putting another community down. You know, ultimately [*The Hero's Walk*] is a Canadian book written by a Canadian author about a Canadian girl ... I think you owe the author an apology by saying that this book did not deserve to be in *Canada Reads* ... specifically the comment: 'this is not 'India Reads,' it's *Canada Reads*.'" ("Day Three," 2016, 00:03:38-00:03:55)

Mohamed is effectively saying that Indo-Canadians are as much a part of Canada as anyone else is and that transnationalism does not make you any less Canadian. It is, however, unclear which community is being elevated through the denigration of Indo-Canadians. Arguably, Poon Tip's comment suggests that something is eliminated by the transnational perspective of the other panelists. While he's unable to put his finger on what exactly is lost by looking at a narrative set in India through the lens of Canadian literature, it is the rudeness of his comment that enrages Virmani and Mohamed. Poon Tip's quip about "India Reads" is connected to a history of anti-immigrant racism and

prejudice which has typically imagined (particularly Asian) immigrants outside the body politic. In this moment, we can see how Poon Tip is trapped by his strategy to affirm the literal land referenced by the Indigenous text he must defend and the racial logic by which his co-panelists invoke transnationalism to overcome the racial boundaries of traditional Canadian nationalism. As an immigrant who is defending an Indigenous book, then, Poon Tip is put in the impossible position of presenting a rude argument in the midst of the radio show's requirement of a civil and inclusive discourse.

There is another trap in Poon Tip's strategy. On the one hand, Poon Tip's comments suggest that a book set in Canada is more Canadian. In this argument, the author is classified as Canadian and *Birdie* as Canadian literature. However, it is doubtful that Lindberg, let alone her character Birdie, would identify wholeheartedly as "Canadian." What gets lost in this conflation of literal land and national identity is settler expectations over the relationship to that land. In this light, Poon Tip must try to anticipate Mohamed's anxieties about how evoking land may reinstitute white exaltation and marginalize non-European Canadians from national belonging. He must negotiate how singling out any one experience of marginalization in Canada might exclude others, especially if that experience resurrects historical constructions of settler subjectivity.

Together, the conflict between Poon Tip, Virmani, and Mohamed points to the way the show incorporates a range of equity-seeking projects into a stalemate that maintains white civility. Mohamed's call for an apology from Poon Tip, who is himself an immigrant from Trinidad, illustrates this stalemate as both panelists engage with the settler fantasies of entitlement that shape the question of first-come-first served, trickle-

down national identity. Like Copeland's assertion that geography inherently defines the nation, Poon Tip's comments engage with an implicitly colonial rhetoric that is disavowed by multiculturalism imagined as transnational. This example reveals a tension between national and transnational conceptions of Canada that is one version of the paradox between celebrations of diverse social justice readings of Canadian literature and unifying narratives of inclusive nationalism and global citizenship.

In an effort to defend the culture of inclusivity that is represented by the 2016 show's transnational framework, Poon Tip apologizes to Mohamed, but not without a tone of ambivalence toward Mohamed's indignation. While Poon Tip recognizes that it is important not to offend one another in a friendly debate, his determination to clarify his position ultimately sees him double down on his position. He suggests that this discussion about literature carries with it some degree of gravity. The way Poon Tip apologizes is particularly interesting given the fraught history of apology and reconciliation that is part of *Birdie's* narrative scope:

I fully apologize. When we all got these books, we read them; we all put defenses together for the show. We all had to put a defense on ... with *Hero's Walk*, specifically, my argument was that it didn't take place in Canada ... I had to create an argument for every book, and I thought "*Canada Reads*" – geographically it should take place in Canada. So that's what I meant, geographically. I certainly did not mean to insult anyone, and I highly apologize if I did ... I think it's a good thing if [what] I am choosing to defend [sic] against it is the fact that it doesn't take place in Canada. I think that that is a positive thing about the book and the

writer ... I was talking about geography, certainly not trying to insult anybody. I would never think that, of course. (“Day Three,” 2016, 00:04:32-00:04:50)

Poon Tip’s apology makes a clear distinction between his remorse for offending Mohamed and an explanation of his reasoning. For Poon Tip, Canadian citizenship ties Canadians to the history of the state, and by extension connects place to the imagined community of the nation. Mohamed’s transnational perspective, conversely, frames national identity through an intersectional sense of a multicultural globalized community which transgresses geo-political borders. By explaining himself, Poon Tip effectively counters Mohamed’s concerns and reaffirms his argument that geography defines what is Canadian. Poon Tip’s comments are subject to the convivial discourse of radio which makes his desire to balance the expectation of an apology with a reassertion of his argument come across as disingenuous. The civil discourse of the show demands an apology which means that Poon Tip is forced to temper the politics of his argument through the liberal multiculturalism of the CBC mandate, and as a result to acknowledge his own position as an immigrant as a way of repositioning his argument to emphasize the “Canadian” part of his fellow panelist’s identities.

Poon Tip’s comments over the importance of a place-specific approach to literature underscore a resistance to the speculative transnationalism of this season of the program. While panelists are generally eager to engage in a globalized perspective, Poon Tip’s defence of *Birdie* subverts universalizing impulses and reminds Canadians that the nation is yet unsettled. Virmani’s outrage at Poon Tip’s opinion underscores the extent to

which the Canadian national imaginary has become untethered from the land, and instead, more closely tied to an imagined, global community.

Since the colonial history of the state traditionally provided the grounds for nationalism, a transnational approach rejects the hegemony of colonial violence as a foundation for understanding national subjectivity. However, in a state push to democratize Canadian expression through multiculturalism, the pendulum has swung so far in the opposite direction as to obscure the unique roots of Indigenous experiences which are lumped in with forms of anti-racist and anti-hegemonic resistance. Recalling the cultural dominance of white national subjectivity indirectly through invocations of colonial violence unsettles transnational perspectives that rely on a firm sense of nation-state unity to participate in global discourse. While the majority of the discussion on *Canada Reads* 2016 focused on the global refugee crisis in relation to a putative Canadian transnationalism, attempts to connect this conversation to *Birdie* fell short, and instead focused on the quality of the writing and narrative. Panelists made repeated attempts in these examples to disconnect Lindberg's novel from the issues it is steeped in, but instead turned to Western models of universal human experience to do so.

Notably, once *Birdie* was eliminated from the running at the end of Day Three the conversation about *The Hero's Walk* and *The Illegal* was able to move forward with the transnational perspective, untroubled by *Birdie's* evocation of Canada's colonial history. *The Illegal's* victory at the end of Day Four is readable on a discursive level as an affirmation of the show's predilection for narratives of benevolence set in the geographical vacuum of speculative fiction.

Imaginary Geographies, or Benevolence without the Violence

The Illegal's imaginary setting opens itself up to strategic readings, such as that used in Hughes's rhetoric, to talk about the global refugee crisis - including its roots in colonialism - but without the complications of a specifically Canadian landscape. The narrative is guided by a sense of responsibility to the global community that, while ethical, is unencumbered by the specific instance of the colonization of Canadian land in cultivating that sense of ethical responsibility. In the context of the show, panelists reflect on and affirm features of inclusive multiculturalism ostensibly in an imaginary foreign setting, and then apply these affirmations to the global refugee crisis. Hughes's benevolent rhetoric obscures the conflicted nature of Canada, and instead the nation-state is imagined as a refuge for those afflicted by the contemporary politics of global imperialism. The elimination of Canada itself from a "Canadian" perspective on immigration and refugees allows panelists to benefit from ongoing colonization while simultaneously absolving themselves of their role in this system. While Canada has accepted, and continues to accept thousands of refugees, it does so without a clear sense of how subsequent waves of arrival interact with Canada's ongoing colonial structures. Hughes connects *The Illegal* to the global refugee crisis without directly implicating Canada in the broader history of colonial violence. In this way, Hughes is able to argue that Canadians have a responsibility to present a global welcome without characterizing refuge and settlement as, itself, part of ongoing colonization. The show's paradoxical structure is recognizable in the way that Hughes is able to simultaneously agree with

Poon Tip on the need for reconciliation while advocating for the resettlement of Syrian refugees on traditionally Indigenous territories.

On Day Two Poon Tip critiques Hill's *The Illegal*, and ironically elucidates the African political stereotypes that he accuses Hill of projecting in his novel. Poon Tip critiques the fictionalized setting:

I came from Africa to here to do *Canada Reads* and you know one of the things that's a little bit jarring for me with your *Illegal* is the fantasy part of it. The greatest hits of Africa, the way he's taking all of these political issues in various countries to create one really bad country. You read about Idi Amin from Uganda; you read about genocide from Rwanda between the Tutsis and Hutus; you hear the runners are from Kenya, apartheid from South Africa, Zimbabwe's land reform, there's a little bit of everything Being a bit of a geography geek as well, you know, he makes reference to you know America being two oceans away, and there's bizarre references to Tim Hortons, and the Bank of Montréal put in, and I don't know if it's to give it Canadian content or if it's to add to the fantasy elements of it, and I guess the only other part of the argument would be there's so many good stories about actual refugees why make one up? I mean there's actual real stories about refugees and immigrants in so many books on the subject, you know, why make it up? ("Day Two," 2016, 00:19:40-00:20:05)

In this example, Poon Tip misses an opportunity to connect the colonial experience of various African nations to that of Indigenous nations in North America. As a result, the violence of global colonial politics manifests as disparate symptoms of unrelated global

conflicts. Poon Tip's question indirectly asks what it is that Hill can do with an imaginary setting that he cannot do with a real one. The creation of a pair of fictional nation-states, with only brief reference to their colonial relationships, overwrites the actual colonial histories that led up to these "greatest hits" atrocities. Poon Tip's comments indict Hill's narrative for being too fictional at a time when real narratives of refugees are not being heard. However, what he ultimately misses in his critique is the opportunity for readers to engage with something highly subjective, such as xenophobia, and engage with it in a space free from feelings of culpability, responsibility, and complicity in an attempt to change deeply entrenched points of view. Moreover, Poon Tip's summary illuminates the neo-colonial attitudes continued by Canadian investment in international corporations and governments that on the one hand exploit local populations, while on the other allowing Canada to maintain an ethical distance from the transactions of global capitalism. References to Canadian products and businesses in Hill's novel make subtle nods to ongoing colonization even if only indirectly implicating Canada in it.

Hughes's response to Poon Tip's critique is to highlight the freeing potential of Hill's narrative. Through a combination of anecdote and literary critique Hughes refocuses the discussion on the lived experiences of persecution and exclusion faced by refugees.

I totally ... accept what you say, obviously everyone has different perspectives, opinions, everybody is a different reader. I think making a place up, not only a place but a time — this is set in the future — it allows imagination, it allows the reader to let go and you know it certainly did that for me. But it also brought in a

lot of places I've visited. I've been to Rwanda twice. I've run on the streets of Rwanda and the first thing that went through my mind on my first jog at six in the morning was that sixteen years ago people were running for their lives This book really brought me to a place of being able to understand a really devastating side of the human condition today, the struggle of so many people, of racism, of xenophobia. The place where this book is set in the future, where we might go, if for example the reality of today someone like the front runner for the Republican Party gets voted – who's talking about deporting eleven-million Mexican people. Human beings that are called illegals down in the United States And I feel that it's a tool that works in *Harry Potter*. It's a tool that worked in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*; and Lawrence Hill, for me, painted that picture. And the Canadian references? Why not have Tim Horton's be a world-renowned cheap coffee chain in the future? It could happen. ("Day Two," 2016, 00:22:05-00:22:20)

Emphasizing the power of empathy through interaction and anecdotal evidence, Hughes attempts to convey the sheer scale of insecurity lived by refugees. By underscoring the liberating potential of *The Illegal's* fantasy settings to elicit empathy from readers, to convey this sense of precariousness, Hughes's response to Poon Tip inadvertently proves his point. There is a shift away from the specific and back toward the general. Poon Tip's "greatest hits" of refugee experience are portrayed as a universal part of human experience, and are presented as interchangeable, in this case, with other refugee

experiences because the histories of the nations involved are disconnected from the colonial foundations of global migration.

What is left unexamined in this exchange is the extent to which these corporations like Bank of Montréal and Tim Horton's are loaded with cultural capital. Hughes's assertion that Tim Horton's could be a global coffee chain ignores the specifics of how that corporation interacts with the global economy. So part of the desire to recognize these corporations on a global stage comes from a desire to invest that cultural capital in the global economy. To underscore the specific microeconomic transaction, Tim Horton's in *The Illegal's* New Freedom State would knowingly be doing business with a government engaged in the deportation of political refugees, complicitly exporting torture and murder, and widespread corruption. In this way, Hill signals the existing participation of Canadian businesses in global neocolonial relations that produce refugees like Keita Ali, and he does so in a way that forces Canadians to think about the lived experience of marginalized immigrants. Hill highlights the way Canada is able to balance its image as an international symbol of benevolence, civility, and social justice with its legacy of colonial and imperialist violence. Therefore, Hughes's desire to read Hill's novel as a call for empathy and Canadian benevolence filters out the politics that trace Canada's participation in the problem, not just the solution.

Recall Hughes's assertion from Day One: "Canadians cannot single-handedly fix the world's greatest humanitarian crisis, but I believe this book can help us imagine the plight of millions of displaced people and hopefully inspire us to connect to our own humanity" ("Day One," 2016, 00:12:05-00:12:10). In her response to Deacon's question –

which book “best gets us to the Canada that you want to live in?” (Deacon, “Day Four,” 2016, 00:39:26-00:39:33) – Hughes draws a rhetorical link between Day One and Day Four:

[*The Illegal*] tackles one of the most pressing issues of the twenty-first century: the migration of millions of refugees. *The Illegal* asks Canadians to imagine the humanity of one refugee and thus all refugees. It urges Canadians to think about our own relationship to refugees today and ask what kind of country we want to forge tomorrow. (“Day Four,” 2016, 00:44:00-00:44:15)

Hughes’s call for empathy is built on an argument of universality and a shared sense of ethical responsibility between Canadians and refugees. Hughes’s argument for a common sense of humanity underscores both the speculative transnationalism of the 2016 season and the way this perspective is used to forge a sense of ethical responsibility among disparate peoples who share only common experiences of Canada, or kinship relationships with these diverse peoples. What is eliminated by this universality is the way Hughes’s sense of ethical responsibility is not automatically extended to Indigenous peoples who share the land but not the sense of national identity presumed by the show’s speculative transnationalism. In other words, the only refugees not included by this description of “all refugees” are those displaced within Canada itself. Virmani clarifies this issue in his own closing statement when he returns the focus to Canada.

Virmani’s emphasis on the use of kinship and a universalized sense of familial experience across the four days is evident in his closing arguments. With *Birdie* no longer acting as a reminder of Poon Tip’s and Copeland’s assertions of place-specific readings,

Virmani uses the nation as a symbol of home in his kinship metaphor. Virmani challenges Hughes:

You want to create that home of acceptance, of tolerance. If we cannot accept our own, if we cannot accept our own family members, how are we going to accept new refugees? How are we going to accept people that are different from us? ... We have to create strong foundations of values of tolerance, of acceptance, of love; and that's what Canada deserves, because that's what great fiction does. This book takes you so far out that you realize that we're not that different after all, and that's why I said even though it's in the Bay of Bengal, this is right here. ... I agree. We have to open up our country. I work with refugees, it pains me, but we have to get to peoples' fears. What are they afraid of? ("Day Four," 2016, 00:40:55-00:41:10)

In the context of the show, the implied "home of acceptance, of tolerance" that Virmani describes *is* Canada. While his metaphor works to characterize "family members" as both literal family members and figuratively as fellow citizens, his final question makes the symbolism clear. If we cannot accept our fellow citizens as part of the imagined community, how will Canadians be able to accept refugees? But Virmani's question recalls Thomas King's question, "what do whites want?" from *The Inconvenient Indian*, featured the previous season. In both cases the answer is land, "Whites want land" (216). Virmani's final question recalls Mackey's concept of settler anxiety by offering an answer inclusive of both Canada's multicultural identity and its ongoing colonial structure. However, in his affirmation that "we have to open up our country," Virmani's

benevolent intention echoes the imperative of the colonial project: the elimination of Indigenous peoples from that land. Canadians' fears of refugees, as I argued by reference to Mackey in the previous chapter, stem from unsettled conceptual foundations for belonging in Canada. Without a settled sense of their claim to the land, Canadian settler subjectivity is unable to distinguish its own history of immigration from those of subsequent waves of immigrants. More specifically in response to Virmani's rhetorical question, Canadians are afraid of losing control over the land, being displaced by subsequent waves of immigrants and refugees, which threatens to expose the logical fragility of their claims to land. In other words, the xenophobia Virmani alludes to is implicitly related to the very colonial conflicts overwritten by his rhetoric of universal kinship and allusions to transnationalism.

Virmani argues that in Hughes's push to identify with the plight of refugees, she ignores the existing xenophobia and intolerance in Canadian society. Virmani refocuses the conversation on the experience of Canadians as transnational subjects, "even though it's in the Bay of Bengal, this is right here." "Home" as he describes it is part of an intersectional negotiation between personal identity and a feeling of belonging to a new place. Virmani's question motions to an absent presence by asking what it is Canadians fear about providing asylum to refugees: chiefly, the fear that settler Canadians may themselves be displaced in the wake of mass migrations and a shifting demography.

I mention that this exchange takes place after *Birdie* is eliminated because it symbolizes the disappearance of Indigenous presence and the effect that disappearance has on the way Canadians imagine themselves and each other. Poon Tip's usage of

“home” on Day Two presents a clear distinction between the way Canadians and Indigenous peoples understand place and the nation:

Canada is my home. You’ve accepted me, and I’m thankful for that every day. Being an immigrant with brown skin growing up in Calgary in the early ‘70s showed me what it’s like to not be accepted at home. Being chased, hearing chants ‘go home, wagon burner!’ is something I’ll never forget no matter how successful I become. Canada is my adopted home, but for 1.4 million Aboriginal people this is the only home they’ve ever known. *Birdie* is an important book that makes us ask what is my responsibility as a relative to Indigenous people. (“Day Two,” 2016, 00:14:20-00:14:30)

Poon Tip’s use of the kinship metaphor illustrates a difference in the way various peoples understand Canada as “home.” For one thing, Poon Tip’s comments highlight the fact that “home” for Indigenous peoples is constantly troubled by the colonial history of the state. As the colonial targets of Canada’s history of genocide, Indigenous peoples are characterized by Poon Tip as unique from other Canadians in their relationship to this land. Despite *Birdie*’s obvious rejection of any sense of normalized familial experience, Virmani and Hughes both advocate for a universal perspective which excludes colonial experiences that might trouble the national imaginary as a settled narrative of inclusivity and benevolence. Identifying the similarities and differences between his own experience of Canada as home and that of Indigenous peoples, Poon Tip, using the language of kinship, identifies the responsibilities of Canadians to First Nations. Like his use of *Wahkohtowin* on Day One, Poon Tip’s understanding of kinship comes from Canadians’

inextricable colonial histories with Indigenous peoples. Canadians, argues Poon Tip, have an obligation to Indigenous peoples based on a shared, and differentiated, experience of home.

Hughes notes on Day Three that she is “an honorary witness for the Truth and Reconciliation [Commission], I’m a very proud one, it’s the greatest honor of my life to have been given that responsibility, and in that role, I hear things and I correct those inaccuracies, and those comments and those words. I do that because this matters to me and that language needs to stop” (“Day Three,” 2016, 00:44:40-00:44:550). While Hughes’s dedication to curbing racially insensitive language about Indigenous peoples is noteworthy, her lack of reflection on the way First Nations might factor into the global refugee crisis exhibits a similar kind of sanctioned ignorance. Hughes’s argument in defence of *The Illegal* focuses on the topicality of the symptoms and is cut off from the larger disease by the imaginary setting of Hill’s novel and by the civil nationalism of the radio show. Virmani’s question brings the audience a little closer to this idea by suggesting that Canadians have to come to terms with what they fear about immigration, but ultimately leaves the nation intact in an urge to universalize a transnational experience of family. Collectively, these examples highlight an absent presence at the heart of *Canada Reads*’s speculative transnationalism. While panelists routinely talk about the role of reading in developing a sense of empathy, the rhetorical structures of their commentary ultimately exhibit the limitations of that empathy within a nationalist framework. The logic of elimination is recognizable in the absence of literal (Indigenous) land from these discussions of global colonial displacement.

For example, despite the relevance of Poon Tip's framing of *Birdie* as a narrative of displacement and marginalization, he is unable to get other panelists to engage with the conversation of the global refugee crisis inflected by the experience of Indigenous peoples. On Day Four Poon Tip is given an opportunity to reflect on the voting from the previous day. Poon Tip ultimately uses the time to talk about a reading program he has launched based on Lindberg's novel, but he prefaces this announcement with a reiteration of the importance of reconciliation in Canada:

[A]s I said yesterday *Birdie* is a book about home, but when your home does not care for your well-being, your ability to make home. Aboriginal women across this country are used to overwhelming negativity when people refuse to recognize their difference. *Birdie* deals with mental health, addiction, substance abuse, and sexual assault, and they're layered complex issues. It's not supposed to be easy to heal, and healing is never linear, it takes steps, and it goes forward and back. My generation has only taken a small step towards reconciliation, the next generation needs to take a giant leap towards reconciliation. (Poon Tip, "Day Four," 2016, 00:04:20-00:04:30)

Invoking the image of Canada as home, Poon Tip places the characters of *Birdie* and Indigenous peoples more broadly in conversation with the global refugee crisis that has formed the core of *Canada Reads* 2016's debate. Poon Tip's commitment to reiterating the way Indigenous women's experiences are not being adequately represented by Canadian benevolence and cosmopolitanism flies in the face of the discourse of inclusive multiculturalism. By pulling the conversation back toward reconciliation and reaffirming

its incompleteness – something Hughes glosses over – Poon Tip underscores the responsibility Canadians have to include Canada's colonial experience as part of their socio-cultural consciousness. Recalling Poon Tip's apology the previous day, his commitment to healing as part of this process suggests that moments that unsettle what Canadians understand about the nation and its methods of marginalization provides Canadians opportunities to heal. An untethered relationship between land and the history of that land threatens to obscure the responsibilities of human beings to the natural world and perpetuate global crises as a series of unlinked symptoms.

Conclusion:

Hill's and Hughes's victory on the final day of *Canada Reads* 2016 was a predictable ending to the debates about Canada's obligation to respond to the global refugee crisis. From the perspective of the 2016 theme, Hill's book was both excellently written for a mass audience and topical to the debates at the table. Furthermore, Hill's setting meant that panelists could consider the ideals of Canadian benevolence, civility, and ethical responsibility without the historical baggage of settler colonialism. And Hughes's strategic appeal to a universal sense of human community mirrors the paradox at the heart of the show perfectly, that our many messy identities can ultimately be distilled into a (nearly) comprehensive singularity.

While the structure of the program and the theme of the year paradoxically moved from a celebration of diverse critiques and perspectives, the rationalizations of *Birdie's* and *Minister Without Portfolio's* elimination from the program point to the invisible

boundaries of this seeming universality. The way Hill's *Illegal* was strategically read by Hughes to win the game points to the predilection of both the panelists and the show itself for narratives of inclusivity and universal experience that can be fit into a national framework. Ultimately, Hughes's arguments point to a market for a transnational understanding of Canada that while seemingly benevolent, folds Indigenous sovereignty into one of the nation's multiple identities, settling ongoing challenges to colonization at home by exporting an image of Canada as settled abroad before importing it back and reselling it. What is lost in the compelling triumph of Hill's and Hughes's transnational victory is the violence of the show's process of distillation and the way its liberal nationalism, untroubled by local land politics, puts it in line with ongoing structures of elimination. Starting over becomes an assertion of power that underlies the colonial structures present in national cultural projects aimed at unity.

Instead of troubling the relationship between citizenship in the state and belonging to land, panelists shifted the discourse toward universal narratives of kinship, family, and empathy that were unable to reconcile Canada's history of colonial violence as an ongoing structure. The civil discourse of the program meant that rejections of particular perspectives were done subtly; however, it was clear that what was unsayable in the context of the show was the way these narratives of universality and Canada as a global refuge overwrite Indigenous and settler conflict as a completed event, and that the right of the state to settle those lands is secured. The violence of simply folding Indigenous anti-colonial resistance into other equity-seeking discourses undermines Indigenous challenges to the image of Canada as imperial, even while it projects these imperial

attitudes into the global economic market through investment and trade. These examples point to the constrained universality that necessarily results from the show's paradoxical format of celebrating diversity and national critique while perpetuating the idea of the nation and a sense of unity through shared experience. As a result, *The Illegal's* victory on *Canada Reads 2016* illustrates the clash between a representation of diverse perspectives and critiques, and the resulting narrative of unity that dresses the colonial logic of *terra nullius* in (new) benevolent clothes.

As I mentioned earlier in the chapter, I think it is important to retain the belief that reading offers opportunities for developing empathy within and between communities, but it is necessary to be critical of this assumption in light of the way the colonial logic of elimination proliferates in Western universalism. Therefore, I suggest a subtle discursive shift away from the transnational and toward the transcolonial. Katie Trumpener's definition of "transcolonial" as "flows [of population, knowledge, tastes, and goods] criss-crossing the British Empire back and forth between periphery and center as old as the fact of colonial settlement" (Trumpener 290). Framing transnationalism through colonial experience allows transcolonialism to work with a characterization of immigrant Canadians as arrivants and opens up opportunities for relational autonomy which place hegemonic experiences of Canadian cultural nationalism in conversation with the epistemological assumptions that foreground the logic of that hegemony.

Indigenous sovereignty has long operated in the "transcolonial" sphere by bypassing the nation-state at home and going directly to international organizations like the League of Nations and United Nations (UN). In 1923 the Cayuga chief Deskaheh

traveled to the League of Nations in Geneva, Switzerland “to register a complaint ... against Canada for unilateral interference and removal of the governing body of traditional chiefs of the Haudenosaunee” (Lyons 13). While Great Britain blocked the motion (Canada at this time was still part of the British Empire) Deskaheh’s complaint was only the beginning of a long tradition of international dialogues between Indigenous peoples across the globe and post-colonial nation-states. In 1977, a diplomatic party of First Nations returned to the UN to deliver “The Haudenosaunee Address to the Western World: A Basic Call to Consciousness” (1977). This address was part of a coordinated effort by many Indigenous nations of North America and South America to gain international support for self-determination as outlined by the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights (14). While the meeting with the UN garnered little material change at the time, the coordinated resistance of multiple Indigenous nations from various lands is itself an expression of transcolonial resistance that continues into the present.

My hope is that in this discursive shift away from speculative transnationalism and toward transcolonialism there are opportunities to consider the way colonial experience has shaped the interaction between multiculturalism and globalization. I argue that in this way human responsibilities to the land become part of an ongoing and active consideration of the ethics by which humans and their communities can occupy space. As I have argued, speculations about transnationalism perpetuate the disappearance of Indigenous peoples and their knowledge about our responsibilities to the land from debates about the nation. Despite active treaties between First Nations, the Crown, and

the land, Canadians continue to regard the land in Canada as settled and instead turn their attention to Canada's imagined role as a global citizen.

Conclusion

Reading Canada Out of the Studio

Since 2016 *Canada Reads* has brought on a new host, Ali Hassan, and greatly expanded its media presence leading up to the debates. The format of the show has not changed and panelists still gather annually to strategically shepherd polemical readings of their books through the debates and strategic voting to try to win the game. Panelists create and employ rhetorical strategies that are subject to the double articulation of live broadcast radio that on the one hand conveys the feeling of an intimate book club among the panelists, and on the other hand circulates these discussions among a mass Canadian audience. So while it is easy to presume that *Canada Reads* is a show about literature, upon closer inspection, its indirect result seems to be the adaptation and refurbishment of a liberal nationalism that incorporates and recuperates critiques of that nationalism.

So what we are looking at here is not so much the impact that *Canada Reads* has on Canadian culture, society, and politics, but rather how in order to win the game panelists must couch their critical engagements with each other and the texts in an appeal to a broad audience's taste for national civility and unity. The double articulation of dialogue on the show suggests that the seemingly open space for debate is in fact a constrained universality, heavily influenced by structures of civility and the logic of elimination. This thesis has explored the paradox of *Canada Reads*: the tension between the show's claims to celebrate diverse peoples and perspectives and the elimination format of the show which echoes the CBC mandate and its goals of national unity and cohesiveness. The elimination format of the show reflects the logic of its paradoxical

structure – panelists are welcome to point out how the texts gathered at the table reveal the shortcomings of Canadian society, but they must construct arguments that will win this literary prize which circulates in a Canadian economy whose national parameters remain unchallenged. If Canadian-ness is too damaged by the debates then it cannot be the reward for winning. Highlighting what can and cannot be said on the show helps connect the large cultural systems that precede the nation to the colonial roots of the civility that shapes this dialogue. As the chapters of this study have described, the national habitus of Canada is predisposed by large cultural structures that manifest as narratives of reconciliation, multiculturalism, civility, and the ethical responsibilities of Canada as a global refuge. I argue that *Canada Reads* is an example of national pedagogy that is a testament to the paradoxical nature of pursuing social justice through nationalism.

The heated exchange between Jeanne Beker – defending the winning book, Mark Sakamoto’s *Forgiveness* (2014) – and Jully Black – defending Cherie Dimaline’s (Métis) *The Marrow Thieves* (2017) – on the 2018 season of *Canada Reads* are an excellent example of the way the nationalist universe of the show continues to shape not only what is said but also what cannot be said or is unsayable. Marking a moment of rupture on the show, Beker’s and Black’s exchange indicates that the double articulation of *Canada Reads* means that the debates register in more ways than is immediately apparent around the table. On the final day of the season themed “One Book to Open your Eyes,” Black, responding to the idea that Canada has “progressed,” argues that “there’s a lot of colonial privilege happening” (26:59 / 54:00) only to be interrupted by Hassan who interjects:

“This room excluded, of course. This studio excluded” (27:02/ 54:00). The moment is heated and Hassan’s comments can be read as an effort to lighten the tone of the debates with irony (nowhere is excluded from colonial privilege). However, his comments also remind the audience and panelists that the purpose of these civil conversations includes the resistance of the historical privilege of settlers. Hassan’s comments also reveal, plainly, what cannot be said within this civil discourse: if the topic of colonial privilege appears on the show, then it does so only for the purpose of challenging that privilege.

The ensuing conflict between Black and Beker intertwines a colonial register with a racial one and illustrates how the discourse of the show is pulled toward a language of race and distanced from a language of colonization. Black continues: “there are a lot of people who sit in their cottages and their homes and don’t have an experience like others and think that ‘let me swipe my Visa card and make a donation but I don’t live that experience,’ what are we doing to change the current circumstances? We just had a Pope say he’s not saying ‘I’m sorry’ to Indigenous Canadians when he said [he would] in 2015... it’s got to change. Yes, we forgive.” And then she shouts, “I believe in Jesus” (27:09/ 54:00). Responding to Black’s volume, Beker asks: “Why are you attacking me July? I totally get what you’re saying” (27:30/ 54:00). “Woah, woah, woah, hold up, we’re live right now,” responds Black, “‘Why are you attacking me?’ Oh the truth hurts, I didn’t say anything to attack you, Jeanne Beker. I said nothing about Jeanne Beker” (27:40/ 54:00). Beker smiles, interjects and attempts to clarify, “I just feel like you’re speaking to me like, like I don’t believe that. I totally get what you’re saying” (27:49 / 54:00). Beker’s reduction of Black’s comments to the intensity of their tone is too much

for Black, and she quickly corrects her: “let me tell you what you just said, ‘I feel like,’ so whatever you are feeling, take it to the altar, because I’m not the one that’s responsible for your feelings” (27:55/ 54:00). A brief but complete silence falls over the panel and the studio audience before Hassan quickly redirects to another panelist.

The debates move forward in spite of Black’s exposure of (white) colonial privilege, glossed over by Hassan’s cool moderation. The awkwardness of the exposure included in their exchange reveals a moment of rupture for the show. Black steps outside of the civil discourse of the show to respond to the implications of Beker’s comments only to have her point about colonial privilege overwritten by the highly racialized exchange. Whereas Black had explicitly called it “colonial privilege,” the exchange shifts from a critique of the failures of reconciliation to the fragility of whiteness. Whereas Black discussed this privilege with reference to the structure of colonialism, Beker personalizes the intention of Black’s critique and shifts the focus onto the racial subtext of their discussion.

Discussing the event at a writer’s festival following the end of the 2018 season, Cherie Dimaline reflects on the exchange between Black and Beker:

The first time I watched it I cried. I cried because I was so incredibly proud of Jilly. And I cried because of that idea that a Black woman can’t speak with any sort of authority and power. That she is just an *angry* Black woman. That she is being too aggressive. That somehow, she's attacking someone. I know this is a conversation we have in our communities and we talk about it — and now somebody said it out loud and it was an opportunity to respond and I think the

way in which [Jully] responded was respectful, was intelligent and was just so powerful. I watched it after and when I'm having a bad day I go and I watch it again. It was so uplifting. (Dimaline qtd. in CBC, 2018)

What Dimaline does in this comment is shift the critique from the personal back to the systemic while bringing the racial register with it. Dimaline's book was voted off on Day Three of 2018. *The Marrow Thieves* is a young-adult novel about a future in which Indigenous peoples are hunted for their bone marrow, which non-Indigenous people believe can restore their ability to dream. However, the colonial underpinnings of Black's defence of the book on *Canada Reads* were subsumed by the dramatic, racially charged exchange between panelists. So while Dimaline is grateful for Black's courage in the face of confrontation, the way this confrontation is then applied to Dimaline's community's experiences of racial prejudice conveys the message that colonial issues are ultimately racial issues. Black's and Dimaline's comments circulate in the context of a double articulation, which can admit that colonial privilege exists but the vocabularies for dealing with this privilege are part of what I called in Chapter Two the racial discourse of multiculturalism. Black's experience of racialization is similar to but not the same as Dimaline's. The result is not a complete dismissal of colonial privilege but rather the negotiation of an alliance illustrative of the different roles race plays between blackness and indigeneity. Whereas race can signal the kinds of conflicts that arise between Beker and Black, and can enable solidarity between Black and Dimaline, the racial register that comes to dominate the discussion minimizes what is distinct about colonization, as opposed to reconciliation: the removal of Indigenous peoples from the land. So while

Black's criticism of the Pope's refusal to apologize for residential schools is part of a decolonial critique, the focus on gestures like the apology evokes the mainstream rhetoric of reconciliation as opposed to an understanding of the way race and colonization work together to maintain white civility. Ultimately, it is the whiteness of that colonial privilege that becomes the focus of the exchange, not the role of race as part of this colonial architecture.

Another disruption occurs on Day Two of *Canada Reads* one season earlier in 2017. Indigenous comedian, activist, and former lawyer Candy Palmater (Mi'kmaq) interrupts the debates between opera singer Measha Brueggergosman and hip-hop artist Humble the Poet to correct a slippage over language. "We are not your First Nations people," Palmater interjects, "when people say 'our', 'our First Nations people.' We are not owned by Canadians." Brueggergosman quips, surprised: "Was that the only thing you heard from that whole speech?" Palmater continues speaking over Brueggergosman, "but it's a very common linguistic thing that people do, and I always try to educate" (Palmater and Brueggergosman, "Day Two," 2017, 00:18:00-00:18:16).

Brueggergosman's rhetorical question, "was that the only thing you heard?," similarly alludes to the underlying structures of civility that frame *Canada Reads*. She considers Palmater's interruption as rude nitpicking. Palmater's assertion of Indigenous sovereignty in the face of a national conversation about "the book Canadians need now" challenges the idea that Indigenous writing can be incorporated into "Canadian literature," that it is part of "our" literature, and that by reading books this way Canadians can read their way out of the colonial domination of Indigenous peoples. By simply contesting one pronoun

she reminds both panelists and audience members that Indigenous peoples cannot be lumped into conversations of the nation as a paradigm of social justice. In short, Brueggergosman's disregard for Palmater's distinction reflects that which cannot be said on the show: the idea that Indigenous peoples have not resigned themselves to being Canadians, and that Canada is therefore not as settled as it claims to be. The political gravity of Palmater's insistence on the importance of language is mirrored by Glen Coulthard, as I noted in chapter one.

The politics of recognition, Coulthard writes, “‘reconcile’ Indigenous assertions of nationhood with settler-state sovereignty via the accommodation of Indigenous identity claims ... with the Canadian state” (3). Palmater's comments reflect an active refusal of the casual positioning of Indigenous sovereignty within the conceptual boundaries of Canada. Her challenge to the imposition of an identity constructed by colonial assumptions is trivialized. Brueggergosman's rhetorical question suggests that Palmater's comments make a political mountain out of a grammatical molehill. But, as Coulthard continues, “instead of ushering in an era of peaceful coexistence grounded on the ideal of reciprocity or mutual recognition, the politics of recognition ... promises to reproduce the very configurations of colonialist, racist, patriarchal state power that Indigenous peoples' demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend” (3). In other words, a recognition of the marginalization of Indigenous peoples *within* Canadian society is not the same as the understanding that Indigenous peoples function *outside* the purview of the nation-state. The result is a paradoxical claim to celebrate diversity while only recognizing Indigenous peoples as a distinct group within Canadian society. This claim

points to the continued influence of the logic of elimination, which seeks to fold Indigenous sovereignty into the racial and cultural registers of the nation. Palmater's remarks, regardless of their validity, are marked out as unsayable, and her ability to rationalize this connection is left unsaid. The moment is a rupture but the conversation continues as if it were just a dramatic moment of debate. In this way, we see how the structures of civility and conviviality that underwrite *Canada Reads* in fact constitute structures of elimination. While continuing to treat Indigenous anti-colonial challenges as claims to increased equity within the existing nation-state, *Canada Reads* continues to represent colonization as a historical event, rather than an ongoing structure of social, cultural, and political life in Canada.

This project has sought to take seriously *Canada Reads*' literary debates about the nature of marginalization and hegemony. At its most basic this project is a decolonial critique that examines the linguistic limits evident in the archive of publicly accessible literary debates, and thus to offer ways of critiquing the mental geographies of Canadian society, culture, and ideology. On a more technical level, my goal has ultimately been to analyze the *Canada Reads* discussions of social justice to demonstrate their constrained universality and the limitations of how social justice can be imagined on the show. If each year the books gathered around the table and the discussion that takes place point to the ill-fittingness of the nation as a form of imagined community, then why do Canadians insist on its refurbishment and improvement? It is not Canadians can develop an understanding of relational autonomy between settlers and fully fledged Indigenous sovereignties that they can hope to read Canada differently. Until then, the show goes on.

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