

Port Rupture(s) and Cross-Racial Kinships in Dionne Brand and Lee Maracle

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines Lee Maracle's *Talking to the Diaspora* and Dionne Brand's *A Map to the Door of No Return* for their respective responses to the Komagata Maru in 1914 and to the Chinese migrants denied entry into BC in 1999. These literary moments are points of departure to examine the Indigenous, Black, and Asian kinships that arise within and beyond the colonial policing of encounters. Dionne Brand's theorizations of the Door of No Return—a synecdoche of the slave trade ports in Africa—make it possible to consider the port as a site of violence whose ruptures can potentially produce unexpected solidarities between racialized subjects and intimacies amongst their various, incommensurable histories and experiences. Indeed, Maracle and Brand reconceptualize migrant entry as an eruption into geographies of kinship rather than into the divisive geography of the port under the nation-state regime. While focusing on Asian migration in Vancouver, the texts also depict Indigenous and Black stranger intimacies, which constitute a web of racialized relations that marks the inextricability of decolonization and Black liberation from transnational affiliations, migrant justice, and Asian kinships.



“Ports open for syntax”

Shazia Hafiz Ramji (2018)

Riding a bus in Vancouver with a friend, Dionne Brand notices a Coast Salish woman get on and ask the Black bus driver for directions. Brand describes this moment in her creative non-fiction, *A Map to the Door of No Return* (2001), as an indescribable feeling amongst the four of them: “We all feign ignorance at the rupture in mind, body, in place, in time. We all feel it” (221). This rupture refers to the Door of No Return, a synecdochal port of African departure that represents “El Mina or Gorée Island,” and other slave ports that led into the Middle Passage (Brand 220). In Brand’s text, the Door reflects what Saidiya Hartman names “the afterlife of slavery” (6), the modern reproductions of the conditions of slavery that hold Black diasporic subjects in a constant state of displacement. It erupts unexpectedly in Brand’s life at different moments to decentre her: “Our inheritance in the Diaspora is to live in this inexplicable space. That space is the measure of our ancestor’s step through the door toward the ship...The frame of the doorway is the only space of true existence” (220).

Evoking another valence of rupture, Brand experiences the Door as a “space of true existence” which emerges in the bus to facilitate modes of relation between the three passengers and the driver. In “We all feel it,” her insistence on affective collectivity implicates the Coast Salish woman in a double gesture: toward the colonial anti-Black order conditioning the ongoing structural presence of the Door, and toward the possibilities of relation from recognizing one’s varied positionalities in the rupture(s). The rupture, as a bodily, cosmic, psychic, and geographical rift, enacts its own pressures on the Indigenous woman and embodies a polyvalence that Brand preserves in the neuter pronoun, “it,” to articulate the affective and spatial kinships that emerge between the four subjects’ different histories and asymmetrical experiences of rupture. As a colonial modality of oppression, the rupture displaces subjects while at the same time producing a space for cross-racial kinships that inhere in their incoherence. It is precisely because the kinships within the rupture are illegible and inimical to colonial divisions of race that they upset those divisions. Configuring the Door of No Return as a rupture, Brand creates the possibility for us to think through the institutional shape of port geographies and its unintended productions of cross-racial kinship.

Brand specifically addresses Indigenous, Black, and Asian kinships by turning to the Vancouver port and its history of barring Asian migration. She makes apparent missed kinships at historical sites of Asian exclusion –missed kinships also taken up in Lee Maracle’s *Talking to the Diaspora* (2015). Referring to the denied entries of the *Komagata*

Maru in 1914 and of Chinese migrants in 1999 respectively, Maracle and Brand explore the affective power of Canada’s legalized xenophobia and its national identity politics. As the nation-state instrumentalizes its prohibitive port geography to overdetermine migrant pathways, Maracle and Brand reconceptualize entry into the port as entry into geographies of kinship that provide conditions for ongoing racialized life. In their texts, the port geography embodies the polyvalent and relational structures that are possible after one has passed through the Door of No Return. Their focus on migration, further, uncovers other articulations of rupture under the legal apparatus of port borders, within which kinships take the form of fugitive intimacies and accomplice work.

Kinship, Smaro Kamboureli writes, is “a loaded term” (17) as it has accrued significance for anticolonial and anti-capitalist conceptualizations of relation, but it was always a complex and generative concept from its long history in Indigenous epistemologies. In the seminal essay “Go Away Water,” which discusses Indigenous literary nationalism, Daniel Heath Justice theorizes kinship as a methodology and affective practice against logics of purity, the biogenetic family, and colonial individuation. What he variously names as the “relational lens” (160) and “kinship criticism” (159) is the intellectual praxis of holding different histories and contexts of thought together; not privileging one Indigenous body, history, or episteme over another. In fact, the “continuity” of Indigeneity depends on this methodology of kinship, which suggests kinship is future oriented (150).¹ Therefore, the method with which we study Indigenous literature and its culturally specific contexts and people, must follow the “decolonial imperative,” “the storied expression of continuity that encompasses resistance while moving beyond it to an active expression of the living relationship between the People and the world” (150). The port makes the People come into direct contact with the world-made-commodity. Embodying the structures of the settler-colonial state, the Vancouver port remains a violent contact zone; but within this colonial capitalist space must always already be, as Maracle and Brand offer in their widened methodological scopes, multiple and uneven relations among Indigenous, Asian, and Black communities and contexts for the continuity of their collective existence.

Thus, in this essay, kinship is both a method and a possibility, one that, as Heath Justice asserts, is “about life and living” (148). The literary moments of cross-racial solidarity in *A Map* and *Talking* represent a practice of kinship that operates outside, within, and despite

1 See also: Larissa Lai on “future-directed” relationality, “Epistemologies of Respect: A Poetics of Asian/Indigenous Relation” (*Critical Collaborations: Indigeneity, Diaspora, and Ecology in Canadian Literary Studies*, edited by Smaro Kamboureli & Christl Verduyn. Wilfred Laurier UP, 2014, pp. 99-126), 114.

the deathscapes of the port's borders. Solidarity and accomplice work are, in fact, practices of kinship: of making relation, of making life sustainable, and most significantly for the texts in this essay, of making possible the life-capacities needed for futurities in which more intimate kinships can emerge. Donna Haraway consistently pairs "kin" with "make," a coupling that Heath Justice admires, to highlight the labour that is embodied in the political and affective practices of kinship.² Moreover, the texts' hybrid forms as creative life writing –Maracle's semi-autobiographical poetics are structured by prose syntaxes, and poetic rhythms constitute Brand's creative nonfiction essays– signify kinship in capacious, rupturous, methodological, future-oriented, and imaginative terms.³ In a kind of poetics of or desire for reparations, they overlay the "real" of news and historical events with a critical and radical reimagining of those narratives through kinship's insistence on "life and living" (Heath Justice 148).⁴ By imagining and highlighting kinships already present in the past, Maracle and Brand enact their own literary kinship through witnessing and explore a practice of kinship with those no longer here. They account for forgotten histories that gesture toward new futures and revise how the Canadian national imaginary hails itself.⁵ These gestures toward cross-racial kinships and decolonial futures evoke the authors' investment in political solidarity, which is mirrored in a node of Asian Canadian literary criticism to which this essay is indebted.

Most recently, Larissa Lai advances a methodology of respect, responsibility, and redirection. By cultivating critical Asian Canadian approaches that consider (un)settler(-of-colour) complicities and by adopting an epistemology of respect in relations with Indigeneity, one can redirect the colonial momentum to a decolonial one, a "turning [of] the world to respectful balance" (Lai 102). Lai, along with Rita Wong and Malissa Phung

2 See Heath Justice on Haraway in *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* (Wilfred Laurier UP, 2018), 75.

3 Though not analysed in this essay, Brand's recent poetry, *The Blue Clerk*, offers intriguing theorizations of the port as a form of entry into the new, unsaid, and disruptive. The clerk character, who lives on some timeless wharf "somewhere" (4), is open towards the blankness of a page in a way that the author cannot be. Further, the collection is a hybrid form intersecting poetry with memoir, which animates the generic concerns here. However, the thematics and narratives are not specific to the Coast Salish territory, or to any territory for that matter. In an interview with Canisia Lubrin, Brand states: "*The Blue Clerk* is an attempt to observe time and not space." For the purposes of this essay and its focus on place, I have refrained from including this text.

4 See Saidiya Hartman on radical imagination in "A Note on Method," *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval*, (W. W. Norton, 2019).

5 See Julie Rak on life writing and the literary and canonical subversions of the genre. "Canadian Auto/Biography: Life Writing, Biography, and Memoir" in *The Oxford Handbook of Canadian Literature*, edited by Cynthia Sugars. Oxford, 2016, pp. 814-824, 816.

have differently yet collectively produced an archive of literary and methodological thought that redraws the lines of race relations in Canada from being hinged upon whiteness to depicting the complications of diasporic (un)settlerhood in Indigenous territories and in relation to Indigenous communities. This field registers the pulse of rupture in diasporic life whereby the colonial order and settler-colonial state mediate relations between Indigeneity and Diaspora, but wherein kinships between the two nonetheless erupt in flights from the str(i)angulated structure. This essay extends their work's focus by examining literary encounters between Indigenous, Black, and Asian subjects whose intimacies exceed and disrupt the port's coloniality.

It is not surprising that both Maracle and Brand allude to the Vancouver port since it plays a special role for the Canadian settler-colonial imaginary as a transpacific, multicultural, and economic space. Leading up to the 1986 Expo in Vancouver, the UBC Faculty of Education and the Vancouver Port Corporation collaborated to finance a children's book called *It's Everybody's Port: Vancouver Bays and Harbours*. Composed of six short stories written by different authors, the illustrated book centres children-of-colour characters to rewrite the nation's heritage through narratives of multiculturalism. In the introduction, a Chinese Canadian girl named Lia-Lin admires the harbour and is reminded of her job "selling fine silks" that "come all the way from China" (Pringle 4). Her teacher relays that "Vancouver has one of the most important ports in all North America" (5), which makes Lia-Lin think of the journeys of ships, the "rough seas and storms" (5) that the silk must cross as it travels "in the holds of huge ships that dock at Vancouver's port" (4-5). She wonders: "What would it be like to travel on such a ship" (5). Lia-Lin's stream of thought, from imported silk to global travel, signals a critical slippage in the text, one that reveals the insidious links between economies of transpacific trade and its underbelly of human labour-made-cargo that is moved within networks of global capitalism. Whereas the children's book celebrates the business of ports that sustain and integrate Chinese-Canadian families like Lia-Lin's into the national imaginary, the relations between economy and travel reveal the real history and structure of Western Canadian ports, where the holds of the ship that carry silk from China to Canada can also carry trafficked migrants.

Brand's *A Map* takes up the link between migrant trafficking and anti-Asian racism that define the Western Canadian ports' racial politics. She briefly chronicles a 1999 moment on Vancouver Island when Canadian immigration authorities refused an unnamed fishing boat full of more than 100 Chinese individuals, mostly women and children, from entering Vancouver. This event exemplifies the anti-Chinese racism that continues to shape

Canadian citizenry, which Brand interrogates in her discussion of a xenophobic media report about the 1999 event:

Newspapers and televisions referred to them as “migrants” and migrants they no doubt were, but one cannot help reading the exclusion of these “migrants” from the category of “children,” which would make it possible to include them in a definition of family reserved for the people within the nation. (65)

Brand observes how media discourses sidestep the language of “children” that could conflate the foreign threat of the migrants with the biogenetic kinship structures of citizenry, of the “body politic” (Brand 65). Roy Miki recalls media’s initial descriptions of these migrants as “‘boat people’ –a phrase linking them discursively to the Vietnamese refugees who arrived in the late 1970s” (38). The media’s naming reflects the historical accumulation of names that interpellates migrants at the borders and that ruptures their trajectories. The port is a site of such historization: migrants are excluded from the colonial imaginary of Canadian kinships and their unsociability translates as unnecessary cargo and undesired labour that is then redirected back to the nations from which the communities fled; in this case, it is the Fujian province and its economic crisis from which the individuals “desperately wanted to find a safe haven” (Miki 39). The rusted boat was held at Campbell River while the snakeheads, members of the Chinese smuggling ring, were charged for human trafficking and Canadian authorities deliberated on how best to deport the undocumented Chinese peoples. After about a year, most migrants were sent back to China except for the choice few whose refugee applications were accepted.

Immediately following the 1999 article, Brand cites a *New York Times* article from 1998 profiling the joint efforts of American and Canadian authorities who dismantled a “ring that smuggled Chinese immigrants into the United States...through a Mohawk reservation along the border” (65, emphasis in original). The Chinese immigrants were mostly young men from the Fujian province; and the members of the reserve were aware of these refugees passing through their lands. The article states: “*The foggy creeks and wooded islands of the Indian territory, which is known as the St. Regis Mohawk Reservation on the American side, and the Akwesasne Indian Territory in Canada, have long been used to spirit gasoline, cigarettes, tobacco and drugs between the two countries*” (Brand 66, emphasis in original). Through the juxtaposition of news articles, Brand tacitly remarks how different modes of entry are possible because of cross-racial solidarity; a future-oriented and laborious kinship that engenders modes of entry/escape to make migrant life possible outside moments of danger. Brand acknowledges how this site of rupture is undergirded

by an alternative geographical formation of borders, by an Indigenous sovereign space that refuses to operate under the colonial territorialisation of ancestral lands.

Indeed, the Mohawk on the colonial border have a history of refusal that is not tempered by their legal realities. The Jay Treaty of 1794 on trade protects Indigenous rights, Audra Simpson writes, to “trade across the border as long as their goods were intended for trade with another Indigenous nation” (126). Though referencing the “cigarette-transport scheme [that] involved mail and wire fraud” (126), Simpson’s analysis of the agreement reveals the anticolonial operation of Indigenous kinships. As transnational trade is possible insofar as it occurs between two Indigenous nations, then the border crossing of Fujian migrants is a passage within these kinship structures, between one Indigenous nation and another rather than between settler-colonial states. Of course, this story is no romance as the conditions and price for smuggling devastate the refugees, and Indigenous agency is constrained by precarity due to “the perception of Mohawk mobility as already a crime” (Simpson 144). Nonetheless, as Rita Wong notes: “That some Mohawks have chosen to assist Chinese migrants...putting themselves at risk...can have the effect of asserting their independence as well as political solidarity with the imagined Third World” (173).

While Brand’s first vignette explores the affective discourse of xenophobia that demarcates a body politic against undocumented Asian subjects fleeing the failures of other state economies, her second offers an image of accomplice work that solidifies possibilities for a future of more intimate kinships between them and that unravels state border politics through the extra-national space of the Mohawk reserve. She writes: “One wants to ask who better able or authorized to give safe passage to anyone across North America than the Mohawk or any of the people who inhabited this continent before the New World settlers” (66). Brand inscribes the history of Indigenous hospitality and guidance that marks first encounters onto the contemporary to explore transnational affiliations outworking the colonial institutionalizing of territory and nationalism. Roy Miki’s work speaks to this radical potential in transnational forces as he considers, more abstractly, the force of diaspora and migrant movement to not just rewrite but unsettle the nation. He discusses the potential power of global forces within localities that produce “altered states,” states that “expose and unravel homogeneities –of culture, identities, discourses– which cover over global/local indeterminacies” (58). In other words, global networks of people, which are structured by capitalist violence and are survived through unpredictable encounters and transnational intimacies, erupt in and are shaped by localities, and thus undermine national determinants of those localities. There is the potential for a “nation as a complex of heterogeneous global/local formation” (Miki 52).

However, what could it mean for ports to be open to unwelcomed guests, or subjects who do not ask to enter, who enter irrespective of labour demands? Or, how does one extend kinship to those who are denied the possibilities of entry, and those who do not make it through the journey? To evoke Haraway's questions about kin-making: "What shape is this kinship, where and whom do its lines connect and disconnect...What must be cut?" (2). In Vancouver, the Chinese migrants in 1999 were perhaps understood as too many cheap labourers and were returned to the waters as disposable labour. They were also cut affectively from networks of kinship as the highly spectacled nature of their arrival became a means for the nation to bolster the local community's xenophobic fears and to forge national unity—as Miki notes, Chinese Canadians were also outraged by the potential 'queue-jumping' of the "boat people" (33). The Canadian identity is reconstructed through settler-colonial logics of the origin story that is defined by multiple iterations of the "cut" that Haraway laments. The language of the 1998 *New York Times* article reminds Brand of the "neo-origins" (67) of Canada. The article's descriptors of the Mohawk reserve as "wooded islands" and "foggy creeks" are "foundational to this romance" of the Canadian and American origin narratives of *terra nullius* and *terra incognita* that articulate a national identity against Indigeneity and continue to do so with the addition of Asian illegality (67). Are futures not foreclosed from the very moments of exclusion and state rejection? How can literary kinship reopen possibilities for these futures?

Questioning the overdetermining "neo-origins" of Canada in her own collection, *Talking to the Diaspora*, Lee Maracle similarly speaks to a history of Asian exclusion. This text marks the beginnings of an era in Maracle's literary career that explicitly thematizes the form of dialogue. *Talking*, much like her later *My Conversation with Canadians* (2017), is both an investment in conversing with others and a formal critique of dialogue whereby each person putatively holds equal power, space, and standing.⁶ The latter model of liberal discourse, Maracle demonstrates, reproduces the reformist politics of reconciliation and the historical and ongoing hierarchical differentials of power. Whereas she opens *My Conversations* by inviting the non-Indigenous—usually white—reader to her kitchen table, a space of radical feminist thought and action, in *Talking*, she hails a different and more ambiguous reader/listener to different geographies in her life. The "*Diaspora*" she talks to variously includes Palestinians, African Americans, white settlers, and other marginalized

6 Maracle has mentioned she might continue this formal thematic with a book tentatively entitled, *My Conversations with Indigenous Peoples*. Maracle announced the possibility of this book at "After Conversation" on April 9th, 2019, an event for the "Afterlives" working group held at the Centre for Indigenous Studies in the University of Toronto.

communities around the world.⁷ By including white settlers in the category, Maracle gestures towards the settlerhood and settler-complicity of diasporic communities in Canada and the diasporic and unsettled nature of white settlers (Kamboureli 2).

There is a moment when Maracle speaks directly to South Asian diasporans in an allusion to the *Komagata Maru* incident of 1914—an eerie ancestor to the 1999 moment—in order to historicize Canadian border politics. This allusion appears in the poem "Gassy Jack's Clock," in which Maracle traces the colonial history of Vancouver in the form of Gassy Jack, after whom the neighbourhood Gastown takes its name. To uncover the history that is erased in the name of 'heritage' figures, the speaker remembers the *Komagata Maru* apprehended in Coast Salish waters, at the Coal Harbour port in the Burrard Inlet. Gurdit Singh commanded the "British-built and Japanese owned steamship" in an effort to make a continuous journey as a British citizen to another British colony, Canada (Mawani 2), but he was not included in the small group of twenty people who were allowed to disembark the ship. The speaker in Maracle's poem imagines the state of the Punjabi detainees, "aboard the close quarters of the ship/ without water – starved and hungry./ Parts of the left over ship [now] languish in/ the museum – a hard iron-rusted/ reminder of this country's beginnings."⁸ The nation's "beginnings" are a fiction built on violence and exclusion, and thus each iteration of state violence and exclusion is an instantiation of the conditions required for the origin story to remain in place. In other words, the mistreatment and deportation of the South Asian passengers aboard the *Komagata Maru* is an integral part of the "country's beginnings," related to (yet clearly different from) the Indigenous experience of violent displacement, genocide, and marginalization. Maracle offers another valence of the rupture: rather than a vague feeling that collectivizes different subjects affectively, the rupture sheds light on the architectures and physical structures of settler-colonialism. It opens the possibility for collectivizing different experiences by reanimating old wounds or the memories of violence in the present. The wounds come back with scar tissue attached—scar tissue with the potential to viscerally and memorially connect the wounded across fields of seemingly incommensurable difference.

7 A similar definition of "settler" can be found in Daniel Heath Justice's *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* (2018): "I still most often prefer the term 'settler,' followed by 'colonizer' and other related terms, to signify those peoples and populations not identified as Indigenous" (14). However, he does "grapple" with the term for how "it obscures the ways in which physical and symbolic violence against Black bodies, minds, and spirits is also deeply enmeshed with anti-Indigeneity within settler colonial race logics" (15). This terminological issue raises some of the central concerns in the study of both Indigeneity and Diaspora that I explain in footnote 10.

8 Maracle, "Gassy Jack's Clock." Her book is not paginated, so in-text citations will refer to poem titles only.

The poem notes how these violent (re-)“beginnings” are now commemorated in museums in a kind of politics of apology for the *Komagata Maru* travellers, an apology circuit that Indigenous communities know well to distrust. The museumification does not redress the current make-up of the Canadian nation that may be something else had immigration policies been different. While speaking about 1914, Sir Richard McBride might as well have been reflecting the climate in 1999: “To admit Orientals in large numbers would mean, in the end, the extinction of the white people and we have always in mind the necessity of keeping this a white man’s country” (qtd. in Salehi 12). Buttressing his thoroughgoing ethnocentrism, McBride also articulates the overextended jurisdiction of the “white man’s country,” which is not limited to the land since the state encroaches sea spaces in a way that makes states “mobile entities, with the port of entry operating as a mobile island that inhibits others’ mobility” (Mountz 318). However, what is not museumified or prohibited by the state’s management of the port geography is Maracle’s transhistorical witnessing of the men on the ship; her way of looking that is angled by a critique of Vancouver’s settler-colonial narrative and a desire for a different narrative. This transhistorical witnessing is a methodology of kinship. Animating Heath Justice’s formulation of kinship as entangled contexts, Maracle demonstrates how one’s history is contextualized by and through the histories of others within a larger relation that operates despite the colonial episteme of individuation.

Moving away from the port specifically, in the last poem of the collection, “Hedgebrook,” Maracle imagines the port’s global-local encounters in spaces of sovereign Indigenous land, which she explores as the constitutive outside of the ruptures of state violence. She considers a narrative in which the possibilities of unconditional entry are not foreclosed as they are in colonial geographies but facilitated within Indigenous ones that refuse the colonial logic of land ownership. The speaker travels to Hedgebrook, a women’s writing retreat on Whidbey Island, upon land territorialised as Washington state but full of “Suquamish voices” (“Hedgebrook”). She travels in a ferry to another nation-state through “dark green islands” and feels welcomed: “My body knows these islands.” The refrain, “I am home again” weaves the poem together. The speaker remembers:

The story of this corridor belongs to Suquamish boatmen
 ferrying families from one end of its territory
 to the other. Cedar and ermine skin-clad women ancestors
 stand regal in the canoes while brown-skinned men
 dip and sing through the slate under-bellied
 blue-green water.

The name “boatmen” here does not refer to Vietnamese refugees or Chinese migrants, but People of the Boat, people who travel and help others journey through lands. In the line, “Suquamish boatmen” are “ferrying families from one end of its territory / to the other,” Maracle avoids qualifying the subjects by sexual, cultural, or linguistic markers. While it is unclear if the families being ferried are Suquamish, they are accompanied by Suquamish “women ancestors.”

We also do not know if the families travel in Suquamish territory or a shared water “corridor” due to the pronoun “its” whose ambiguity unsettles the logics of ownership that attend its grammar. In fact, the “it” that possesses the territory must be the territory itself, or the “corridor,” a shared waterway. Thus, the boatmen are the decentred subjects of the territory as they help others travel through the land’s sovereign self. The boatmen *and* the land facilitate entry in a production of space that has become the “story of this corridor.” If rupture as a colonial mode of subjection functions by disrupting one’s sense of being through displacement, then Maracle suggests that Indigenous ontological ties to the land cannot be displaced or dispossessed as there is no pretense to possessing the land in the first place.⁹ It is a sovereign place, in which Maracle’s speaker feels welcomed because she knows the land’s “story” of Suquamish boatmen and respects them, the waterways, and her hosts, the “ermine skin-clad women ancestors.” She does not refer to any border protocols that deny entry based on logics of biogenetic belonging calcified by claims to jurisdiction over the land. As the speaker only recalls the ongoing history of Suquamish boatmen –and not her passage through settler-colonial borders– she arrives at Hedgebrook feeling inspired to weave a story about land through deep time and through connections with her human and non-human relations.

The poem, that Maracle crafts from her memories of Hedgebrook, explores how entry into a place in which one feels at home can also be an artistic practice of nurturing old and new relations. Entering a home, even if one has not been there before, is a decolonial and artistic act. While one may not feel an ancestral connection with the land, it is still a place to pass through or visit in accordance to local epistemologies and traditions. Disavowing this practice of respect would instantiate the settlerhood of migrants (Lai 102). In fact, Maracle’s collection in general articulates a desire, of the Indigenous speakers, for everyone who is displaced or diasporic to feel at home somewhere. For those who

⁹ See also: Aileen Moreton-Robinson on Indigenous conceptions of belonging as an ontology of land-relations that continues beyond the dispossession of one’s traditional lands in “I Still Call Australia Home: Indigenous Belonging and Place in a Postcolonizing Society.” *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty*, U of Minnesota Press, 2015, pp. 3-18.

are not physically, psychologically, or metaphorically at home, Maracle offers her kinship to facilitate that entry into a place and relation of welcome. In the poem “On the 25th Anniversary of Martin Luther King’s Death,” Maracle imagines ports extending into bridges of kinship. In the beginning, the speaker is a young Indigenous girl watching the televising of violence against the Black students marching in Birmingham; by the end, the speaker is a grandmother theorizing the practice of building kin with other marginalized communities. She specifically conceptualizes kinship with Black communities as a bridge-building dreamwork: “This dream is a bridge / inviting others to its arc...On this bridge / across turtle’s back / free spirits still dance” (“On the 25th”). As dreamwork encompasses kin-making in the past, present, and future, Maracle does not project a method of togetherness beyond this gesture of infinite openness.

In “Oratory on Oratory,” in fact, Maracle celebrates the unknown that awaits us after the reconceptualization of our relations and of the structures that divide us. According to the Stó:lo epistemology, she explains, oratory is a storying of oneself and of one’s experiences to better journey towards the good life. It “is about the freedom between beings and about cherishing the distance between them” (64). In respecting and listening to the distance, one can move in relation to others and not try to “fully understand the being/phenomena under study. We recognize that we are not able to walk inside the body/mind/heart/spirit of the being/phenomenon” (Maracle 63). To enter into kinship then is not to determine its journey, but to transform oneself in relation to the unknown of that kinship. As Maracle dreams of bridges that connect others to herself and to the land on which she dreams, she makes possible the capacities for life and kinship that do not prohibit or overdetermine the unpredictability of what Jean-Luc Nancy would call the inoperative community, a collective emerging spontaneously without a collectivizing force. This community emerges not within the rupture, but in the unknown intimacies of the future.

But on the other side of Maracle’s bridge, for Black diasporic people like Brand, there is no place outside the rupture in which Blackness finds its “true existence” (220). To return to the opening vignette of Brand in the Vancouver bus, the Black gestures of cross-racial kinships cannot perform from any other perspective than the one from within the rupture. As Maracle dreams an Indigenous architecture, a bridge, that opens infinitely into the world to uncover her relations with global Indigenities and colonized life, Brand highlights the capacities of Black life on Turtle Island to extend kinship with local Indigenous subjects and communities through colonial architectures. After the Coast Salish woman enters the bus, Brand observes the tragic irony of her encounter with the Black bus driver. The bus driver gives directions to the Salish woman, telling “through lost maps...the woman of

a lost country her way and the price she should pay” (220). At first, I asked: why the word “country” rather than nationhood? What is a lost country for Indigenous peoples in Canada? What is the scale of “country” for Indigenous peoples: is it a local landscape or a cultural and linguistic collective? Does the attention to country and belonging operate evenly between the realities of the bus driver and the woman? At second glance, the term “country” reiterates the significance of Brand’s potential misrecognition of, disconnect from, and speculation about the Coast Salish woman; that their relation is only legible to her through the frames of loss that the rupture dictates. Both subjects are structured by a colonial framework from which one of the only modes of mutual understanding that can take place is through a shared affective experience of vague feeling: “We all feel it.” Brand does not know about the Coast Salish woman beyond the context of the bus, its representation of colonial routes, and its travelling structure as the Door of No Return. As a result, she stays, to borrow from Haraway, in the thick of the present and in the trouble of the bus. The present is even thicker as “lost country” could also refer to the nation-state and its own loss of coherence and collectivity. The state not only reproduces the conditions for the rupture but is ruptured itself. Within this break is the space of the bus, a moving spatial arrangement of Blackness and Indigeneity that provides conditions for what Brand calls elsewhere in the text, “strange intimacy” (15), an ambivalent affect that again, is constituted by the subjects’ different histories and experiences of loss. The acknowledgement of the “lost maps” and “lost country” creates an intimacy between Brand and her unaware bus-mates, and tacitly affirms their continuity and futurity: for to even make such an acknowledgement means they all exist and persist within the spaces of loss and violence.

Through their focus on border politics and migrant entry, Brand and Maracle reconceptualize the ruptures of the port as a geography of kinship that might produce spaces for alternative world-building. Although they imagine the port from distinct perspectives –Brand highlights the role of the nation-state in inhibiting but not precluding kinship, while Maracle explores the possibilities of kinship that emerge in land-based epistemes of movement– where their two visions meet is in their stubbornly held view that kinship among racialized subjects can emerge despite and beyond the frameworks of the nation-state and can imagine the nation’s exclusionary collectivity otherwise. While there are well-established differences within and between Indigenous and Diaspora studies – differences that often turn on one’s relation to the land and the route to decolonization– Maracle’s and Brand’s works help to radically expand our understanding of how these two disparate fields might meet and how their differences are critical for decolonizing

academia and our relations.¹⁰ By drawing attention to the ways in which the polyvalent rupture triangulates relations among Indigenous, Asian, and Black subjects, they suggest how forms of kinship can arise amidst the violent governance of racialized life in Canada. In doing so, they make a demand on the reader, pressing us to return to the archive, and to uncover the unexpected, forgotten, or foreclosed histories of racialized kinship that exist below the official national narratives. However, our work is always incomplete: even the port—a site that seems overdetermined by the border politics of the nation-state—must be entered in different ways, at different times, and from different perspectives, to constellate some understanding of how to achieve what Lee Maracle calls the good life.

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¹⁰ In the *TransCanada Series*, while *Critical Collaborations: Indigeneity, Diaspora, and Ecology in Canadian Literary Studies* (2014) is a major collection exploring the transdisciplinary effects of the subtitled key terms in the "undisciplining of the discipline" of Canadian literary studies (3), the collection, *Cultural Grammars of Nation, Diaspora, and Indigeneity* (2012), thematizes the mobilizing tensions that characterize study in the intersections of Indigeneity and Diaspora: namely, nation, sovereignty, and postcolonialism. Outside of Canadian studies, Iyko Day's article, "Being or Nothingness: Indigeneity, Antiblackness and Settler Colonial Critique" distills a central concern in the interdisciplinary scholarship. She reviews the logical thread of Jared Sexton's response to Enakshi Dua and Bonita Lawrence's article on anti-racism and on the imperative to re-foundationalize the field with respect to the ongoing colonization of Indigenous peoples. Sexton suggests this call attends the anti-Black indigenization of Black people in North America, which Iyko Day recognizes as a conflict, in part, of defining sovereignty. For Sexton to make his claims, he assumes that land-based decolonization reifies another order of the state of things, a state of Indigenous sovereignty that does not account for the abolition of the anti-Black state. Day pairs Sexton's claims with Glen Coulthard's definition of sovereignty to demonstrate how it is conditioned by the refusal of state recognition and of state antagonism. Like others, Day's work bases itself in "the heterogeneous constitution of racial difference in settler colonies" (110) rather than the exceptionalist logics of claiming slavery at the "threshold of the political world" (Sexton qtd. in Day, 110). In other words, this intersectional work holds together disparate disciplinary and subject formations, much like Daniel Coleman's analysis in "Indigenous place and diaspora space: of literalism and abstraction," *Settler Colonial Studies*, 2015, 1-16.

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