"No one's free who isn't free to love": Love and History Across Canadian Boundaries in George Elliott Clarke's *Beatrice Chancy* and *Québécité: A Jazz Fantasia in Three Cantos*

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Abstract

George Elliott Clarke's 1999 opera *Beatrice Chancy* is the story of the daughter of a slave owner and a slave in Nova Scotia in 1801. It addresses Canada's ignorance about its history of slavery from 1689-1834. The play shows how love becomes perverted in a society in which bodies can be owned, to the point that the landscape becomes "*transfigured by unfulfilled love*" (143). *Québécité*, on the other hand, is an opera about two interracial couples getting married in contemporary Quebec City. It is Clarke's utopia and Beatrice's dream: a world where love is possible across any historical or cultural boundaries. This utopia, informed by Canada's policy of multiculturalism, is problematic, especially in terms of its engagement with Québec's own cultural and historical issues. As performances, however, both plays invite an inclusive community of Canadians to discuss the issues raised, even if they cannot yet be solved.

Précis

Beatrice Chancy (1999), l'opéra par George Elliott Clarke, est l'histoire de la fille d'une esclave Noire et de son maître Blanc dans la Nouvelle Ecosse de 1801. Adressant l'ignorance qu'ont plusieurs Canadiens de l'esclavage pratiquée au Canada entre 1689 et 1834, la pièce démontre comment se pervertit l'amour dans une société où un corps peut être une commodité. *Québécité* (2003), d'autre part, met en scène deux couples de races mixtes qui se marient dans la Ville de Québec contemporaine. L'histoire est également l'utopie de Clarke et le rêve de Beatrice: une monde où l'amour est possible à travers toutes frontières historiques et culturelles. Cette utopie tant informée par l'éthique multi-culturelle Canadienne est très problématique, spécialement mise en vue de son engagement avec la dynamique culturelle et historique du Québec au sein du Canada. À travers leurs manifestations dramatiques, les deux pièces invitent une communauté inclusive de Canadiens à discuter les problèmes abordés, sans exiger leur résolution.

Introduction: Love Across Canadian Borders

Canadian poet and playwright George Elliott Clarke's two operas, *Beatrice Chancy* (1999) and *Québécité: A Jazz Fantasia in Three Cantos* (2003) are very different in content and tone: the former's context is Black slavery in Canada while the latter tells the story of modern-day interracial romance and marriage in Quebec City. The two plays do, however, share an almost identical line that highlights the difficulty love relationships will encounter, whether one is in Nova Scotia in 1801 or Quebec City in 2003: "*love is as lonely as this man and this woman, loving each other alone"* (*Beatrice* 39), and "Love is as lonely as a man and a woman / Loving each other alone" (*Québécité* 30). Both plays, however different they may seem, are preoccupied with the possibility of loving across racial, cultural, and historical boundaries in Canada. Sexual/romantic love is highlighted in the plays as the most intimate manifestation of a love that can also apply to family, friends, and, most importantly, to the community at large. Many Canadians live under the colourful veneer of Canadian multiculturalism, where there is no need to question how the legacy of racist practices like slavery affects our ability to communicate with each other in the present. *Beatrice Chancy* begins the very important project of remembering suppressed Canadian pasts that can then lead to a more productive (if problematic) Canadian dreaming, as manifested in the idealized marriages of *Québécité*. The act of remembering a traumatic past together through witnessing these plays creates space to dream up a world in which equal, healthy love is possible across any Canadian boundary.

Beatrice Chancy is the gothic tale of the daughter of a slave owner and a slave in Nova Scotia in 1801. It is fictional, but inspired by the true story of an Italian woman named Beatrice Cenci, who was hanged for parricide in Italy in 1599. The story is also (shockingly) plausible based on what is known about slavery in Canada. When this daughter, Beatrice, falls in love with

one of her father's slaves, he whips them both and rapes his daughter. Beatrice gets her revenge by murdering her father, a deed for which she is finally hanged. The play shows that within the power dynamics of a culture in which bodies can be owned, love becomes perverted, leaving only, at the end of the play, a landscape "*transfigured by unfulfilled love*" (143).

On the other hand, *Québécité* "colours in" Quebec City with the story of two interracial couples, Laxmi and Ovide and Colette and Malcolm, falling in love, fighting, making up, and getting married in a much more fantastical form. The play takes the ideology of multiculturalism as the system through which these lovers can overcome problems of race and culture in contemporary Québec, where those issues are already highly sensitive. This classical comedy ends with the rather utopian image of the lovers riding off into the Québécois sunset on Vespas singing, "*Vive le Québec Libéré*" (92). Though much lighter in tone than *Beatrice Chancy*, *Québécité* raises serious questions about what happens when conventional love stories become racialized, and imagines the possibility of a world (unlike Beatrice's) where love can cross any boundary. The utopian world of *Québécité* actually manifests *Beatrice Chancy*'s unfulfilled dream: the dream of a Canada where troubled pasts have been remembered and reconciled, and healthy, fulfilled love thrives.

Though I will be focusing on how historical issues affect love in the present, the questions raised in this paper are not limited to the realm of romance. Interracial love in Canada works metonymically for many other levels of compassion, understanding, and equality in various aspects of Canadian life. Love is a good place to start to look at some of the problems of the legacies of racial power imbalances in Canada that can interrupt or pervert many different types of relationships. "Racing" love (to borrow from Clarke's article "Racing Shelley" on the hidden Black text in Percy Bysshe Shelley's *The Cenci*) allows us to crystallize the issues of

suppressed histories and hierarchical power relationships as they exist today in Canada. If we can interrogate some of the problems of love relationships and their possibilities in today's Canada, then we can extend out the critique into the larger issues of attitudes toward race, history, and power in our nation.

For these reasons, I will be drawing on Frantz Fanon's analysis of love in a culture (in his case, France; in ours, Canada) that still functions on the basis of power imbalances that can obstruct healthy love relationships. Together with Fanon, "I believe in the possibility of love; that is why I endeavor to trace its imperfections, its perversions" (42). Fanon writes, "let us remember that our purpose is to make possible a healthy encounter between black and white" (80). Here, too, I would like to address the possibility of such healthy encounters, not just between Black and White, but between people with any form of racial identity in contemporary Canada. The definition of love that I employ here is Fanon's, in that "true, authentic love—wishing for others what one postulates for oneself, when that postulation unites the permanent values of human reality—entails the mobilization of psychic drives basically freed of unconscious conflicts" (41). Essential to finding freedom from these unconscious conflicts is remembering the past and coming to terms with the present. Once this work is done, we can see more clearly what problems Canadian love encounters, and what solutions can be found.

The catalyst for the action of both of these plays is desire for an other, the urge to break through boundaries. Desire, according to Fanon, is always for recognition from that other. The characters in both *Beatrice Chancy* and *Québécité* want to be recognized as complex beings with differences that should be celebrated, and not ignored. Fanon writes,

> As soon as I *desire* I am asking to be considered. I am not merely here-and-now, sealed into thingness. I am for somewhere else and for something else. I demand

> that notice be taken of my negating activity insofar as I pursue something other than life; insofar as I do battle for the creation of a human world—that is, of a world of reciprocal recognitions. (218)

Beatrice's desire for Lead in *Beatrice Chancy* instigates her father's ire, while the lovers' desire for each other in *Québécité* creates both conflict and the possibility of reconciliation. Thinking through these plays, both as texts and in performance, may help us to find new ways to encounter Fanon's "true, authentic love" across any Canadian boundary.

Both of these plays engage with these issues in terms of history. Slavery in Canada is one of many skeletons in Canada's national closet, but it is one whose legacy suffuses race relations in our present. In writing *Beatrice Chancy,* Clarke is trying to correct the "mass ignorance [that] exists about the conduct of slavery in the British North American colonies—including ceded Québec" (*Beatrice* 7). Canadians like to think American slavery was much longer and much worse than Canadian slavery, even though the time periods were similar: 1689 to 1834 in Canada and 1619-1865 in the United States. Robin W. Winks, who wrote the definitive work *The Blacks in Canada* in 1971, and Joseph Mensah, writing in 2002, more than 30 years later, both discover a shocking "lack of literature" in terms of the Black experience in Canada (Mensah 4). Mensah writes, "some Canadians still believe that slavery did not exist in this country and that slavery was an entirely U.S. phenomenon. This is not surprising since Canadian historians have generally attempted to black out the Black experience in Canada" (43). This ignorance is not merely negligence: selective amnesia is an important part of developing a sense of Canadian national identity, especially as opposed to the United States. Mensah explains that

> As Canadians, we have the tendency not only to ignore our racist past, but also to dismiss any contemporary racial incidence as nothing but aberration in an

> essentially peaceful, tolerant, charitable, and egalitarian nation. For the most part, we believe we are superior to countries, such as the United States, that are struggling with racial problems. (1)

This widely held attitude that Canadians have always been better than the United States in terms of race relations is, when compared against the history, rather hypocritical: in terms of "the maltreatment of racial minorities, Canada has a disreputable past and present and, therefore, has little to be proud of" (Mensah 2). In fact, some Black Loyalists from the United States who settled in Central and Eastern Canada "alleged that racial oppression was more pervasive in Canada," leading them to move back into the U.S. (54). Invisible racism can be insidious indeed, and "This allegation is still prevalent among some Black Canadians who are disillusioned by the subtle and sophisticated racism in this country; at least in the United States, Blacks generally know what they are up against" (Mensah 54). Canadians and Americans both have a disturbing history to contend with but, in Clarke's words, "At least Americans talk about it" ("Crime" 53).

Many years after slavery's abolition in Canada, most Canadian students celebrate Black History Month each year since its inception in the 1920s, and do not ever learn about slavery in Canada. Mensah quotes from James Walker, who wrote, "A student of Canadian history […] can go right through our school system, university courses and even graduate school without ever being exposed to the history of Blacks in Canada" (43). The problem is not only what happened in the past, but our inability to talk about it here in the present. Beatrice's story, though fictional, may have happened many times over, and staging *Beatrice Chancy* offers a rare opportunity to hear the voices of these ghostly enslaved.[1]

Even among those who know that slavery existed in Canada, many assume it was much less brutal and violent than it was in the United States. It is true that Canadian slavery was much

smaller in scale than in the United States because the Canadian fur trade economy did not depend on slaves for its work. "Stubbornly, though," Clarke writes in his preface to *Beatrice Chancy*, "slavery is slavery" (7). Slavery may not have been economically necessary, but it was socially necessary, as it indicated "visible proof of wealth and status" (Cooper 127). Afua Cooper reminds us that not only were Blacks from abroad enslaved, but also Aboriginal people, who were known at that time as *Panis,* and they were treated just as cruelly as the enslaved Blacks.

There are several concrete indications that there was nothing gentle about Canadian slavery. One indication is life expectancy: "The average age of death for Panis was 17.7 years, and for Blacks, 25.2" (Cooper 81). In contrast, according to the Oxford Companion to Canadian History, in 1801 "for Canadians, life expectancy at birth was 39 for women and 38 for men" (Baskerville). Rape, and even the breeding of female slaves was common practice in this "kinder" slavery. Because the offspring of the slave would take on its mother's status, a master impregnating a slave meant more slaves (Cooper 40). Female slaves were vulnerable not only to the physical labour and abuse of their male counterparts, but also to sexual violence against which they had no protection. Runaways were also common for all these reasons, and "the fact that these slaves were fleeing their enslavement reveals that, even if Canadian slavery has been considered to be 'mild' by some historians, the victims found it harsh enough" (Cooper 86-87).

One aspect of history that Canadians do like to remember is the Underground Railroad, a secret network through which many American slaves escaped to their freedom in Canada. Winks notes, "Scores of self-congratulatory newspaper articles appear each year in Toronto, London, Hamilton, and Windsor on the theme of how the slave found freedom in Canada" (ix-x). Of course, that's not the whole story. In 1792, Colonel John Graves Simcoe arrived in Upper Canada from Britain, where he was a staunch anti-slavery advocate. When he began to push for a

bill for the "immediate abolition of slavery in the province" of Upper Canada, the slaveholders resisted, claiming "that slave labour was essential for the economic life of the colony and that Simcoe would ruin them if he abolished slavery" (Cooper 101). In 1793, he finally succeeded in passing "an act to prevent the further introduction of slaves to limit the terms of contracts for servitude within this province" (Cooper 102). This act definitely did not abolish slavery: it meant that no slaves could be imported into Canada, and the children of current slaves born after this time would be free, but that every current slave in Canada must fulfil their (life) sentence (Cooper 102). Enslaved Americans had heard about this loophole by the War of 1812 and were moving northward to Canada, and to free states like Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin, and part of Minnesota, which had already prohibited slavery in 1787, six years before Simcoe's act passed. At the very same time, enslaved Canadians were escaping, through the Underground Railroad, to these same free states (Cooper 103). Paradoxically, then, the slaves were moving in opposite directions, the Americans northward and the Canadians southward. The mythology of the Underground Railroad has been a source of Canadian pride for a long time because it freed so many American slaves, but it should also, ironically, be a source of American pride for having freed so many Canadian slaves.

A most recent testimony to the importance of this incomplete narrative is this past year's Governor General's Literary Award winner for non-fiction, Karolyn Smardz Frost. She won for *I've Got a Home in Glory Land,* a biography of enslaved American couple Thornton and Lucie Blackburn, who escaped to Canada and remained there. In her acceptance speech for this book, she says that this couple "stayed to help build Canada as we know her today" (Smardz Frost para. 1). She admits that while the complete story would of course be impossible to tell, it is an important part of Canadian history:

> There is much that will never be known about the workings of this secret system but one aspect of its powerful legacy is very clear. The Underground Railroad came about because angry men and strong, defiant women like Thornton and Lucie Blackburn rejected what it meant to be born black in the antebellum United States. (para. 6)

Smardz Frost stops short of asking what it meant to be born Black in Canada at this time and in the years previous to the anti-slavery bill. With awards and speeches, we glorify Canada's role in freeing Black slaves from America, but we do not mention that many Black Canadians were either waiting to serve out their life sentence at the same time, or attempting to escape into the freer world—which in this case was, ironically, the United States. We must round out our cultural memories now by recovering lost stories like Beatrice's that have not yet been told.

Selectively forgetting the ghosts of the past is an important aspect of nation-making. As Daniel Francis argues, we carefully create national mythologies about our pasts in order to maintain an image of ourselves that we like:

> we describe ourselves as an inclusive cultural mosaic, while forgetting that racism was at the heart of Canadian culture for generations. The creation of myths—or to put it another way, the creation of unity—requires some forgetting. In order to live together, we try to get over our differences, put aside our grievances, show a united front. History is as much about forging a livable consensus as it is about remembering. (12)

This statement leads us to wonder: for whom is this consensus livable, and who participates in the forming of this consensus? Canada's national myths forge a reputation of multicultural

harmony and acceptance, but when we choose to forget a racist past, we cannot address it in the present.[2]

The problem is that so much of the systematic racism in Canada's past is a part of our present. In his 1985 novel *Comment faire l'amour avec un nègre sans se fatiguer*, Haitian-Montrealer Dany Laferrière demonstrates the ways in which historical power imbalances inhibit the possibility of love today. Laferrière narrates an argument between an unnamed protagonist and his white lover, ostensibly over a bowl of rice. The conflict, the protagonist realizes, was not simply about that bowl of rice, but rather, "plus je réfléchis, plus j'ai tendance à croire qu'il s'agit moins d'une affaire de riz qu'un vieux malentendu historique, irréparable, complet, définitif, un malentendu de race, de caste, de classe, de sexe, de peuple et de réligion" (80). This kind of "malentendu," or misunderstanding—literally mis-hearing—can arise across different identity positions in multiple territories of oppression and victimization that reside in, for example, a bowl of rice.

We as Canadians are all complicit in the work of our national amnesia, and if we do not choose to acknowledge the oppression of the past, then that oppression will remain a part of our present. M. Nourbese Philip writes: "We must not forget. Neither the oppressor not the victim—not Canada or the Native person, the African or the Asian—we will not forget. […] To forget would be tantamount to engaging in massive and collective social amnesia" (24). Remembering the past can also create real hope for the future. Philip, for example, sees remembering as an active engagement in the present, where memory may actually play a "subversive role" in that "memory is more than nostalgia—it has a potentially kinetic quality and must impel us to action" (20). A Canada where we are free to move on from our past necessarily only exists in a dream world, a utopia, because our present behaviour—as amnesiacs—chains us to our shameful and

hurtful past. We all live with the legacy of victimization and perpetration, and must remember the past in order to understand and love each other more equally. We must remember *Beatrice Chancy* in order to dream *Québécité*.

My first chapter will focus on *Beatrice Chancy* and the ways in which the power imbalances of slave culture interrupt loving relationships both for the characters and for present-day audiences as an insufficiently remembered historical legacy. Clarke uses many elements of the traditional gothic narrative in this play to confront both the Canadian past and its present. Maggie Kilgour notes that the gothic form is definable more easily "by its properties than by an essence," some of these properties being "conventional settings (one castle, preferably in ruins; some gloomy mountains—preferably the Alps; a haunted room that locks only on the outside) and characters (a passive and persecuted heroine, a sensitive and rather ineffectual hero, a dynamic and tyrannical villain, an evil prioress, talkative servants)" (5). *Beatrice Chancy*'s gothic castle is the Chancys' plantation, its locked cell where disobedient slaves are tied up and whipped by their master, and its mountains the isolated Annapolis Valley, an area from which it is impossible to "Scape to Halifax" because "Hound-face scarecrows / With hounds will thresh roads and fields to snatch us" (*Beatrice* 64-65). Beatrice is our persecuted heroine, Lead her ineffectual lover, and Chancy the tyrannical villain—that is, until Beatrice usurps his role in her terrible vengeance. Clarke takes these conventional aspects of the gothic tale and uses them, not to create a fantastical ghost story, but as a way to approach a real Canadian trauma and confront his audience with it in an effective way. The gothic tale becomes a slave narrative, a testimony that takes Beatrice as its passive female victim and transforms her into the villainous avenger, liberating both her fellow slaves and her audience's collective memory.

The gothic is also the ideal form in which to display an extreme manifestation of the devastation slave culture can have on human relationships. *Beatrice Chancy* is, at its heart, a family drama that charts the dissolution of the family in a culture in which bodies can be owned coercively. In the gothic, argues Kilgour, "'normal' human relationships are defamiliarised and critiqued by being pushed to destructive extremes" (12). One such extreme is incest, such as that committed against Beatrice by her father. Kilgour writes, "Incest in particular […] suggests an abnormal and extreme desire (a violation of natural family ties) that is antithetical to and subversive of social requirements" (12). Love is shown as perverted, violated until it becomes sexual violence. In this sense, the play engages with what Mark Edmundson, in his book on contemporary manifestations of the gothic, calls "the attractions of wielding and submitting to absolute power," which are ultimately also "the attractions of sadomasochism" (xviii). The sadomasochistic elements of this play manifest the difficulties of sexual/romantic love in a society dictated by power imbalances. The gothic is an ideal form in which to display perversion in a world, like slave-era Nova Scotia, in which healthy relationships become unsustainable: "The gothic is thus a nightmare vision of a modern world made up of detached individuals, which can be dissolved into predatory and demonic relations which cannot be reconciled into a healthy social order" (Kilgour 12). The social order presented in this gothic play is unhealthy, perverted, and echoes the imbalances of contemporary society.

The gothic genre, consisting as it does of "old material and traditions" (Kilgour 4), is an ideal genre in which to address issues of history and n(arr)ation. Kilgour argues that the gothic genre's "nostalgia for the past" was used to recover "a *native* English literary tradition" such that it "played an important part in the development of both political and literary nationalism" (13). Clarke takes this genre, which traditionally engages with the past in order to narrate a national

mythology, and subverts several of its aspects, for example by turning the passive victim, Beatrice, into the avenging villain by the end of the story. Clarke is thus able to use the gothic in order to challenge Canada's national history in its accepted version. *Beatrice Chancy* thus 'blackens' or racializes Canadian history in the gothic mode.

Further, the gothic is able both to engage with the past and make itself physically present in the reader, often through the frissons it generates in the attendant reader or audience. Clarke's project attempts to retrieve history, and uses the affective aspects of the gothic to bring it into the present. "From its origins," writes Kilgour, "the gothic was seen as encouraging a particularly intimate and insidious relationship between text and reader, by making the reader identify with what he or she read" (6). As a gothic narrative, Beatrice's terrifying story about Nova Scotia's past exposes "the gothic reality of modern identity, and by failing to represent an adequate solution it forces its readers to address them in real life, thus (ideally) using literature to encourage social change" (Kilgour 10). By experiencing Beatrice's horror story, audience members feel its resonances in the present and the ways in which a legacy of slavery remains in the racial hierarchies of modern society.

In my second chapter, I will argue that *Québécité* is, in effect, the utopian manifestation of Beatrice's dream: the world Clarke imagines here is possible only after Beatrice's testimony has been heard and Canadians can come to terms with the injustice of its past. The vehicle for this liberating utopia is Pierre Elliott Trudeau's policy of multiculturalism, which Clarke imagines as capable of solving issues of race and culture in modern-day Canada. *Québécité*'s utopian songs sound great and the multiracial characters harmonize flawlessly. As such a melodious utopia, however, *Québécité* is also on some level colonial. A utopia is necessarily one person's vision of a better world that is imposed on that of his or her audience. In the same way,

colonial powers impose their values on the colonized citizens, and in this sense colonialism is already implied in the utopian imagination. *Québécité* specifically imagines a world that sings the praises of federal Anglo-Canadian multiculturalism, but does not address the specific post-colonial issues of Québec itself, in which this musical comedy is set.

When the policy of multiculturalism was first implemented in 1971, Pierre Elliott Trudeau reportedly told Parliament,

> The government will support and encourage the various cultures and ethnic groups that give structure and vitality to our society. […] They will be encouraged to share their cultural expression and values with other Canadians as to contribute to a richer life for us all. (qtd. in Francis 83)

Will Kymlicka informs us that "the government's documents make clear" that "the main goals of multiculturalism policy (and most of its funding) have been to promote civic participation in the larger society and to increase mutual understanding and cooperation between the members of different ethnic groups" (485-86). This ideology provides the structure of Clarke's utopia. Several critics have spoken out against multiculturalism, especially for "undermining the historical tendency of immigrant groups to integrate, encouraging ethnic separatism, putting up 'cultural walls' around ethnic groups, and thereby eroding our ability to act collectively as citizens" (Kymlicka 480). Like any single solution that is applied to many complex and subjective problems, multiculturalism cannot be accepted uncritically.

I will be addressing these issues of Québécois history and identity in the terms that Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins define post-colonialism: as "an engagement with and contestation of colonialism's discourses, power structures, and social hierarchies" rather than merely a "temporal concept meaning the time after colonialism has ceased" (2). As a settler-invader

colony, Canada holds a problematic position as a post-colonial space. Settler-invader colonies "have been colonised by Europe at the same time that they themselves have colonised indigenous peoples who experienced (and frequently continue to experience) the constraints on freedom, language, religion, and social organisation" that come with living in any occupied country (6). In Québec specifically, there is a sense of having been doubly colonised, first by the French and then by the English, and the threat of Anglo-Canadian federalism is ever present in the Québécois collective consciousness. Many Quebeckers see multiculturalism as a powerful colonial weapon fashioned by federalist Anglo-Canada to obscure Québécois issues, so Clarke's choice to set *Québécité* in Québec's capital city adds layers of complexity to the issues of interracial romance across boundaries in Canada.

We must remember, however, that *Québécité*'s utopian dream is contained within its performance, and despite its problems, it creates the momentary possibility (even if merely a *feeling*) of positive change in Canada's race relations. Jill Dolan calls this sensation the "utopian performative" (7), the fleeting moment in which the participating audience is infused with the possibility of *a* better future if not *this* specific future. It may not be perfect, but as an affective performance, as what Clarke calls his "silly love song" (qtd. in Donelly D8), perhaps it is enough.

While Clarke's particular perspective is Black Acadian Canadian, or Africadian, these issues of race relationships are pertinent to all Canadian subjectivities. Afua Cooper has written a detailed history of Marie-Josèphe Angélique, a slave who burned down Montreal in 1734 to try to escape her bondage, and she argues that her story is

> not simply 'Black' history, but is also a Canadian story. In fact, it is a global narrative, one that belongs to all of us, whether or not we want to claim it, or feel

> good about it. The story of Angelique provides an opportunity for us to reclaim a hidden past. Since much of the Black past has been deliberately buried, covered over, and demolished, it is our task to unearth, uncover, and piece it together again. (10)

These issues affect us on a global scale, and the need to remember is imperative for our present relationships. Angélique's story, like Beatrice's, belongs to all of us, no matter what our background may be.

Remembering all of these hidden stories of racism in Canada casts a new light (or colour?) on the Canada we know as the mosaic nation. Canadians must learn who we are and what lies in our collective past, and come to terms with it in order to meet each other on equal terms. I would like to address and acknowledge here the arguments of writers like bell hooks, who suggests that when a scholar approaches a subject from an ethnic perspective that they do not share, they must acknowledge "the ethical issues of their race privilege, or what motivates them, or why they feel their perspective is important" (44). I understand the need to position oneself and to acknowledge that no scholarship is free from bias or emotional underpinning (for surely it would be rather dry if it were).

I do not, however, think there is any subject position from which one person can understand everything about another's, whether they share race, sex, language, religion, or even the same parents. I think it is a mistake to categorize people in boxes in terms of rights to speak or assumed motivations. Initially, my motivation to write about Clarke is that I love his writing. Secondly, I am a Canadian, an identity that I own as full of questions, and I am invested in interrogating that subject position as sensitively and thoroughly as I can while acknowledging

that these issues may not be unique to the Canadian situation and that the meaning of "Canadian" in itself is debatable. As Robin Mensah asks in his history of Blacks in Canada,

> Who can candidly claim objectivity in the emotional issues surrounding race and ethnicity in Canada? Who can even pretend to see both sides of the issue when innocent Aboriginal people are allegedly dragged into police cruisers and dropped off on the outskirts of town on chilly Prairie winter nights for no apparent reason other than the fact that they are Aboriginal people? Who can claim neutrality when Blacks are routinely harassed, arrested, and sometimes fatally shot in the streets of Toronto with little or no provocation? (7)

I would like to add, who can claim objectivity when this racism and oppression is a part of her ancestral past and living present? Thus, I present my biased subject position: I am a fourth-generation Scottish-Canadian with Anglo-Québécois roots born in Ontario and making my life in Montreal. I do not experience discrimination from the police or large institutions based on my skin colour, but I am aware of my position in the world as a woman, and I am sensitive to the linguistic tensions in Québec as a French-speaking Anglo. My descendants were not in Canada early enough to have held slaves, though surely they might have if given the chance. My great-grandfather was a Home Boy: like many poor and orphaned children in Britain at the time, he was forced to immigrate to Canada to provide slave labour for a farm family in Canada. This history of slavery is not, however, visible in my skin. Rather, my skin colour carries with it shades of oppression and the legacy of widespread racist practice. These assumptions of colour very much mark my identity in my Canadian present, and my racial, linguistic, and gendered subject position is complex and unique, just like everyone else's. The erasures and selective amnesia in Canada today mean that we all, no matter our colour, live with the legacy of our

colourful, though often whited-out, past. Without a smack of Africadian heritage or a sense of Francophone Québécois struggle, Beatrice's story is my story too, and yours, just as is Colette's, Malcolm's, Laxmi's, and Ovide's, as well as all those addressed but not spoken for in these two plays.

For this reason, my paper revolves around the desire for communal feeling: the possibility of an equal, healthy love relationship between people that is not overwritten by the power dynamics of a legacy of racism. As Colette says in *Québécité,* "no one's free who isn't free to love" (25). The desire of one person for another is a fundamental human feeling that, in a free society, should be explored and not suppressed. Love and desire were denied to Beatrice Chancy because of her race, and the refusal of love in her story is a Canadian legacy. It is an issue that is, of course, not restricted to issues of race, but proliferates in our society in many different ways. "The question that arises," Frantz Fanon writes, "is this: Can the white man behave healthily toward the black man and can the black man behave healthily toward the white man?" (169). Can we enter into a world in the future where love relationships across any boundaries can enact "the mobilization of psychic drives basically freed of unconscious conflicts" in order to achieve what Fanon calls "true, authentic love—wishing for others what one postulates for oneself, when that postulation unites the permanent values of human reality" (41)? We may not have the definitive answer to that question right now, but perhaps it lies between these two plays: if we can fully remember Beatrice Chancy, we can begin to dream *Québécité*. In the fleeting moment of the utopian performative, the possibility of a healthy Canadian community will arise, and then maybe the image of lovers driving off into the sunset on Vespa scooters singing "*Vive le Québec Libéré*" will not seem so far from reality after all.

Notes

[1] Neil Bissoondath offers several other examples of systematic racism in Canada's past. On May 13th, 1914, for example, a ship named the *Komagata Maru* landed at Vancouver. Of the 376 passengers on board, twenty-two were let off, and the rest of the ship was quarantined, and even garbage was not let off the ship. A stalemate ensued, leading to much illness and one death. It finally sailed away after two months in the harbour (Bissoondath 33). A second example is rather ironic in the context of Canada's relatively open immigrant laws and the pride Canadians take in being a country welcoming to people from all over the world. In the early 20th century, the "native population was contained on reserves, the small black communities effectively isolated from mainstream life, and entry to Canada by people deemed undesirable on racial and ethnic grounds was severely restricted" (Bissoondath 32). American and European whites were encouraged to immigrate to Canada, while other immigrants were discouraged through the use of an immigrant tax. East Asians exclusively were charged $200 and then $250 compared to the $25 to $50 for everyone else (30). The Japanese in Canada were historically discriminated against with internment camps during WWII, and there was a violent mob attack on Little Tokyo in 1907 (32). Further, residential schools were set beginning in the 1600s to try to "civilize" Native schoolchildren, many of whom encountered much physical, mental, and sexual abuse at these schools. The last of these schools closed as recently as 1998. This abuse was only recently acknowledged by the government, which began offering payments to victims of residential schools in late 2005.

[2] Nova Scotia has its own unique historical issues in terms of race relations. An event that is often pointed to as representative of racism in Halifax was the destruction of Africville in the late 1960s. Africville was a slum in Halifax, but it was also the epicentre of African-Nova

Scotian life for 150 years before it was bulldozed to make space for urban developments. The memory of this event, like slavery in Canada, is physically erased, paved over with cement, turf, and a few flowers in the name of urban development. Clarke writes, “We can guiltlessly commemorate, with a single plaque, an entire Black community—Africville—which had been in existence for almost 150 years when, in 1962, the city of Halifax decided to relocate its citizens, razing and burying all signs of Africville’s former life” (Foreword xiii). I would like to add that, when I visited Halifax in the summer of 2007, I could not even find the plaque, and was not sure whether or not I had, in fact, found the site where Africville once was until I was told that I had the next day. Figure 1 is a picture of what is left of Africville today.

Figure 1: Seaview Park, where Africville used to be.

Chapter One: "The landscape is transfigured by unfulfilled love":
Love and its Discontents in *Beatrice Chancy*

When composer James Rolfe asked George Elliott Clarke to write him a libretto in 1992, Clarke says he "began to dream an opera of pain: a nasty work that could jet blood and saliva in amnesiacs' faces" ("Embracing" 15-16). Over seven years, Clarke created *Beatrice Chancy*, a "true but often altered story" (*Beatrice* 152) loosely based on Beatrice Cenci, a woman who was beheaded for murdering her father in Italy in 1599. Beatrice Chancy, in Clarke's version, is the daughter of a Black slave and a White slave-owner in Nova Scotia in 1801. In this gothic thriller, slavery is a villain that corrupts every love relationship in the play: father and daughter, husband and wife, and young lovers. By the end, the stage directions read, "*the landscape is transfigured by unfulfilled love"* (143). In present-day Canada, Canadian history as we understand it has become that villain, complicating the possibility of healthy love relationships across cultural backgrounds because it silences so many of the traumas in our national past whose legacy we still live with. As a gothic narrative that details the perversions of love within slave culture, *Beatrice Chancy* actively remembers a national trauma by staging Beatrice's personal trauma.

Beatrice Chancy works especially well in the gothic form because of its built-in obsession with the past. Mark Edmundson cites critic Chris Baldick's definition of the gothic, and points out a central element: that of "A fearful sense of inheritance in time" (28). The gothic function, then, is a way of dealing with the past in that it organizes and repeats our anxieties about it, especially in terms of past trauma: "What haunts the psyche? Its traumatic past. […] Past traumas live on in the self […] to the point where we can quite literally become possessed, repeating the past in ever-intensifying neurotic circles. When Freud says that we are all sick, he means that we are all chained to the past" (32-33). History, then, and especially the history of

trauma, informs the anxieties that we are trying to work through when we engage with gothic narratives. The ability of the gothic is that it corrals "the anxiety that is free-floating in the reader or viewer and binds it into a narrative" (12). *Beatrice Chancy* is certainly a horrifying story, but one that distills a suppressed national trauma (Canadian slavery) and locks it into a narrative. The gothic provides Clarke with a form that both contains and confronts the anxieties of a forgotten Canadian past. We may not be able to confront our haunting past, but we certainly love our ghost stories.

Mark Edmundson argues that gothic stories enjoyed a revival in 1990s pre-millennial American culture, making *Beatrice Chancy's* publication date of 1999 especially significant. The reason for this proliferation, he argues, is that North American culture is obsessed with power. Our society is structured around hierarchies, in the family unit, in institutions like the University, and in the workplace, and as June Rathbone suggests, "Hierarchical systems are, by their structure, conducive to bullying" (287). We thrive under authority, we need it, but we constantly desire freedom from it: "A deep ambivalence about authority lies near the heart of our culture of Gothic" (Edmundson 21). Slavery, a system in which bodies can be physically owned and controlled, is the most extreme manifestation of the systems still functioning in North American culture.

The major conflict in *Beatrice Chancy* arises because Beatrice desires agency over her own body: an impossibility within slave culture. According to Angel M. Butts, a person's self and a person's body are "independent but closely related entities" (63). The core self is constituted of multiple selves that are variously owned by (given to) entities like the father, the lover, or the employer. Butts writes, "The way in which a single individual prioritizes each self determines the strength that each ownership stake has in controlling the actions of the

individual's body. The possibility for conflict arises as these ownership stakes are negotiated and exchanged" (63). Generally, a person chooses how to prioritize those selves, and problems can arise when an external force perceiving ownership over one of the person's selves comes into conflict with another. Beatrice wants to give a part of her self to her chosen lover, and her Father believes all of her selves belong to him, including daughter, lover, and slave. By offering part of herself to Lead, Beatrice challenges Chancy's ownership over her body.

In a gothic narrative, a refusal to submit to the powerful figures in a society is coded as a transgression, both celebrated and punishable. *Beatrice Chancy* highlights desire as transgressive for the oppressed slaves. Gothic stories often imagine worlds in which these transgressive desires can be realized, but they must also be punished by the end of the story. Maggie Kilgour writes,

> the gothic appears to be a transgressive rebellion against norms which yet ends up reinstating them, an eruption of unlicensed desire that is fully controlled by governing systems of limitation. It delights in rebellion, while finally punishing it, often with death or damnation, and the reaffirmation of a system of moral and social order. (8)

The gothic conflict of *Beatrice Chancy* is love. The play, as a whole, is obsessed with love: it is a beautiful impossibility for the slaves, whose bodies are already spoken for. The slaves lament variously, "Why should I love, why should I love, / When my heart's scraped by chains?" (19); "Why does the slave ever love? / Hatred be so much simpler…" (42); and "Why's it always the hated who must love?" (99). The characters understand that they are not free to love in this world, so the love they do encounter must on some level turn violent. Dumas, the poet of the slave community, points out, "This world's distorted—like love / When hate's mixed in" (15). The White reverend, Peacock, proclaims, "Love is the root and trunk and branch of all evil / And

invention in this constantly rotting world. / The history of passion is littered with lying bodies" (115). In this sense, the love in the play is always tinged with death, oppression, and violence, and Beatrice foreshadows the tragic ending early in the play with the words, "if true loves must part, everyone must part" (36).

Love, then, is a cruel reality, if a real dream. As such, the love in this play is couched in the vocabulary of dreaming. When Beatrice and Lead fall in love, many of their friends can see that Beatrice's father would never let her marry one of his slaves. Dumas sings, "Let a bee dream she'll marry" (29), and when it becomes clear that this love is not to be, "Our dreams are frozen stiff and break apart" (79). Even when Beatrice and Lead are together, they are already dreaming about a love they seem to know can never really materialize in marriage and a long life together. When they secretly meet after Chancy has discovered their love, Lead suddenly sits up nervously mid-kiss, "*losing a dream*" (64). Beatrice realizes, at the end of her traumatic experiences, that she was "dreaming, dreaming too much, / As if love could extinguish history" (119). Unfortunately, love cannot extinguish history, and it does not come for free, especially for the enslaved.

In slave culture, skin colour means the difference between slave-owner and slave, and thus who is free to love and who is not. This colour-coded hierarchy renders desire transgressive when it moves in any direction but down the hierarchy. One of the manifestations of this hierarchical power structure is that the people in Beatrice's life are unable to fully understand her identity as the daughter of a White slave-owner and a Black slave. Clarke has written on the problems of a "'zebra' consciousness" in Canadian culture as an important image in African-Canadian writing ("Canadian Biraciality" 203). "African-Canadian literature," he argues, "engages the symbol and the image of the mixed-race black because this figure violates the

sanctity of racial polarities" (203). The characters in the play understandably display a great deal of anxiety over the valences of blackness and whiteness, anxiously insisting on them as separate categories. Lustra speaks of the innocence of her love with Chancy in its early days in terms of whiteness:

> When I wed Chancy, his hands shone: Pure milk
>
> Glaced my skin, silk that whitens white.
>
> The next dawn, I felt snow kissing upon
>
> My face—white like our blessed love was white. (46)

She understands, however, that this love has been tainted, and that as slave owners, "Our white gives sunlight no more" (46). Lustra's ambivalence about whiteness is also apparent when, for example, she "blanches with shame" (53). Cruel overseer Dice sees whiteness as a saving substance that can erase or purify his bad blackness. He is grateful to his father, a "white saint" who created "the good that pinks my skin" by pumping white "sap" into his "ma's black thighs" (22). Dice desires what Frantz Fanon calls "a kind of lactification," or the cleansing of blackness within oneself by mixing it with whiteness (Fanon 47). Blackness, then, becomes the necessary negative of whiteness. Chancy actually needs blackness to maintain and reinforce his whiteness:

> what is whiteness without blackness?
>
> How can we be beautiful, free,
>
> Virtuous, holy, pure, *chosen,*
>
> If slaves be not our opposites? (26)

For the Black characters, however, black is beautiful, as when Lead sings:

> We are black—as coffee is black
>
> Black—as earthy bread is black,

Black and black and black.

We mean beauty. Can I get an amen? (79)

The characters in this play require the solidity of the categories of whiteness and blackness, and Beatrice creates a problem for them all with her doubled Black-White identity. The ambivalence of these two colours climaxes when Beatrice murders her father—a cruel but perhaps just event—and she "*shifts behind a screen to change her dress—from black to white*" (132). Beatrice's identity as *both* Black and White antagonizes the racial anxieties of slave culture. She is often described as some medium between black and white that place her on one side of the colour line. She is described as "Honey-tint Beatrice" (17), "honey looks wrapped in molasses silk" (18), "Black strawberry" (65), and "*cinnamon*" (59) by a fellow slave, her lover, and the stage directions respectively, all of which refer to her as some sort of delicious consumable. She is also, variously, "gold-tint Beatrice" (19), "a gold gal with violet hair" (22), "black woman," (42), "dark maid" (30), and "dust-coloured bitch!" (70). Both Black and White characters try to define her colour, place her in a category in which they can claim her.

At the beginning of the play, her free, White identity dominates within the family unit. She has been sent to Halifax, according to her father, "To shape her more like us—white, modern, beautiful" (52), and is welcomed as the Chancys' White daughter. The Chancy family understands Beatrice as a daughter, and she understands them as parents. When Chancy's friend, the Reverend Peacock, reminds him, "she is equally your daughter and your slave," Chancy responds, "she's my daughter" (27). Despite Lustra's jealousy of Beatrice's mother, who was Chancy's mistress, Lustra loves her like family, saying, "I strove hard to hate, / But my heart refused; you became my child" (74). Beatrice returns these sentiments, at one point greeting Lustra with "O second mother!" (31). On the other hand, the Black slaves also see her as part of

their family, and she is described as being welcomed "*home*" (34) when she returns from three years of schooling at a nunnery in Halifax. The slaves similarly attempt to "blacken" her in order to claim her as their own. At one point they wonder whether she will ever betray them, and Dumas says, "A white-coloured slave can backstab easy, / But Beatrice be dusky plum—true damson— / Down to her soul. She be our own daughter" (18). The family structure on one side whites out her Blackness, and on the other blacks out her Whiteness; she is always loved *because* or *despite*, not as a complete subject.

This loving *despite* is, of course, unsustainable, and the parent-child structure crumbles when Chancy finds out that Beatrice is in love with a Black slave named Lead. Suddenly, her Black identity becomes visible, and Chancy proclaims angrily, "you're nobody's slave but mine" (56). Similarly, when she and Lustra, a former mother and ally, have a conflict about this, Lustra reminds her of her place: "For a piece of property, you quarrel much" (72). Chancy's fatherly love is perverted, and he plans to rape her as a lesson in power: "She'll learn what it means to be property," he schemes (82). Beatrice's Black slave identity, when it becomes visible, conflicts with her White daughter identity, so the love between her and her parents becomes a struggle for power within the colour hierarchies of slave culture.

The love between father and daughter was never complete or healthy, and it now becomes dangerously perverted. Chancy objectifies Beatrice anew as purely Black and a slave, leading her to become, like her mother, his "forced wife" (17). Chancy reacts jealously to Lead because "Jealousy emerges when an individual is denied access to persons, objects, or rewards to which that individual feels entitled" (Butts 63). Chancy and Beatrice's father-daughter dynamic becomes violently perverted: Chancy mocks their family relationship when she becomes pregnant, snickering, "I'll beget son and grandson, / while she gets son and brother" (97). The

power dynamics of slave culture make it impossible for Chancy to react appropriately as a father, and his desire for complete possession becomes obsessive and violently sexual.

Similarly, Lustra is unable to understand Beatrice as a whole being, and their relationship fluctuates depending on which aspect Lustra chooses to recognize. At times, Lustra understands them both to be slaves because of their gender, referring to Chancy as "our master" (29), and explaining to Beatrice, "My chains are invisible, silent: / But they weight me, they press me down" (74). Lustra sees that equally for Black and White, "It is women's fate to endure / Dishonour, injury, pain" (74). She also questions slavery as a practice, understanding that, as a White woman, "the genius of her culture is theft" (29). Though White, Lustra is also a victim of slave culture, and her power is contingent on her abusive husband. When Chancy rapes Beatrice, however, she is no longer her daughter or her fellow slave, but becomes her husband's mistress, inciting jealous rage. Where she once understood Beatrice's struggle as a Black slave, her opinion changes when Beatrice's revenge becomes murderous. Lustra screams at her, "You are a crude killer, / Who used slaves' small griefs to license great crime" (130). Lustra's position as White wife both liberates and enslaves her, and her relationship with her surrogate daughter also breaks because of the dynamics of slave culture.

This daughter/slave confusion makes it very difficult for Beatrice to understand her own self, especially because her biological parents are a White slave-owner and a Black slave. Due to this conflict of selves, Beatrice's sense of identity begins to fragment. She is unable to accept that slave and owner coexist in her own body. After the rape, she understands her identity in terms of blackness and slavery, no longer any part White or free: "I'm black blackened blacker," she says (95). She sees her body as fragmented, literally torn apart by this conflict of selves: "My eyes seep pus; I can't walk […] The flesh limps from my spine" (90). She cries, "this flesh is

crumbling" (90), omitting the possessive pronoun "my" which suggests that she understands her flesh now as somehow independent from her identity. She briefly passes out, and on awakening has seemed to have lost her self, or her sense of herself, asking, "Beatrice? What is she? Oh, Beatrice is dead" (92). She goes mad because she can no longer understand herself on her own terms. She has been disembodied, denied self-possession, and thus begins to speak in the third person. Slave culture literally tears her apart.

Beatrice's position as a person of mixed Black-White heritage, a "zebra," in Clarke's terms, reminds "Africans and Europeans of the White-initiated sexual violence against black women that ensured the sadism of slavery" (203). Robin Winks explains the prevalence of mixed-race children being born in Nouvelle-France during slave times, reporting, "Of 573 children of slaves for whom there is adequate record, 59.5 percent were born outside any form of marriage, and while in many cases the parents may have been of the same race, the entry in the registers— *père inconnu* [father unknown]—no doubt covers many white men too" (11). Cooper substantiates this statistic:

> The phrase 'father unknown' on the baptismal records of slave children was often used as a cover-up to hide the fact that the father was a White male, usually the owner of the mother. This White owner usually had a legal White wife. And the slave mother who gave birth to a child fathered by her master had to bear the brunt of his wife's jealous rage. (165)

It is assumed in this play that Dice is also Chancy's child by Beatrice's mother, but Chancy refuses to acknowledge him as such, preferring instead to enslave him. Beatrice and Dice represent very real subject positions within Canadian slaveholding families. Here we can see that while Beatrice's desire for Lead is read as transgressive within the hierarchical rules of slave

culture, Chancy's rape of both Beatrice and her mother is not seen the same way. As the records show, this abuse was condoned within the power structures of slavery, and it is still present in the bodies of Canadians today. These "*pères inconnus*" must become *connus*.

Chancy's specifically sexual violation against his slave/daughter speaks to long-standing ties between power, sexuality, and race that are strongly in effect within slave culture, and are effectively explored within the fear-fuelled and power-obsessed gothic form. The ultimate manifestation of our "culture of Gothic," according to Edmundson, is sadomasochism (xviii). With the slave culture of *Beatrice Chancy,* the power struggle is located in colour. Fanon argues that the Black man has been consistently characterized as a completely physical, even genital being. In contrast, the White man has been understood as an intellectual person able to separate the transcendent, religious mind from the baseness of the physical body. Sexual perversion, then, is based on the White fear of Black sexual potency. Fanon imagines a White person thinking: "As for the Negroes, they have tremendous sexual powers. What do you expect, with all the freedom they have in their jungles! They copulate at all times and in all places. They are really genital" (157). By this logic, White racism against Blacks is rooted in sexual neurosis, and violence against Black bodies is actually always sexual revenge. Fanon writes,

> Still on the genital level, when a white man hates black men, is he not yielding to a feeling of impotence or of sexual inferiority? Since his ideal is an infinite virility, is there not a phenomenon of diminution in relation to the Negro, who is viewed as a penis symbol? Is the lynching of the Negro not sexual revenge? We know how much of sexuality there is in all cruelties, tortures, beatings. One has only to reread a few pages of the Marquis de Sade to be easily convinced of the fact. (159)

Understood this way, Chancy's rape of Beatrice may actually be an act of sexual vengeance against her Black lover, whose potency he fears. His sexual jealousy and racial neuroses are present in his first comment upon hearing of their plans to marry: "my daughter can't love some bull-thighed nigger!" (55). He goes on, "you'll not buck, sweat, under a swinish black, /Lavish moth kisses on a savage mouth" (56). Chancy's violence is rooted in what Fanon calls "Negrophobia" (165), a neurosis that understands the Black man as a specifically sexual (and, here, animal) threat against the White man.

In *Beatrice Chancy*, these sex- and race-informed power struggles enter into the various love relationships in the play and turn them sadomasochistic. Chancy's rape of Beatrice, for example, entails a specifically sadomasochistic vocabulary. He is, firstly, directly tied to the Marquis de Sade, that literary progenitor of sadistic sexual practice, as he "*paces in his library, a warren of Sade*" (23). After Chancy finds out about Beatrice's love for Lead, he ties her up and whips her. While she is restrained, he walks over to her and *"drags a finger across Beatrice's lips, driving them apart*" (68). Chancy is clearly the Sade of this play: he gets pleasure from other people's pain. Beatrice describes him this way: "We love purely, you love purely to hate" (69). His biography is *"an encyclopedia of sin*" (58), and when he hits his wife, Lustra, for talking back to him, he says, "After such blows, Lustra seems more lustrous" (58). Chancy's violence in this play is always connected with his sexuality.

Interestingly, Chancy seems to want to enact a fully sadomasochistic relationship with his victims rather than to simply act sadistically against them. He wants his victims to enjoy their subjugation in turn, masochistically. After Chancy rapes Beatrice, he smirks, "I'll wager she enjoys this joyous sin" (96). Butts, in a study on Master/slave (or M/s) relationships in contemporary society, explains that these relationships are consensual and contractual. While the

Master figure controls everything the slave figure does—often including going to the bathroom—it is still a relationship; the Master has a responsibility to the slave, and the slave desires to be controlled completely by the Master. Though the relationships in this play are not consensual, Chancy treats his slaves as if they were. He fetishizes his position as Master and sees his slaves as needing his love: "they're dumb-faced, childish cattle / That need unflinching mastery" (26). He further asserts, "My power isn't violation, it's love" (27). According to Vivian Patraka the perpetrator of sadomasochistic spectacle often actually "insists on the victim's collaboration in the process, even in desiring that pain and humiliation" (90). A letter that Chancy writes to Beatrice in order to coax her to meet him in church, where he plans to rape her, displays his desire for her submission in a sadomasochistic context. He writes:

> Only you can love me to God, Beatrice.
>
> Every moment is a moment of becoming.
>
> Soft, in church, we'll softly confederate.
>
> Your love-besotted father, C. (*Beatrice* 76)[1]

Chancy acts sadistically against Beatrice, but he wants her to react masochistically.[2] Slave culture encourages this binary between passive slave and powerful master, and sex becomes very much rooted in ownership and power struggle.

In this kind of world, healthy, equality-based love seems impossible. In *Beatrice Chancy*, we witness every type of loving relationship dominated and destroyed by the hierarchical power dynamics of slave society. Chancy even alludes to this fact when Reverend Peacock warns, "Beware: *Cruelty* cannot be mother to *Love,*" and Chancy responds, "Our system is a machine of cruelty" (58). This system of cruelty and power in Nova Scotia in 1801 destroys the possibility of love, a signal aspect of a healthy society. Rathbone, for example, argues that "Sexual equality

is not only a core principle of democracy, it is also relevant to happiness and fulfilment" (viii). A healthy world would be full of good relationships, where "a good relationship is free from arbitrary power, coercion or violence" (Rathbone viii). In a world obsessed with power and its manifestations in sexual relationships, good relationships could become impossible. Edmundson worries that our society is devolving into a Gothic, S&M obsessed society in which there "would be no conception of love, no room to wish for the happiness of others, for their pleasure, their growth into imaginative prowess and complexity of character" (133). Here, he argues,

> Equality in love, as well as in politics and social life generally, would no longer be a tenable ideal. It would be impossible in such a culture to conceive of any relation, with husband, with child, with neighbor, or with friend, except in terms of domination and submission. In an S&M culture, love (if one could still use that word) would always be love of power. (131)

Our obsession with watching gothic narratives in which love is transgressive and desire turns violent may indicate a serious sickness in contemporary society that speaks to the invisible hierarchies that oppress us.

Clarke does not, however, allow *Beatrice Chancy* to simply fulfil the gothic appetites of his audiences to watch the violent and sexual cycle of transgression and punishment. Rather, the story reminds its audience of a real past that has echoes in the real present that has been silenced and must be remembered. When Chancy rapes his daughter, it is with the silencing power of an oppressor over his victim's memories. Chancy assures his daughter that it will be over quickly, and that afterwards, "there won't even be a scar" (87). In this sense, Beatrice is not allowed any physical reminder of her victimhood, but is meant to suppress its memory inside her body, where her community cannot access it. Her only words after he says this are the following: "I hurt [*two*

words garbled] my throat / [*Several words whited out*] a knife" (87). Chancy's power and oppression "whites out" her resistance, effectively erasing his responsibility from this perverse act.[3] Similarly, there has been a trauma in Canada's past—slavery—that has been "whited out" on a national scale that disempowers the people living with its legacy today.

The shame Beatrice feels after the rape further speaks to tactics of silencing that can protect a perpetrator. Shame is an aspect of trauma that often informs an unwillingness to speak out against one's oppressor. Lynda Hart suggests that "shame is particularly resistant to intervention: in order to work through it, one must in a sense reexperience it" by telling its story (172). Shame informs Beatrice's reaction to her rape fundamentally. After the rape, she says to Lustra, "Don't glance / Upon me: This flesh is crumbling / like proved lies" (90), and later, "I want nothing on me that betrays me" (92), indicating that she feels guilty for what has been done to her, and anxious that it will be found out. This sense of shame often leads to the cycle of shame and silence that follows many forms of trauma, sexual or otherwise. Again, Beatrice's trauma stands in for a national trauma, and many stories like hers are never told in Canadian history books.

Clarke's Beatrice, however, does not accept this whiting out, and enacts a black revenge. Her previously sweet, poetic words turn sour, and she insists on maintaining sharp truths and calling Chancy, rightly, "my raper" (109), refusing the silence and shame that so often inform sexual assault. She realizes, in testifying to her subjugation, "How hard, pure and cold language— / like war or love—must be!" (110). At this point in the story, Beatrice rejects the conventional gothic role of the passive victim, and chooses instead to become the avenging villain. The fourth act of *Beatrice Chancy*, titled "Revolt," begins with an epigraph from English novelist Angela Carter: "She learns her lesson at once; to escape slavery / she must embrace

tyranny" (89). Beatrice is our hero, but in order to be that, she must also embrace the most murderous of impulses. Edmundson argues that every good Gothic story must contain an ambivalent villain: "No Gothic narrative can work unless the villain is in some way an admirable figure" (11). This villain, usually male, is hated, but also envied, usually handsome and suave. This is arguably true for Chancy, the obvious villain in the play, but Beatrice finally steps up and usurps this role. She is the final ambivalent hero/villain of the play, brutally murdering her father. Chancy, on the other hand, regrets his sin, admitting that his incest has created his "own damnation" (104) because he's "violated faith inviolate" (105). The traditional Gothic roles are reversed, and Beatrice claims a position of power in the play by embracing the very sadomasochism that was once used against her. She refuses to play the passive slave to Chancy's Master, and gets revenge by taking on the sadistic role.

As a result, even the consensual love between her and Lead becomes overwritten by sadomasochistic desire. In the beginning, the two are blossoming lovers, stealing away to the cemetery to kiss and wonder, "*Why must love sweeten a cemetery?*" (64). They sing love songs to each other, and embrace in what the stage directions describe as "*Chaste bliss*" (65). When the formerly innocent lovers decide to murder the rapist, Beatrice announces, "We must be better killers than lovers" (118). The sexual dynamic between the lovers begins to change, and pleasure begins to meld with violence and revenge. Just before the murder, Beatrice sings, "we'll kiss and kill and kiss again, / feeling only pleasure" (124). The lovers kiss repeatedly throughout this scene, and Lead says to Beatrice, "I've never loved you more. Never more loved" (131). Finally, before Beatrice and her lover Lead murder Chancy, she claims, "We must hate before we can love" (119). Lead attempts, and fails, to kill Chancy himself, so Beatrice takes the dagger from him and "*slams him in the face with the knife handle*" (126). When Lustra resists, Beatrice "*slaps*

her lustily" (129), overwriting these violent actions with lustful pleasure. When the lovers emerge from Chancy's room having murdered him, they have actually taken the violent phallus of their oppressor and used it against him: Lead recounts, "Encunted, the dagger fucked his left eye" (129). The lovers have taken the power away from Chancy, "encunted" him, and raped him with it, penetrating him as he did Beatrice. At this point, the stage directions tell us that Beatrice "*can no longer distinguish desire from disease*" (127). Beatrice, now, has become the ambivalent villain so common in the gothic thriller in order to complete her cruel justice. "Rapacious," says Beatrice, "he had a rapacious end" (130).

If Beatrice is a villain, however, we still sympathize with her. Her sadism is a key aspect of her justice. According to June Rathbone, often women who display sadomasochistic tendencies have suffered trauma at the hands of someone more powerful, and sadomasochistic play is a way of reclaiming the power they felt was taken from them in the past: "It soon becomes clear that what they are all involved in is the re-enactment of situations, long past, in which they were helpless but which they now master" (261). In fact, Beatrice even begins to resemble her father: at one point she steals away from the house to release Lead from his bondage, and the stage directions reveal "*Chancy in a gold-trimmed black cloak and a broad, shadowing hat*" entering Lead's chamber (116). Lead assumes it is Chancy until Beatrice reveals herself: "It's me—Bee!" (116). Once Chancy has been dispatched, Beatrice echoes his wine-drinking, lustful, sadistic behaviour and laughs, "Then serve me red wine! I'm ravenously happy" (129). Later, after having murdered her father, she repeats a phrase he once used against her to Lustra, who is protesting the murder: "Ply that cat's tongue again, I'll lop it off" (70, 131). Beatrice needs to re-enact and reclaim the trauma in a situation in which she is in control, and can say, in Rathbone's words, "I'm in charge now!" (260).

This sadistic revenge, further, not only liberates Beatrice from mental slavery, but also quite literally liberates her fellow slaves; her role in the character list is "*a martyr/liberator*" (10). One of the slaves, Moses, says, "Chancy's life be our doom," and Lead replies, "His death be our freedom!" (101). At the end of the play, they sing together, and they are listed no longer as "SLAVES" but as "LIBERATEDS" (148). As she renounces God and throws a Bible into the fireplace, Beatrice says, "No more white lies, no more black pain" (110), and her war cry before going in to murder Chancy is, in "blacker" English than she has thus far spoken, "Slave days is over!" (126). She becomes the heroine of the play, and despite the villainy in her vengeance, her tyranny is liberating. Indeed, Maureen Moynagh argues that Beatrice's empowering resistance is an act of what she calls "diva citizenship" (100). She argues, "Beatrice, in rising up against her violator, violates the terms of decorum, refuses its morality, and claims the justice of her actions" (100). Clarke imagines the possibility of resistance under these terms, when women are merely objects and there is no law or even sense of decorum to protect them. Beatrice fought back in the only way she could—with violence.

Further, by taking on the role of Gothic hero-villain, Beatrice reverses the normally gendered sadomasochistic revenge story where the male villain seeks to annihilate the threatening female body. Vivian Patraka speaks about this desire to annihilate the body as a form of dehumanization that was present in sadomasochistic fantasies of the Holocaust, where "The concrete dimensions and unique name of the threatening women constitute a kind of exterior border to the body; their murder […] excessively breaches this border to reduce the women to interior body—fluctuating, perishable, uncontained, and no longer recognizable as human per se" (93). Beatrice, in turn, dehumanizes her father, turning him into a bodiless pulp through her revenge. When the deed is done, Lustra asks: "Is my spouse this—just gusts of hair?" (129).

Murdering him was not enough: Chancy had to be annihilated so thoroughly that there was no question of accident in his death. In this sense, Beatrice's revenge also becomes gendered, where the perpetrator's male body is reduced to nothingness in a brutality rarely seen from women in Gothic narratives.[4]

Beatrice is hanged for her crimes by the end of this play. Following the gothic convention, transgressors must be punished. The manner in which Beatrice dies, however, suggests her complete absolution, and Clarke's total endorsement of her actions throughout the play. Lustra is hanged beside her, and for protesting against Beatrice's revenge, Chancy's White wife dies horribly: "*She suffers a shock-like seizure, a pressing pain that gnashes her jaws so tightly, she can feel the nerves in her face and in her teeth […] chunks of precious flesh have been torn, wholesale, from Lustra's face*" (148). Beatrice, on the other hand, is left with "*no mark upon her skin*" (148), suggesting an almost supernatural escape from the indignities of death. Though she has to die, she is absolved in her beautiful death.[5]

Further, whether her revenge goes unpunished or not, it is certainly satisfying. Revenge dramas like this one, for Edmundson, are particularly important in 1990s American gothic culture. Within the revenge drama, the sadomasochistic drive may be fuelled by more and more extreme violence: "The more outrageous the torture, the more violence we'll be able to enjoy with a clean conscience. Because, Hollywood knows, violent revenge is OK if the crime being answered is heinous enough" (136). In fact, he argues, revenge dramas are structured very similarly to classic love stories:

> For the object of revenge, at least in compulsive vengefulness, almost invariably takes on the attributes of a sexual object: it is intensely complicated, singled out, fetishized, becoming the center of fantasy and desire. It becomes, as does the

> object of romantic love, the only thing that exists in the world. In the actual act of revenge there is—or there is imagined to be—a consummation that changed everything, just as erotic consummation is purported to do. (140)

Revenge narratives, then, are actually gothic romances. In a world dominated by abuse and power struggles centred on bodies, love is the most desired of commodities. Revenge dramas are infused with passion, power, and desire; they are nightmarish mirrors of the best of love stories.

The pleasure we as the audience get from watching this revenge, however, implicates us in the perversion of power revealed in this play. Sadomasochism is an integral, if often hidden, part of any society dominated by relationships of power. Though slavery has long been abolished from Canadian society, power, control, and the objectification of bodies have not. Laura Hinton, in her study on sympathy and sadomasochism entitled *The Perverse Gaze of Sympathy*, argues that audiences get perverse pleasure from watching suffering characters in plays, movies, and on television. Every time we watch a sentimental heroine suffer, we are experiencing sadomasochistic pleasure: "sentiment is reproduced by sympathy's endorsement of sadomasochistic, scopophilic practices: in short, by the perverse gaze" (2). We watch the beautiful, sexualized Beatrice suffer whipping, confinement, rape, and hanging, and the sympathy we feel for her "becomes an expression of visual pleasure. The desire for visual pleasure makes the sympathetic spectator a fetishist and a voyeur. […] [S]adomasochistic desire underlies the experience of sympathy, through the perverse narrative spectator who creates and reflects sentimental image-making" (Hinton 2-3). Hinton argues that we become involved in this story, aligning ourselves with Beatrice (the masochist) or Chancy (the sadist) or both in order to feel this scopophilic, voyeuristic, perverse pleasure.

Clarke makes sure we know just exactly how sexually desirable Beatrice is, and many of the characters fetishize her sadistically. Even Lead, her lover, imagines her in the following way: "*He dreams that rain will glaze her charcoal hair, her lips gashed gold vermilion, smother her chastely sealed being in untaintable liqueur*" (41). The words are loving, beautiful, but punctuated with the sinister connotations of the words "smother," "gashed," and "sealed," indicating a violence lurking beneath sexual desire. At one point, Clarke directly points to the audience, inviting them to desire Beatrice as well. She enters the room, and the stage directions read, "*Once, she glances at the audience and lowers her eyes, lidding them briefly, erotically*" (51). This is the only point at which the stage's fourth wall is breached, and Beatrice begins to seduce the audience. Our sympathy for her may not be completely altruistic: she is seducing us as well.

Watching Beatrice, sympathetically, sexually, or sadomasochistically, is pleasurable and even therapeutic in that it stages a national trauma in gothic terms so that, like that survivor of abuse, we can say from our comfortable theatre seats, "I'm in charge now!" (Rathbone 260). We are safe in the role of audience, as judges and moral authorities absolved when the last act ends and justice has been served. Clarke does not, however, let his audience walk away with a comfortable but useless feeling of catharsis. Rather, he utilizes the particular gothic effect of physical affect to implicate his audience. More than any other form, argues Kilgour, the gothic is loved and feared for the intimacy it creates with the audience: "the gothic's main concern is […] to create a feeling or effect in its readers by placing them in a state of thrilling suspense and uncertainty. From its origins, the gothic has been defined in terms of this peculiar and palpable effect upon its audience" (6). The gothic at once calms our general anxieties by forming them

into a coherent narrative, but it can also implicate us as active spectators or even participants in our power-driven, sadomasochistic society.

In the case of *Beatrice Chancy,* the gothic thrill that draws us into the horror comes from the often brutally visceral language. After Beatrice has been raped and is found by Deal and Lustra, for example, Lustra says, "Deal, smear some water on the cloth, / Stop that vileness groping down her leg" (93). The word "groping" gives life to the "vileness" sliding down her leg, suggesting that it has some sinister, blind plan of its own. After having murdered her father, the previously innocent and sweet Beatrice offers us a disgusting and incredibly evocative image of the carnage she left behind: "if anyone interrogates the sheets, / I'll claim that slushy queans encrimsoned them" (131). The audience's sympathy for the characters draws us inside their world, and invites us to feel the pain that a slave society inflicts on its citizens.

The gothic intimacy not only draws us into Beatrice's story, but by analogy also tells us our own Canadian story, in an attempt to break that cycle of shame and silence. Clarke's staging of Beatrice's story testifies to a larger Canadian reality that remains what psychologist Dori Laub would call a "hole of memory" (65). It is a space in the national past that is created by anxiety and fear, made invisible most of the time, and threatens to suck us into its vacuum if we get too close: perhaps, in this context, Canadian slavery is one of several holes of memory in our national past that we may understand as "black" holes of memory. With appropriately gothic vocabulary, Moynagh suggests that *Beatrice Chancy* enacts "a splitting open of the historical sutures that close out stories of racial terror and sexual injustice, relegating them to a space beyond the body of the nation" (97). In this sense, Clarke "seduces his audiences into an uncomfortable intimacy with public violence and compels them not only to denounce that violence but to acknowledge their complicity in it" (98). We are meant to feel, through this

mechanism of the gothic thrill and the sympathetic gaze, the pain of a personal trauma that parallels a national one. Beatrice stands in metonymically for the Canadian perpetrators and victims—in this case rape survivor and murderer, slave-owner and slave—and witnessing her story means witnessing our stories as well.

For a community that has undergone a national trauma the stories of perpetration and victimization must be told, and it is the writers, filmmakers, and playwrights that shoulder the responsibility to construct the narrative of trauma for that community, as Clarke is doing here. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub explain that an "as yet unresolved *crisis of history*" is in turn "translated into a *crisis of literature* insofar as literature becomes a witness, and perhaps the only witness, to the crisis within history which precisely cannot be articulated" (xviii). The only way to heal from such an unspoken—even unspeakable—trauma, argues Laub, is to testify to it, to tell its story. Clarke is able to use the conventional form of the gothic in order to tell a story about the present that breaks the conventional Canadian tendency to remain silent.

Breaking the silence of trauma, however, is incredibly difficult. The survivor must engage in the process of "constructing a narrative, of reconstructing a history and essentially, of *re-externalizing the event*" which requires that he or she "articulate and *transmit* the story, literally transfer it to another outside oneself" (69). Because of the difficulty of this process, many survivors "prefer silence so as to protect themselves from the fear of being listened to—and of listening to themselves" (58). Even if a survivor understands that "silence is defeat" and can be a "place of bondage," it can still serve as a sanctuary of repression or denial. For the descendants of national trauma, too, representing the painful past comes close to impossible.

Beatrice, then, rejects oppression by rejecting silence, and embraces healing through testimony. Right before she dies, she says, "The globe contracts / To the O of a noose. / I'll

waste, becoming words" (145). Her act of "becoming words," as manifested in Clarke's play, allows her to take on the status of testifying survivor instead of silenced victim, thus creating the possibility for healing. For this reason, however, listening to her story becomes almost as traumatic for us as telling it would be for her. Re-enacting trauma, whether national or personal, requires an audience, and that audience has a responsibility, too. Laub writes that for a testimonial to be successfully healing, "there needs to be a bonding, the intimate and total presence of an *other*—in the position of one who hears" (71). The audience, then, is a key part of Clarke's project of staging a Canadian historical trauma through Beatrice's personal trauma. Laub writes that a survivor's listener "comes to be a participant and a co-owner of the traumatic event: through his very listening, he comes to partially experience trauma in himself. […] The listener, therefore, by definition partakes of the struggle of the victim with the memories and residues of his or her traumatic past" (58). This process means that the very act of watching Beatrice's story on the stage gives us part ownership over her ordeal. This process is scary enough without its gothic elements: "We are indeed profoundly terrified to truly face the traumas of our history, much like the survivor and the listener are" (Laub 74). Through listening to Beatrice's story, a fictional gothic narrative emerges that reveals a disturbing Canadian truth.

With *Beatrice Chancy*, Clarke rejects the silence around this unspeakable aspect of Canadian history and makes it representable, on some level at least, on the stage.[6] Beatrice's story intends to leave a scar on its audience as a tribute to the ongoing pain of the past that connects us all. The moment of speaking out against oppression can change everything. In Fanon's words, "Once that has been said, the rest will follow of itself, and what that is we know. The end of the world" (216). In this sense, testimony and performance can end the cruelty of this world, can break with the power structures that have prevented Beatrice from having love, and a

new order will be free to come to life. For this reason, *Beatrice Chancy* must be "an opera of pain"; we amnesiacs, we sleepers, must be (rudely) awakened.

The possibility of imagining a better future where love becomes possible must begin in remembering, re-enacting, and effectively dramatizing that past, not merely on the page, but on the stage. Fundamentally, the performance experience brings a number of people into the same room to share something. William Rueckert believes that "drama should be our model or paradigm for literature because a drama, enacted upon the stage, before a live audience, releases its energy into the human community assembled in the theater and raises all the energy levels" (110). For Rueckert, literature in performance can create the literal possibility of raising a physical, shared energy that can incite an audience community to thought, discussion, or even action. He believes that any coming-together around literature such as in a classroom or theatre is "the true interactive field because the energy flow is not just a two-way flow" from the work of art to the person, but proliferates through each member of the audience community (110). This creative energy spike, for Rueckert, "makes it possible for the highest motives of literature to accomplish themselves. These motives are not pleasure and truth, but creativity and community" (111). Thus, the act of attending a performance in itself is creative of a shared energy between audience participants who can begin the process of healing together.

Joseph Roach also argues for the power of a performance experience in that physical performance is inherently connected with memory, both individual and communal. Quite literally, performances enact cultural memories, where "expressive movements" can be understood as

> mnemonic reserves, including patterned movements made and remembered by bodies, residual movements retained implicitly in images or words (or in the

> silences between them), and imaginary movements dreamed in minds, not prior to language but constitutive of it, a psychic rehearsal for physical actions drawn from a repertoire that culture provides. (26)

Cultures literally perform their pasts, and in the process both remember and choose to forget, where "The social processes of memory and forgetting, familiarly known as culture, may be carried out by a variety of performance events, from stage plays to sacred rites, from carnivals to the invisible rituals of everyday life" (xi). Performances always involve an element of memory even if they are orchestrated to encourage forgetting. Nations attempt to replace lost events, founders, or peoples with performances that stand in for them in an endless anxiety of repetition that "justifies the complicity of memory and forgetting" as a process of culture-making (6).

Even within the process of forgetting, memory always resides. In this sense, Roach argues, "performances so often carry within them the memory of otherwise forgotten substitutions—those that were rejected and, even more invisibly, those that have succeeded" (5). Performances thus can be windows into a given society's memory processes; a performance can work to "bring forth, to make manifest, and to transmit" (xi). Roach adds, however, that "To perform also means, though often more secretly, to reinvent" (xi). Performances like *Beatrice Chancy* can orchestrate a new way of transmitting the past that can recover what has been lost or forgotten. The powerful physical experience of witnessing a play that remembers for us can change how we understand ourselves as a nation.

The work of this play does not stop with memories, however. It also asks for dreams. By reading this play in the present and facing our shameful past, Canadians may begin to imagine a different kind of future, where love is possible. In Clarke's essay on the process of writing *Beatrice Chancy*, he references philosopher Herbert Marcuse:

> Remember, then, Marcuse's insight that the *art* of resistance is seldom embraced in its time: 'it seems that the poems and songs of protest and liberation are always too late or too early: memory or dream. Their time is not the present; they preserve their truth in their hope, in their refusal of the actual.' ("Embracing" 24)

Beatrice's story remembers Canadians who were dreaming of a better future, a future that allows the possibility of free, equal love between people of any status, across identities with different and even conflicting histories.

The dream, in this play, is always a dream of love. Beatrice chooses to recall love at the end of her life, not slavery and brutality: "I should remember only love […] Because this was my dream" (141). This may be enough for Beatrice, but if her audience is to make loving possible in the present, we must remember more than simply love. We must remember Beatrice's tragedy and why love was impossible for her. Without remembering, without testifying, without breaking the cycle of shame and silence, Canadians will never see true, equal, loving relationships across racial backgrounds become a reality.

Notes

[1] There is an interesting parallel here with the famous slave narrative of Harriet Jacobs, who calls herself Linda Brent in her memoir *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Linda fears and hates her master because he continually threatens to rape her. He is livid with jealousy when he discovers that she has become pregnant by another man. When she runs away and goes into hiding, he searches desperately for her and sends her letters full of loving words to try to coax her back. He writes, for example,

> Come home. You have it in your power to be reinstated in our affections. We would receive you with open arms and tears of joy. […] you were never treated as a slave […] we, at least, felt that you were above disgracing yourself by running away. Believing you may be induced to come home voluntarily has induced me to write […] (Brent 176-77)

Linda's master wants her to come home voluntarily, to re-enter what he sees as their relationship, and what she sees as his terrorism over her. His desires here parallel Chancy's greatly.

[2] Chancy also refuses to sell his slaves, which is something Butts highlights as an important difference between possessing someone and entering into a Master/slave relationship with them. Mistress Linda, one such Master, explains, "I don't believe that owning a person is the type of thing that you can give away because I think what you own is what you have with them. And what you have with them ends up being your relationship" (Butts 73). Chancy does seem to feel a responsibility for what he sees as a relationship between himself and his slave/daughter/lover. When both Reverend Peacock and the hangman offer to buy her, he refuses to sell her, stating, "she's too expensive to waste" (28). He has invested in three years of her

education in Halifax, but she is also his daughter, a possession he prizes. He prefers to defer having to break off their relationship by selling his power over her to another man.

[3] Scars are a very important part of this play, because they enact a physical reminder of the past: "my body's an atlas of pain" (71), cries Beatrice after being whipped. These physical wounds actually bind the characters in the play together. When Beatrice "*eyes a cruciform cut*" (64) on Lead, she gasps, "Wounded! I'm wounded seeing this wounding" (64). Similarly, when Beatrice and Lustra fight, Lustra reminds her surrogate daughter of how she was punished when she stood up for her against Chancy: "This wound near my lips marks my love for you" (74). The wounding of bodies even connects slaves and slave owners, indicating that the violence of the slave systems marks all who partake in it: Beatrice, Lustra, and Chancy are all at one point described as having, in Beatrice and Chancy's case, "*a bandage on one cheek*" (59, 96), and in Lustra's, "*a bandage near her mouth*" (71). These characters are marked by their conflicts as victims of a social structure that encourages violence and its physical erasure, its "whiting out."

[4] Beatrice is paralleled several times to Marie-Josèphe Angélique, a slave who set fire to her owner's house in 1734 in New France (now Québec) burning much of Old Montreal. Though this event was devastating in Montreal's early years, Angélique's story of resistance against Canadian slavery is never taught in Canadian schools and rarely mentioned in history books. Refusing to accept this silencing, Afua Cooper wrote a detailed biography of Angélique's life, death, and revenge against her oppressors. Cooper applauds her as "a slave woman who did not act like a slave. Though her status was servile, she did not have a servile mind" (259). In Clarke's preface to Cooper's book, he again parallels Beatrice and Angélique, quoting from his

own play: “annihilate her and you nullify / seven millennia of poetry” (Clarke, “Foreword” xvi; *Beatrice* 146). Both Cooper and Clarke wish to celebrate a rebellious nature, a refusal to be used, broken, owned, and enslaved, but rather choose to tell the story of these victims who became powerful avengers against a brutal system.

[5] Beatrice’s beautiful death further suggests a celebration of her resistance rather than a lament for her death, thus offering hopeful possibilities for the future. Joseph Roach points to just such a moment of hope and possibility at the end of the tragic play *An Echo in the Bone.* Here, even if “the die is cast so the cast must die,” a character asks the drummer to play “for what [we] leave behind. Play for the rest of us” (Roach 35), and the characters begin to perform a ritual of celebration. Roach argues that this “affirmation contests the closure of investing the future with the fatality of the past” (35). Beatrice’s revenge, though punished, is a violent rising up against the oppression in our national past, and creates possibilities for a better future for having achieved, at least, some imaginative justice.

[6] In South Africa, there has been a movement to heal from the trauma of apartheid violence by staging statements from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Marcia Blumberg argues that this staging is therapeutic and validating for the “wounded survivors” (280), but also stages the traumas of a “central traumatic event in broader terms” that affect the whole country, no matter what role a given audience member had during apartheid violence (280). Similarly, Beatrice’s story speaks to the larger issue of Canada’s past in order to address the injustices of Canada’s present.

Chapter Two: *Québécité*: A Utopian *Fantasia* of Multicultural Harmony

If Beatrice Chancy will indeed "remember only love […] Because this was my dream" (141), then Clarke's 2003 libretto, *Québécité: A Jazz Fantasia in Three Cantos,* is the modern-day imaginative manifestation of that dream. It imagines a world where problems of history and oppression do not conspire to create a landscape of "*unfulfilled love*" (*Beatrice* 143) but rather one where love is endlessly possible across any boundary. It is a classic love story between two couples where boy meets girl, fights with girl, and finally marries girl. Here, however, the couples are interracial, and the background is Quebec City, a space not normally associated with racial and cultural diversity. These differences create their own set of problems, but Clarke's *Fantasia* is ultimately manifested positively within the brief utopian possibilities of the performance event.

Clarke decided to write what he calls this "silly love song" in Québec specifically because it is

> a city that's not associated with people of colour. When we look at the history, we know that there was always a coloured population in that city because of the fact there was slavery. It's something that nobody ever wants to remember. But I choose to remember that. It's part of the context. (qtd. in Donelly, D8)

The characters in this play span several linguistic, racial, and cultural backgrounds, contrary to Clarke's previous works, which tend to focus specifically on Africadian issues in Canada. Ovide Rimbaud is Haitian, "of black-white ancestry" (15), having moved to Québec when he was nine; Laxmi Bharati is a Montréalaise Hindu of Indian descent; Colette Chan emigrated from China when she was nine, and her lover Malcolm States, who is "of African-American and Mi'kmaq Nova Scotian heritage" is the only Africadian in the play (15). These characters are not only

from different places, but some also have different racial identities mingling within their own blood.

Québécité "colours in" Quebec City with tints and hues of history as if *Beatrice Chancy*'s work had been done: as if Canadians, as a nation, had come to acknowledge all the lost or suppressed histories of slavery and racism, and historical power imbalances thus could no longer obstruct the possibility of healthy love across racial and cultural boundaries. Where slave culture informed and perverted Beatrice's love, *Québécité* dreamily rejects those complications. The play stages an almost clichéd narrative of love to ask a very complex question: how do the valences of love, lust, conflict, and procreation change when the lovers do not come from the same racial or cultural background? Power dynamics are always present, and always troublesome, in every love relationship, no matter what two people do or do not have in common. What happens when these power dynamics become racialized? Are the power dynamics different or merely more visible? Clarke answers simply that love is all you need, and ends the play with his lovers riding off into the Québécois sunset on Vespa scooters singing, "*Vive le Québec Libéré*" (92). This is a world in which the power dynamics rooted in historical racial oppression have been triumphed over. It is not only Beatrice's dream, but her utopia: it is a world where love conquers all, even oppression and national amnesia.

The first half of the play is relatively realistic as the two couples-to-be get to know each other and share their histories in modern Québec. In a scene between Malcolm and Colette, they ask each other about their pasts and tell each other stories. Like any couple new to each other, they ask traditional getting-to-know-you questions. Their answers, of course, are slightly more unique than one might expect in a traditional love story. Malcolm asks Colette, "Why did you leave that place you love?" (26), and Colette explains the tensions in China in the late eighties

that culminated in the Tiananmen Square protests, in which many students were killed for fighting against communism. Her parents were staunch liberals, so she explains, "Bullets blasted away ballads and ballots, / and bodies were miscounted everywhere […] A Communist comrade warned us / worshipping Freedom could be fatal" so the Chans left for Québec and "opened this nightclub—café" (26). Malcolm responds, "Sad I am for your strife; glad I am you've arrived" (26). Colette in turn asks Malcolm about his reasons for leaving Halifax, and he cites the racism he encountered there: "Halifax is a Hell of Haligonians" (27). These two people may come from very different places, but at this point those differences are sites of the fascination and interest of blooming love rather than of conflict.

At the same time, Laxmi and Ovide begin their tumultuous romance by talking to each other about their tastes in music and literature. Ovide offers himself as "a son of Montreal" who loves "Nelson Symonds on guitar, Oliver Jones on piano" (60) while Laxmi declares her devotion to "Marie-Josèphe Angélique" who is "my Québécoise idol: / that abused slave, proud, *tragique*" who, in 1734, "incinerated Montreal" (60). "To understand me," she goes on, "read Lorena Gale— / Une Québécoise —Afro-Asian-Aboriginal" (60). Laxmi and Ovide encounter each other in today's Canada through a litany of references including Turkish Canadian Yeshim Ternar, Black Canadian Nigel Thomas, and Chinese Canadian Francophone Ying Chen, and Canadian artists and thinkers both born in Canada and elsewhere. Their cultural differences, at this point, are not problematic, but rather help them discover aesthetic tastes in common. Both couples encounter each other via their different histories, experiences, and tastes, all of which have been shaped by their individual and cultural backgrounds.

The couples also encounter very realistic problems. Laxmi and Ovide break up after a fight that takes place, significantly, outside Québec's parliament building. Laxmi is staunchly

virginal as a Hindu woman, where Ovide is a secular man and an experienced lover who cannot understand her reticence. Their specific disagreement is over what it means to live in Québec as a non-White citizen. Ovide felt welcomed when he arrived from Haiti, remembering that "Le Parti Québécois said, "*Venez, restez*" (67). Laxmi, however, has always felt outcast because of her brown skin, taking issue with the ideology of the "*pure laine"* or "*québécois de souche*," which refers to the cultural premium put on dyed-in-the-wool Québécois. "'*La peau brune, mais le coeur québécois'?*" she says, referring to the (feeble) Parti Québécois campaign to increase cultural tolerance in Québec: "Tell that to the '*pure laine'* Québécois!" (66). She then reminds us of another of Québec's suppressed histories—the colonization of the land by the French: "Why not trumpet Québec's aboriginal origin, / Its very name that is Abenaki-Algonquin?" (67). Suddenly the couple's differences seem insurmountable, and Ovide says to Laxmi, "Your virtue is just as clichéd as Bollywood," and she angrily retorts, "Beware: my household goddess is seven-armed Kali, / Who swings seven swords and severs seven necks!" (68). Where these cultural differences were once sources of fascination and commonality, they suddenly become weaponry. The vocabulary of their conflict becomes racialized: Ovide accuses Laxmi of performing a cultural stereotype, and she retaliates with a threatening reference to her religion, to which Ovide has no access.

Just a page later, we see Colette and Malcolm also breaking up. Colette's parents discover their relationship and refuse to allow Colette to date a non-Chinese man. Colette's mother reportedly "swore she'd suicide" (70) unless Malcolm stops seeing her daughter. Colette asks, "Must I destroy my parents' hearts? / They dream of golden, Chinese grandchildren" (70). Malcolm accuses Colette's parents of calling him a "nigger" (69), and claiming, "loving you is like, like, Heaven and a lynching!" (70). Similarly, the conflict between this couple is couched in

racial and cultural terms. As the stakes rise, these couples begin to use cultural difference as part of an arsenal of accusation in order to say, as any couple might, "you don't understand me!" A same-race couple might have the same fight and root it in gendered terms, and a same-race, same-sex couple might even accuse the other of failing to understand, for example, economic or religious background. Here, however, the racialized terms of conflict have real effects on the futures of these relationships because they involve religious and familial communities as well as the individuals themselves. Coming to terms with historical and cultural differences in modern Canada may help to prevent fights like this and help us, as a nation, to overcome Dany Laferrière's bowl of rice, his many-layered "malentendu."

In the real world, as Franz Fanon argues, neuroses are always at play within interracial—especially Black-White—relationships. Fanon argues that racial neurosis is unavoidable on both sides because "The Negro enslaved by his inferiority, the white man enslaved by his superiority, alike behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation" (60). Laferrière's novel shows examples of these neuroses in full force. Even in a moment of tenderness between the protagonist and his sometime lover, he notes, "Moments heureux, doux, fragiles. Je ne suis pas que Nègre. Elle n'est pas que Blanche" (42). Similarly, Jean Veneuse, one of the characters Fanon analyzes, is a Black man in love with a White woman in René Maran's *Un Homme pareil aux autres.* Veneuse, "feeling that existence is impossible for him without love, he proceeds to dream it into being. He proceeds to dream it alive and to produce verses" (Fanon 67). Fanon, Laferrière, and Clarke all understand that a love "freed of unconscious conflicts" (41), as Fanon puts it, is impossible at this point. We must, then, "dream it into being": we must imaginatively create a world in which this love is possible.

For this reason, Clarke's lovers must literally enter a dream world. The stage directions read: "Into the scene drifts Laxmi, followed by Malcolm, so that all four players are mutually lost in the fog, each oblivious to the others" (81). In the liminal fog space between conflict and resolution, the lovers come through the mist and sing, "I'll confess, I regret, I'll apologize" (81) and "Let us resolve: Love must be plucked from the void" (86). In the second half of the play, the issues from the first half are quickly and mysteriously resolved. Malcolm declares a revolution of love, a "*révolution tranquille"* that will be performed "half in bed and half out" (86). The lovers sing, "Our children will be / every colour eyes can know / and free: / and states, parents, gods, / must have no say: / Love is a tyrannical democracy" (92). In this dream, love becomes the authority under which all the action must take place. In this world, similarities trump differences, and Colette can say, "Africans and Chinese jointly adore / musicals, spices, teas, watercolours. / We are too alike not, too, to be *ours*" (86). Ovide sings, "I'll compose a whole opera on Love," and Laxmi responds, "Please omit jealousy, deceit, and hate" (87). *Québécité* is that opera on Love: it is a dream, a world of imagination where "jealousy, deceit, and hate" can be edited out. It is a multicultural universe of verse, an impossible dream for the present, but an always possible hope for the future. As Colette says, "you know you break no laws by dreaming!" (88).

As such a dream, *Québécité* fits into a tradition of utopian stories that imagine more beautiful, healthier, more efficient, and happier worlds than the society that generates them. Utopias are always, however, ambivalent: the word "utopia" is derived from the Greek words for "nowhere (*outopia*) and […] somewhere good (*eutopia*)" (Kumar 1). Like its first incarnation, Thomas More's 1516 novel *Utopia*, the utopia is always created out of the problems and anxieties of the society it was dreamt in. It offers solutions while at the same time presenting

itself as impossible. It is at once plausible and impossible, dreamlike and satirical, optimistic and born from strife. It can look like a mere daydream, but, as Karl Mannheim argues, it can also represent revolutionary desires for change: "The existing order gives birth to utopias which in turn break the bonds of the existing order, leaving it free to develop in the direction of the next order of existence" (179). Utopias lay bare the problems of the society and imagine possibilities for some near or distant future. They may be fantasies but they are also "actions—a kind of 'action dreaming'—in the name of ideal values: neglected or betrayed in the present, once enjoyed in the past, or yet to be fulfilled in the future" (Lasky 9). Utopias may appear utopian, so to speak, but they always imply a possible future reality.

That possible future, however, is often inherently colonial. Utopias are, by definition, one person's idea of what a perfect world would look like, based on that one person's values. The perfect society for one person will never look the same for the next—especially if those two people do not share cultures, histories, genders, ages, or geographies, as is often the case in Canada. Utopias forget anything in the past that did not work or does not fit in with the new order, the new mythology of the unified world it imagines. Diversity works against utopias, which are supposed to represent a society that everyone in it agrees on. Melvin Lasky argues that for many early utopians, diversity was the ultimate enemy "because their deepest longing was for the miracle of a coherence which could give a measure of purpose, dignity, and meaning to the empty randomness that marked and marred the life they were criticizing" (Lasky 10). With *Québécité,* Clarke imagines a diverse world that is only diverse insofar as his vision allows. Specifically, it ignores the unique perspectives of Québec itself.

Clarke's particular choice of utopia is adapted from that of Pierre Elliott Trudeau. *Québécité*'s world is one in which Trudeau's multiculturalism is working at its most—well,

utopian. There is no question Clarke wrote the play with Trudeau's policy in mind. It is dedicated, in part, to Trudeau and to Adrienne Clarkson, the Chinese Canadian Governor-General in 2003. The dedication reads:

Her Excellency The Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson

&

The Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau (1919-2000):

Two Visionaries of Liberty (7)

Clarke sees multiculturalism as the implementation of a utopian future for Canada, and respects the architects of this imagination enough to dedicate his manifestation of the dream to them.

Multiculturalism has had a utopian flavour to it right from the beginning. It began as a way of dealing with sudden influxes of immigrants to the country, and was presented as a way to help these immigrants integrate into Canadian culture without losing important aspects of their histories, languages, or cultures. Will Kymlicka's 2002 study on the effects of multiculturalism thus far finds the policy largely effective in integrating Canada's many cultures. First, naturalization rates—or the number of immigrants choosing to become Canadian citizens—have risen dramatically since 1971. This is particularly significant because "Canadian citizenship is not needed in order to enter the labour market in Canada, or to gain access to social benefits. […] the right to vote is the only major legal benefit gained by naturalization" (Kymlicka 482). This implies that citizens who naturalize primarily want to identify as Canadian citizens and "to participate in the political life of the country" (482). Secondly, demand for ESL/FSL classes is very high in Canada, and, "According to the 1991 Census, 98.6 percent of Canadians report that they can speak one of the official languages" (483), which means that immigrants do have at least linguistic access to a unified Canadian society. Finally, and most significantly for our

purposes, rates of intermarriage "have consistently increased since 1971 […] Moreover, and equally important, we see a dramatic increase in social acceptance of mixed marriages" (483-84). These figures suggest that Clarke's multicultural utopia may not be so far away: on many levels, multiculturalism is doing the work of letting love come for free.

These figures do not, however, tell us anything about the types of interracial relationships happening in Canada today, nor do they tell us about the levels of neuroses that may be present in them. Clarke specifically imagines Canadian love as rooted in celebrating difference, as multiculturalism purports to do, as opposed to ignoring or erasing said difference. Where the different characters often understood Beatrice's identity in terms of the race they chose to recognize her as, the characters in *Québécité* fall in love because of the ways in which they are different. For this reason, Colette sings of Malcolm, "I do admit I adore / The blue-black tinting his skin and hair; / that black indigo in Malcolm's hair…. / Blackness blacker than black, I adore" (63). Laxmi similarly loves Ovide because he is nothing like her. She says, "I love Ovide because I shouldn't / (because he so enrages me, / because he does so outrageously, / things I wouldn't or couldn't)…" (84). The men similarly wax poetic on the ethnic beauty of their loves—Laxmi has "cinnamon-copper skin / and plum lips ablaze" while Malcolm asks, "how can I even now not dream her sable-delectable-hurting-flirting-vigilante-*cognoscenti*-oblique-unique-circular-oracular-glassine-hyaline-tasty-T'ang Dynasty Eyes?" (29). This is the love that Beatrice Chancy dreamed of: a love that not only recognizes, but also celebrates whiteness, blackness, and any other selves or communities that reside within one body.

Of course, there are some serious problems with this multicultural love. The lovers' fixation on each other's skin colour verges on fetishization and the eroticization of the Other. The interfering neuroses of interracial love that Fanon so worries about are present in this play, if

only diagetically, in Ovide's past love affair with a White Québécoise named Mireille. We can see the neurosis flaring up in a conversation between Ovide and Malcolm: Ovide says, "I sing of a white woman who was whitest white—/ Like smoke or fog or mist" and Malcolm responds, "A pallid gal crowning a black man's sex: / She was Desdemona, you was Oedipus Rex" (55). Fanon writes that for a Black man marrying a White woman, the feeling is that "I marry white culture, white beauty, white whiteness. When my restless hands caress those white breasts, they grasp white civilization and dignity and make them mine" (Fanon 63). It is clear that Ovide's relationship with Mireille had not achieved Fanon's ideal of "true, authentic love" (41). Multicultural loving for difference, then, does not necessarily imply the free and equal love Fanon desires, but can rather easily enter into a neurotically racialized discourse.

More problematic than the way the characters speak about each other is how the playwright represents them. In an attempt to respect cultural differences, Clarke quickly slips into racial and cultural stereotyping. Colette, for example, is described as a sexy China doll. Her smallness is emphasized, and twice the shortness of her legs is highlighted: at the piano, when she says, "Look! My legs are so short, / my feet can hardly touch the ground" (28), and again when she and Malcolm are on a bed in a hotel room together, "*Colette's feet don't touch the floor*" (44). The costuming also often infantilizes her as a schoolgirl or a doll. For example, she is dressed in a "*white silk blouse, a pleated, paisley indigo miniskirt, flat black shoes, and her two black braids*" (24), and later, post-coital, we read, "*Colette, in tangerine bra and panties, dons a short, pink chiffon skirt and a sun-gold silk shirt, then gold knee-high stockings, and then, before a full length mirror, a Liberal-Party red beret. She steps into lipstick-pink high heels and a fluorescent gold backpack*" (51). These descriptions seem more like something out of (Liberal Party inspired) Asian-fetish porn than anything from the real world.

Laxmi is similarly cast in the role of virginal Hindu goddess who is also irresistibly sexual, perpetually waiting to be 'taken' for the first time. According to Ovide, she is a "*femme fatale* Salomé […] very exotic, sensual, feminine, / very shapely, very sexy, so ultra-clean" and yet, "she isn't open-minded: she's no libertine" (56-57). At one point, Ovide is trying to convince her to open her 'mind,' requesting that she "play Delibes's delicate Lakmé" and let him "play Romeo with bravura" (42). She chastises him for his lack of purity, saying "Le Moulin Rouge is more your moral style, / Ovide, not the immaculate Taj Mahal" (43). To this, he "*shakes his head 'no' and then kneels, on a dry spot, before* LAXMI. *He touches her feet*" (43). Laxmi is fetishized in the play, and Ovide wants her to perform the part of a chaste but sexually generous Hindu goddess.

Several times, she is referred to as Lakmé, the title character of Delibes' opera, in which an Indian woman falls in love with a colonial officer, and kills herself when she realizes he will choose duty over his love for her. Stories like *Lakmé* fall into a tradition of Orientalist writing, which imagines the Eastern world in opposition to the West as an exotic, fetishized world of beautiful women, luxury, and power. Edward W. Said has written at length about this phenomenon, and points out that in Orientalist writing, "Women are usually the creatures of a male power-fantasy" (207). The colonizer in Orientalist narratives often understands the women of a colonial space as sexual, fertile, ripe for the taking. Colonialism involves entering a space coercively and mapping it, drawing over it, or filling it in with the colonist's ideals. The colonist penetrates and, assuming the space to be either empty or full of bad values, he installs himself and his culture in that space at the cost of the pre-existing culture, even while taking elements of that space—resources, bodies—for himself. The colonist acts much like the perpetrator of sexual violence discussed in the previous chapter: there is a desire for a sadomasochistic relationship in

which the masochistic colonized needs and wants the sadistic colonizer. The perpetrator/colonist then assumes the veneer of the "happy family," where he can act as benevolent authority. For this reason, it is not totally harmless when we hear Ovide sing lustfully to Laxmi, "Your skin's smooth—like paper without writing" (59). Ovide wants Laxmi's consent to enter her body, to overwrite the "smooth" space of her skin and colonize her with his desires.

As we can see, the multicultural love in this play is highly problematic. As several critics have pointed out, multicultural ideology may also be dangerous in Canadian life. In one of the places where Clarke makes his allegiance to multiculturalism clear, he refers disparagingly through Laxmi to Neil Bissoondath, a famous critic of multiculturalism, as "Real Spittoonbath" (61). In his bestselling 1999 polemic *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada*, Bissoondath writes, "The unexamined acceptance of a racial vision, life filtered through the colour of skin and conventional stereotype, has never struck me as in any way benign. It is a vision that proceeds from differences, from that which separates, disregarding that which unites" (15). His argument is that the encouragement of ethnic groups in Canada to maintain their sense of culture, language, religion, and traditional ceremonies actually discourages different cultures in Canada from integrating and sharing a unified Canadian culture. Further, "Depending on stereotype, ensuring that ethnic groups will preserve their distinctiveness in a gentle and insidious form of cultural apartheid, multiculturalism has done little more than lead an already divided country down the path to further social divisiveness" (Bissoondath 90). In other words, multiculturalism encourages racialization, stereotyping, and segregation. From Bissoondath's perspective, the lovers of *Québécité* do not need multiculturalism; they are suffering from it.

Several other critics have echoed and modified these anti-multiculturalist sentiments. M. Nourbese Philip, while disagreeing with Bissoondath's critique, finds the policy of

multiculturalism insufficient to solve problems of racism in Canada. Bissoondath, she argues, "confuses between antiracism and multiculturalism" and "fall[s] for a political discourse of assimilation which keeps the so-called immigrants in place through a constantly deferred promise" (9). In an essay entitled "Why Multiculturalism Can't End Racism" she explains that multiculturalist ideology insidiously reinforces the supremacy of French and English Canadian culture: "At its most basic, multiculturalism describes a configuration of power at the centre of which are the two cultures recognized by the constitution of Canada—the French and the English" (181). The policy, then, accomplishes the opposite of its purported intent by diminishing the issues of minority cultures.

Carl E. James further explains that the discourse of multiculturalism actually normalizes White Canadian culture while setting up "foreign bodies" as different, abnormal, and marginalized (201). He points out that the discourse of "integration" is actually a smoke screen for cultural conformity: "Historically, policies have articulated the 'assimilation' of First Nations people and 'other' Canadians. Now the word used is integration" (203). The contradiction in multicultural ideology is that it promises to maintain cultural difference while encouraging cultural assimilation into the dominant ethno-cultural majority, which is White Anglo-Canadian. Kobayashi and Johnson, in their study on race and racism in Canada, also comment on the contradiction between multicultural ideology and practice: "Poll after poll tells us that Canadians are on the whole a 'tolerant' people who value multiculturalism as a fundamental characteristic of our society; those same polls tell us that about one in five Canadians harbours significant discriminatory attitudes" (3). We are steeped in a discourse of "tolerance" and "integration," and are thus unable to see racism in many of its forms. Kobayashi and Johnson add that this "subtle and indirect" discourse actually causes "the most perverse manifestations of today's racism [to

be] normalized" (8). As a result, many people living under this discourse do not fully understand how subtle, minor experiences of racism effectively marginalize non-White citizens. Multiculturalism, for these authors, actually works to perpetuate and normalize dominant structures and silence the marginalized groups it purports to protect.

As we saw with *Beatrice Chancy,* the possibility of recuperating lost Canadian histories is a very important part of Clarke's project, and the statement that I think Clarke is specifically railing against in Bissoondath's book is the following: "Yesterday's humiliations are just that, *yesterday's* humiliations, and to nurture them is to indulge in the fruitlessness of vengeance" (26). As I tried to show with *Beatrice Chancy,* there is some productive work in imaginatively avenging a deed from the past if it is not yet acknowledged in the present. We cannot forget the past because it remains, for Canadians, in the silence of our present. It may be a mistake, however, to assume multiculturalism allows for both remembrance and moving on. Bissoondath does differentiate between remembering the past and obsessing about it. Multicultural policy, he argues, encourages people to hold onto the past possessively, and in effect become a "victim" of that past:

> To be a victim of the past is to be burdened by the sense that history—colonialism, imperialism, racism, sexism—has victimized you, and this sense of historical injustice has become a full and active element of your personality. You are informed by more than just the memory of it; it impels you to view the world in a certain way, to act in a certain way; it hardens you, makes you combative: you claim the moral high-ground and live to see your victimhood acknowledged and compensated. But to chain yourself to the injustices and humiliations of the past is to march forward into the future with your gaze fixed firmly behind you.

> […] History and its wrongs make up one of the pillars of racialization and the racialized self. Nasty things happened years ago in Canada. But that is a Canada that no longer exists. The world is no longer what it was. (165-66)

Bissoondath sees the importance of remembering and talking about both the history of the land one came from as well as the history of the land one lives in. These two histories make up fundamental aspects of a person's identity, and Canada's wilful amnesia is creating identity gaps for the Canadians that live in it. Bissoondath specifies, however, that "ridding oneself of a colonial *mentality* is so easily confounded with ridding oneself of a colonial *heritage.* Heritage is history: it is there and always will be. The danger comes when heritage paralyzes mentality" (75). In other words, we must be able to accept our heritage and our past, to talk about it and come to terms with it, but not go so far as to let it define our identity in the present.

Kobayashi and Johnson admit that many of the "nasty things" Bissoondath speaks about should be left behind, but that we are not currently in a position to pretend they never happened: "We have put much of the violence of the past behind us, yet it cannot be said that the ongoing racisms experienced by Aboriginal peoples and by people of colour are trivial vestiges of the past" (7). For this reason, we must focus on the good work of multiculturalism while also scrutinizing its manifestations "for the ways in which they are used to cover up the effects of racism" (7). It is clear from Kymlicka's statistics that, in some ways, the policy of multiculturalism is working and, for example, making interracial marriages more possible than they have ever been before. But without addressing the contradictory tendencies of a policy that looks great but misbehaves, any multicultural utopia will remain *outopia*: no place.

Clearly multiculturalism has its issues within Canada as a whole, but it is even more problematic within *Québécité*'s context: Québec itself. Multiculturalism has been largely popular

within English Canada, but this has never been the case in French Canada. As James makes clear, the ideology of "integration" assumes that culture is a function of being from elsewhere, so the dominant (Anglo) Canadian culture is normalized and thus made invisible. Anglophone interests have always taken precedence in Canadian issues:

> There is no denying that Canadian governments have always sought to bring about Anglo-conformity through the assimilation and integration of ethnic and racial minority groups and Aboriginal. […] It was felt that the core of nationalism must remain English while French institutions, language and history would take a lesser role. (204)

From an immigrant perspective, French and English might seem to dominate, but from a Québécois perspective, it is clear that English is the more powerful linguistic culture in Canada.

Bannerji suggests that multiculturalism's particular historical moment coincided with a time of Québécois uprising, and was thus used to pacify both immigrants and French Canadians at once: "Pierre Elliot Trudeau's gift of an official policy of multiculturalism appeared in our midst in a period of a rapid influx of third world immigrants into Canada, as well as in a moment of growing intensity of the old English-French rivalry" (9). This moment came just a year after the violent culminating events of the October Crisis, where two government officials were kidnapped by the Front de Libération du Québec, who had up to that point killed six people and injured 27 more in bomb attacks beginning in 1963. "In this context," Bannerji writes, "the proclamation of multiculturalism could be seen as a diffusing or a muting device for francophone national aspirations, as much as a way of coping with the non-European immigrant's arrival" (9). The convenient timing of the policy, then, casts shadows on its altruistic veneer.

Québec politicians like former Premier René Lévesque would agree. He has said, "Multiculturalism, really, is folklore. It is a 'red herring.' The notion was devised to obscure 'the Québec business,' to give an impression that we are *all* ethnics and do not have to worry about special status for Québec" (qtd in Bissoondath 40). Clarke has stated that by setting his interracial love stories in Quebec City, he wanted in part to respond to former Premier Jacques Parizeau, who, after the separatists lost the referendum in 1995, blamed "money and the ethnic vote" for the loss. "This is my personal response to that," Clarke claims (qtd. in Donelly D8). According to Donnelly, "Clarke said he's one of those people who happens to believe Québec belongs to everybody, not just one group of people, just like the rest of the country. At the same time, he said, he's sympathetic to 'the whole national ethos' of Québec. 'As a minority person, I understand the drives behind that'" (Donnelly D8). Clarke claims to be sensitive to the minoritized position Québec takes in Canada, but wanted also to make sure that other ethnic voices were being heard. In the process, however, he writes over the specific concerns of Québec as a nation. The title of the play itself embodies this paradox: it is both a proper French word denoting "quebecness" as well as a kind of re-frenchification of the anglicized name of the Québécois capital city: from Ville de Québec comes Quebec City, which then transforms into *Québécité.* Even while Clarke appears to be paying homage to this historic Québécois city, he is building an English-Canadian dream right on top of it.

Frédérique Arroyas and Stephen Henighan are two critics that harshly judge *Québécité* for taking Ottawa's politics and transposing them into Quebec City. They begin their article by citing Léandre Bergeron, who, during the Révolution Tranquille period, describes three eras in Québécois history, the French (1534-1760), the English (1760-1919), and the American, which extends from 1920 to the present (108). There has been as yet no "Québécois" period in which

Quebeckers can define their own space. The critics admit that "le terme d'impérialisme soit trop fort pour caractériser les rapports actuels entre le Canada Anglophone et le Québec" (114), but they do find Québec's specific position in federalist Canada vulnerable to colonial appropriation by the dominant culture. Cultural products about Québec by Anglo-Canadians can often be used, they argue, to suppress specifically Québécois culture and promote Anglo-federalist culture. This is what Clarke is doing with *Québécité*: its promotion of interracial love actually masks a neocolonial promotion of federalist, multicultural ideology: "*Québécité* de George Elliott Clarke est un texte où le discours de la tolérance s'affiche pour mieux masquer un néocolonialisme latent" (115).

One example of this neo-colonial intent is that of *Québécité'*s many intertextual references, only two of the cultural products mentioned are Québécois *de souche* (Arroyas and Henighan 121). The first is to Cirque du Soleil, a travelling circus act that performs worldwide and does not engage with specifically Québécois culture, and the second is to Pierre Vallieres' 1968 *Nègres blancs d'Amérique* or, in English, *White Niggers of America.* Arroyas and Henighan point out that by referencing this book, a famous polemic against Québécois oppression, "à l'exclusion de tout autre texte signé par un Québécois de souche, *Québécité* réduit la culture québécoise à une polémique pleine d'aigreur, qui néglige ses réalisations artistiques pour mieux insinuer que les aspirations du Québec procèdent d'un ressentiment borné et sans fondement" (123). Paradoxically, then, even while *Québécité* attempts to imagine a space of free love in a diverse Canada through the lens of multiculturalism, Clarke insensitively overwrites and even ridicules specific Québécois voices as incendiary and resentful.

In the preface to the play, Clarke writes that his "story is set in Ville de Québec because its architecture is Gothic, its vices baroque" (12). What ends up happening with Quebec City is

similar to what happens to the representation of the lovers: it becomes fetishized as an exotic, architecturally beautiful, picture-postcard place. Henighan and Arroyas comment that it provides an exotic contrast to Ottawa: "La ville de Québec telle qu'elle est représentée dans *Québécité* est bel et bien une ville de carte postale et devient opportunément le versant exotique d'un Ontario monotone" (118). Clarke treats it like a tourist would, appreciating the beauty, but not actually interacting with the people who live there. The lovers in the play are completely isolated in the city—they never encounter another human except Malcolm's band. Laxmi complains about the problematic ideology of the "*pure-laine*" Québécois, (66-67), and yet, there is no *pure-laine* Québécois character in this play that could speak for him or herself. This utopia is set in Québec, but it is certainly not a Québécois utopia.

Utopian imaginings like this one are particularly fraught in a postcolonial context. The postcolonial imagination so often requires memory and hope for the future within a community that is rebuilding. A society that has been colonized, decolonized, recolonized, gained independence, or all of the above, will certainly be preoccupied with how to create an ideal society for its citizens. As has been shown historically, the society's powers will try to solve problems of race relations with shiny new policies. Even apartheid was, in the beginning, seen as a utopian solution to racial conflicts in South Africa: The National Party in 1948 even "advocated that its apartheid policy would end racial conflict" in South Africa altogether (Louw 31). As we have seen, utopian imaginings like apartheid and, to some extent, multiculturalism, can actually be damaging in terms of race relationships and any number of other issues. Creative minds in postcolonial worlds still want to imagine a better future, but how to do so without suppressing someone else's dream?

The answer to this question comes in a new form of utopian dreaming which refuses to describe what that future world would look like. The ethical postcolonial utopia will imagine the possibility of new worlds without telling the reader what he or she should see in that imaginary world. In Ali Erritouni's words, "When the novelist baulks at prescribing for the reader an alternative reality, she recognizes and enables the reader's right to determine the substance of that reality" (77). Ralph Pordzik, who has written a study on this new trend in speculative fiction that is happening all over the world, terms the novels of this new genre "utopographic metafiction" because they use utopian imaginings as "a kind of 'testing ground'" for possible approaches to future worlds, and are also self-conscious, turning "problematically unto themselves," destabilizing their authorly authority and encouraging the reader to think about the utopia's structure and fill in the blanks him or herself (134). A postcolonial utopia must understand itself as problematic, but must continue to do the work of imagining a better future. It should give the reader the desire for change and hope for the future without determining that reader's idea of how the world should look.

Clarke's utopia fails to open itself so imaginatively. It is a staunchly multicultural utopia, and is completely determined by Clarke's unified vision, which is determined in turn by Trudeau's. Without fully addressing the problematic issues of history and race relations in Canada, *Québécité*'s multicultural harmony can do nothing less than strike a false note.

In performance, however, that false note sounds pretty good. *Québécité* as a whole is actually quite unified; it is harmoniously homogeneous. Even its formal aspects suggest a desire for shared experience, similarity, and unification. Unlike *Beatrice Chancy*, where line lengths are varied and each character speaks with different diction, tone, and vocabulary, the characters in

Québécité speak so similarly that it even becomes difficult to tell them apart. Comparing a page of *Québécité* and *Beatrice Chancy* show these differences quite plainly. From *Québécité:*

O: May I be a poet speaking to other poets?

L: The word *love* bleats and chirps in their sonnets.

O: Yet Petrarchan sonnets *première* with Sade—

because Petrarch adored an ancestress of Sade.

L: Poets are eyes looking for eyes

to look into, eyes to inspire fresh lies.

(They are pure piranha in hyena disguise.)

C: [*Smiling.*] It's cynical to feel so clinical about emotion.

L: *Mais l'éros est comme une érosion.*

O: Poetry is endlessly fresh, like dew, like grass.

C: Love refreshes, well, like a wine-drenched glass. (34)

As we can see, each of the lines is roughly the same length, and the ending word of each rhymes with the last or the next. The syllables scan with mostly anapests and iambs, and these rhythms are not dependent on the character speaking them. Each character speaks similarly, and they seem to be speaking almost independently of each other. Especially since they are indicated only with a letter representing their name, it is difficult to intuit who is speaking without checking the letter corresponding to the words. Compare this excerpt from *Beatrice Chancy:*

Beatrice: His blood's like dirt: it scums off in water.

Lustra: Can water rinse away murder so easily?

Beatrice: Why not? It seems to work with rape.

Deal: (*Singing offstage*) Steal away, steal away, steal away to

Jesus.

Steal away, steal away home:

I ain't got long to stay here.

Thunder, cannon, hooves. Further surges of rain.

Lustra: Why are the slaves singing?

Some evil has happened.

Beatrice: We'll live, free, by Lawrencetown Beach—

Where heaped waves—constant moaning silk,

Cleanse light, wash and freshen it,

So the word *Love* pours itself forth as ocean.

Shouts. Shots. Thunder. Hurried steps approach. Beatrice seizes the dagger and tucks it inside her gown. A breathing alarum, Deal pants into the room.

Deal: Dice be draggin Chance, slashed up, smashed,

From a busted-up apple tree. (132-33)

Here we can see that the lines do not equal each other, and the rhymes are much less present. Each character is given a full name before their speech, instead of just a letter as with *Québécité.*[1] Each character also has individual diction, and we can hear them speaking and reacting to each other in accordance with the situation. We can hear Lustra's White and Beatrice's nun-taught grammar, while Deal's slavery-informed blues include words like "ain't", "draggin" and "busted up." Personal histories define differences in diction here, where in *Québécité,* these personal and even cultural differences are not present in the characters' speech.

The finale of *Québécité* is, appropriately, a fantasy of harmony. The music, sending the lovers off into the sunset, includes music from many cultures: "*church bells, horns, sitar,*

Chinese violin (p'i-p'a), harmonium, harp, tabla, and thumb piano commix" (92). The lovers are singing of a future in which "our children will be / every colour eyes can know" and celebrate "*le Québéc de couleur*" (92). In a coloured-in Québec, history must be left behind, and racial and cultural problems dissolve into a utopia that rhymes. The CBC's recording of the 2003 musical at the Guelph Jazz Festival shows that in performance, the play is even more harmoniously homogeneous. All of the instruments named above do not appear in the performance, and we need not heed Clarke's instruction in his "Prelude" that our "ears must accept African strings, Asian brass, European percussion, Aboriginal vocals" (12). Rather, according to the information given by the host of the radio program that the recording was featured on (*In Performance*), the instruments remain the same throughout: voice, trumpet, cello, drums, piano, and double bass, as well as a turntable and some "electronic effects," but there is never a strong sense of many ethnic instruments working together in the sense the stage directions imply.

The libretto was written after the casting had taken place, and D. D. Jackson and Clarke composed the piece with the performers in mind: Haydain Neale, former Guelph resident and African-Canadian frontman of R&B group Jacksoul plays Ovide; Indian-Canadian traditional vocalist Kiran Ahluwalia plays Laxmi; Korean-Canadian experimental jazz vocalist Yoon Choi plays Colette; and jazz musician Malcolm is played by New-York based African-American jazz and gospel singer Dean Bowman. As a result, we can hear certain differences in the singing styles of the performers, but they often come off as tokenized. The only time we hear a character engaging with a traditional ethnic form of singing is during a long section where each character has a solo, and Ahluwalia sings in her traditional vocal style, a wordless, haunting melody that explores the range of her soprano voice. Colette, too, has a long non-verbal intro to her solo, but it sounds more like a whining, hysterical child than any traditional form of Chinese music or, for

that matter, Yoon Choi's melodic, smooth experimental jazz/pop singing. Here the infantilizing representation of the china doll becomes audible. The jazz of this libretto is, finally, D.D. Jackson's: it is the jazz fantasia of one person and does not necessarily reflect the sounds of the many different cultures it is meant to engage with.

The French in the play is itself somewhat tokenized—it comes into play here and there for poetic reasons, but is not fully engaged with. It consists of a few words added to the mostly English poetry for texture or, perhaps, sex appeal; it is more of a condescending token rather than any real attempt to employ the language. At one point, it acts as a secret language between women, with Colette asking Laxmi as soon as Ovide leaves the room, "Laxmi, *est-ce qu'*Ovide *serait ton chum?*" Laxmi responds, "*Pas du tout,* Colette!" and she jokes back, "*pas encore, peut-être!*" (33). Later, as the lovers imagine their world, Ovide projects, "We'll be oral linguists tonguing French vocables" (89).

The "French vocables" that we hear in performance, further, do not sound particularly French. For example, the word "*avril*" is rhymed with "cathedral" (88). With the accent required to rhyme these two words, we think not of the Québécois month of thaw, but rather of the faux-punk Anglophone singer, Avril Lavigne. Even non-rhymed French words sounds butchered, including Ovide's last name, Rimbaud, as sung by Ovide with a hard English 'r' rather than the rolling French 'r' it requires. Two other examples are "ensemble," in which the "ble" is pronounced as "bluh," and "Révolution Tranquille," in which "revolution" is spoken with a hard English "n" and "Tranquille" with a similarly hard English "l." It is unclear if these performers are familiar with French or not, but it is clear that the characters, as they are being performed, are not. The rhyming harmonies are English, even when they are French. French, the Ville de

Québec, and ethnic women in this play are all sexualized, exoticized, and reduced from a condescending federalist and even almost colonialist perspective.

The music in performance actually encourages us to be entertained, enjoy the melody and, ultimately, to forget the very issues the libretto attempts to raise. Rather, we are encouraged to do like Malcolm, and let the music take us away: "to forget my regrets," he says, "I picked up piano" (27). *Québécité* as a dream may actually be focusing more on the entertainment value of a *Jazz Fantasia* than on questioning issues of interracial romance in modern-day Québec. "Because our dreams were solely Music," Colette says, "we survived" (27). Dreams, music, and survival: if these all go so harmoniously together, and we do not question the opinions Clarke is putting forth, it will be all too easy to accept an unexamined multicultural utopia.

Enjoying a performance like this, then, may be somewhat dangerous. M. Nourbese Philip describes her experience watching a Native comedy—*The Rez Sisters*—with a predominantly White settler audience, most of whom were laughing and enjoying the play tremendously. This made Philip feel uncomfortable because, she felt, the audience was being "let off too easily" (30-31). She describes a similar feeling when watching *The Coloured Museum*, "a powerful, painful, and at times funny collage of Black American life over the centuries" (31). As she watched the White settler audience laugh at the same jokes she was laughing at as a Black woman remembering traumatic histories, she wondered, "Were they laughing at the *same* things I was laughing at, and if their laughter lacked the same admixture of pain, was it laughter which, having been bought too cheaply, came too easily? Were they, therefore, laughing at me and not with me?" (31). Marcia Blumberg recounts the similar reaction of a young Black actor involved in the Market Theatre Laboratory's 1996 stagings of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission's apartheid testimonies: he "vents anger" at the liberal audience members who feel

shock and "revulsion, yet seemingly experience a catharsis that clears their consciences." To this he exclaims angrily, "rainbow nation *se gat* (asshole)" (278). With uncanny similarity, *Québécité* stages a multicultural, post-slavery, post-*Beatrice Chancy* world that is pleasant to watch and allows the audience to feel proud of Canada for being in the process of solving our national racial problems. What, then, does it mean to laugh at a play that raises serious issues and insufficiently answers them? Is it enough to write a play about interracial romance and have White audiences watch it and feel good about it? Are the audience members of *Québécité* being, in Philip's words, "let off too easily"?

The question, of course, raises another: are they being let off at all? Is a performance so definitive that audience members truly do not question a word of what has been said? Does *Québécité,* whether in performance or as a work of literature, exist in a vacuum? Despite its myriad problems, I think the answer, on all counts, is no. Perhaps the point of this play is not the success of the love and marriage in this play, but that they are presented in performance as a possibility, as a topic for discussion. Performance brings together a group of people into a community setting and encourages interaction between them. As Jill Dolan puts it, "live performance provides a place where people come together, embodied and passionate, to share experiences of meaning making and imagination that can describe or capture fleeting intimations of a better world" (2). Audiences are not merely passively watching something as they might on a television, but are seeing something *embodied* that includes them, too.

This experience of witnessing and especially being moved by a performance can elicit what Dolan calls "the utopian performative" (7). She emphasises the affective nature of the theatre, arguing that the feeling that an audience member can get in this communal situation may be more powerful than any single message the performance attempts to put forth. Dolan calls the

communal experience of the theatre audience "participatory publics," and she suggests that "the *communitas* they experience through utopian performatives might become a model for other social interactions" (11). She describes "communitas" (via Victor Turner) as an event in which "audiences or participants feel themselves become part of the whole in an organic, nearly spiritual way; spectators' individuality becomes finely attuned to those around them, and a cohesive if fleeting feeling of belonging to the group bathes the audience" (11). This experience creates a sense of togetherness and participation.

This feeling of togetherness, the affective nature of performance, may create space for that elusive possibility for equal, healthy love in a communal setting. Dolan writes,

> The aesthetics of these performances lead to both affective and effective feelings and expressions of hope and love not just for a partner, as the domestic scripts of realism so often emphasize, but for other people, for a more abstracted notion of 'community,' or for an even more intangible idea of 'humankind.' (2)

Here, then, we return to the idea of love, and the project of recuperating it not only for a romantic couple, but for a community. The aesthetics of a performance elicit feelings, desires for a better world in which love is possible. Creating the dream of a better future within participatory publics may even lead to social action. However fleeting the experience may be, the utopian performative might encourage participants "to be active in other public spheres, to participate in civic conversations" that may be sparked by these performances (11). The question is not, then, whether or not Clarke adequately answers the questions he raises with either *Beatrice Chancy* or *Québécité*, but that he offers his audiences an opportunity to think about them.

This is especially important for *Québécité* as a jazz opera. Clarke has said of his choice of genre, "Telling stories about love has always been a part of jazz, and especially love across

boundaries. And jazz was a multi-cultural music from the beginning. At the music's very birth different aspects of cultures and traditions were combined. In a sense we're kind of returning to the roots of jazz" (qtd. in Martensson para. 13). D.D. Jackson also points out that opera is like jazz in that it doesn't demand that "everything be completely clear and explained to you from the beginning" (qtd. in Ferguson para. 1). The "silly love song," then, leaves some possibilities open for interpretation and the hopeful dreaming that may, potentially, turn into a positive reality.

Beyond recuperating lost Canadian histories or creating the possibility for healthy love across boundaries, Clarke is simply opening the opportunity for discussion. I may not fall in love with the Jamaican Muslim Canadian in the seat next to me while watching *Québécité*, but maybe the shared experience of having seen the play will allow us to strike up a conversation. Dolan writes that "when an audience reaches a level of comfort that dissipates the tension of strangeness that often charges spectators settling down so close to each other for an hour or two […] these more intimate audiences become micro civil societies" (26). Maybe the issue is not that we don't understand each other across racial and cultural (or gendered or economic) boundaries, but that we don't sit down together enough.

In this sense, while Clarke's *Québécité* may fail in Pordzik's formulation of a postcolonial utopia, it still raises the possibility of a better world—any kind of better world—within the theatre, within what Dolan calls "the ephemeral maybes of this magic place" (4). *Québécité* has some deep flaws, but we must remember that it is still a "silly love song," a jazz opera, ultimately a performance and a work of art. As Clarke says in his "Prelude" to the play: "History is a slaughterhouse, Poetry an opera house: only Love allows us to distinguish Beauty from its extinguishing" (11). For Dolan, the utopian performative can be powerful even—or perhaps especially—if it is not a complete, flawless plan of action: "The utopian performative,

by its very nature, can't translate into a program for social action, because it's most effective as a *feeling*. […] [P]erhaps such intensity of *feeling* is politics enough for utopian performatives" (19-20). It is watching the jazz, then, listening to the harmonies and seeing these characters be embodied that allows us to think about and talk about what options we have, and which we want, for our collective future.

Thus, even while Clarke's success is tempered with his "malentendu" with Québécois culture, he ultimately does create the possibility for discussion with that fleeting moment of harmony, the "utopian performative" that opens the door to questions even if it does not answer them or answers them badly. In this sense, then, the experience of listening might be enough, and we should simply follow *Québécité*'s prefatory statement: "WARNING: THIS WORK MAY BE, EVEN IN CANADA, SUNG LOUDLY, AND WITH FEELING."

Note

[1] Of course, part of the reason for this difference in format and character naming may have to do with the different publishers: Polestar in the case of *Beatrice Chancy,* and Gaspereau for *Québécité*. It is also interesting to note, however, that there is one point in *Beatrice Chancy* when Beatrice and Chancy appear in the stage directions as "*B*." and "*C*.": Scene V, the rape scene (82-87). This sudden change in naming may indicate a turning point for the characters' identities, where the passive gothic victim and the evil gothic villain confront each other. Past this point, they start to take on each other's roles in Clarke's gothic drama.

Conclusion: "Love history, and it loves back": The Project Continues

As we have seen, both *Beatrice Chancy* and *Québécité* exhibit a desire to find a way to reconcile suppressed histories in Canada in order to make way for "true, authentic love" (Fanon 41). Beatrice's gothic tale shows the danger of this historical repression in its ability to pervert love, while *Québécité*'s utopian dream begins the project of imagining what love would look like if we, as a nation, could come to terms with our past. Whether dealing with the past or the future, both plays ultimately address problems of our Canadian present, and staging them for an audience at least opens the door to discussing these issues as a community.

The urgency of Clarke's project is not only shown in the scholarly evidence I have been engaging with here. An example of the persistence of Canadian amnesia at the turn of the twenty-first century appeared on March 24th, 2008, in Montreal's widely read and only English newspaper, *The Gazette*. In the front section, an article titled "Governor General carries the promise of atonement" reported on a trip the current Governor General, Michaëlle Jean, took to France. The first sentence of the article reports that Jean went there "to help rekindle a French national debate over race relations and France's historic reluctance to confront its role in the slave trade" (O'Neill A12). The article goes on to explain that Jean's presence could prove "embarrassing" for French President Nicolas Sarkozy and the people in France in general for not having acknowledged their slaveholding past. Adding insult to injury, Jean's "visit also takes place two days before France's national day to commemorate slavery, which was inaugurated only in 2006 under pressure by France's blacks" (A12). On a personal level, further, we learn that Jean, "Canada's most famous Haitian immigrant" and a

> great-great-granddaughter of African and aboriginal slaves […] made an emotional private visit in 2006 to a local museum here [in La Rochelle, France]

> that includes disturbing artifacts from the slave trade, [and she] is acutely aware that her own ancestors may very well have been placed in leg irons by bullwhip-wielding guards in ships that set sail from this port. (A12)

Well shame on France! How unlike Canada they are in terms of race relations, especially since "French minority groups have often been frustrated by the republic's shunning of the concept of multiculturalism" (A12), Canada's internationally celebrated policy. Her presence in France, as a shining example of multicultural moral authority, may help spark some awareness in this country, which has "tried to hide their history" and has "throughout history never felt guilty about its colonial misdeeds" (A12).

Something is wrong with this picture. How often do we see Canada, as a nation, feel "guilty about its colonial misdeeds" like slavery, residential schools, assimilation, head taxes on Chinese immigrants, or Japanese internment camps? Why, considering our history, do we celebrate Black History Month each year with barely a mention of slavery (if that), and certainly no "national day to commemorate slavery"? I cannot speak for France as a nation, but at least the government has admitted, publicly, the country's involvement in the slave trade and successfully created a national day of remembrance. The perceived moral high-handedness from our "most famous Haitian immigrant" is sickening, considering Jean's own ancestors may have as easily been enslaved in Québec as in La Rochelle.

The fact that a female immigrant holds the post of Canada's Governor General is certainly positive for Canada's image, but we must keep in mind that this post is merely symbolic, and does not entail any actual political power. Jean is drafted into this representative position because of her race and gender in order to perpetuate a Canadian mythology that does not always reflect reality. *The Gazette*'s article clearly shows the need to remember lost histories

and address them as a community for the Canadian present and future. That the article was published in March 2008, just as I am in the process of completing this thesis, shows that this problem of history remains very much a part of today's world. Clarke's project is, indeed, timely.

Of course, this does not mean that Clarke's attempt to remember Beatrice and dream her dreams will solve the problems of national identity, amnesia, and silence in Canada. As I have shown, *Beatrice Chancy* and *Québécité* offer interesting and productive, but flawed, ways of engaging with Canada's history as a gothic memory and its future as a musical fantasy in order to imagine a world that is full of love. Importantly, of course, this project is far from finished. On *Québécité,* for example, Clarke has noted that he understands it as a somewhat naïve and imperfect utopia: "I don't promise these marriages will work out," he laughs in an interview (CBC). The point may not be whether the problems these imaginary couples face get solved or not, but that they are willing to try to find a way to love each other anyway.

We can see the continuation and complexification of the desire of dreaming a better Canada by remembering its history through Clarke's most recent work, *Trudeau: Long March, Shining Path* (2007). This verse drama, based on a libretto like the other two (this time for Toronto's Harbourfront Festival) imaginatively explores the life of Pierre Elliott Trudeau, architect of multiculturalism and Canada's most lionized political celebrity. It is clear from this work that love and history are still strange bedfellows, and Clarke is still thinking of ways to understand them together. Within the first ten pages or so of the play, Trudeau meets a Chinese poet named Yu Xuanji, who says, "Love history, and it loves back […] you have to make history as gracefully as making love" (40). Trudeau and Yu sing a duet that calls on the healing power of love to triumph over history: "If only we could make history / Just by making love. / Then

maybe all human history / Would chronicle love" (41), a conversation that echoes Beatrice's "I was dreaming, dreaming too much / as if love could extinguish history" (*Beatrice* 119), and, in Clarke's "Prelude" to *Québécité*, "History is a slaughterhouse, Poetry an opera house: only Love allows us to distinguish Beauty from its extinguishing" (11). All of these lines show a desire for love to truly be all you need but also speak to its insufficiency against problems of history.

If *Beatrice Chancy* is a "slaughterhouse" and *Québécité* more of an "opera house," *Trudeau* offers a highly imaginative but realistic look at love in a Parliament house. Pierre Trudeau, here, is not the silent "*visionar[y] of liberty*" (7) he appears to be in *Québécité*, but is a complicated human who makes mistakes, "an 'iron man,' but one with a flower in his lapel and a girl on each arm" ("Vrai, Un Essai" *Trudeau* 22-23). Significantly, in this play, Trudeau's ability to love fails, showing a significant departure from the idealism of *Québécité*. He and his once-loving, much younger wife Margaret divorce because, in her words, "I'm his wife, and now a mother, […] But Canada is his real lover" (100). Trudeau himself admits to his wrongs against love in the last scene of the play, wondering, "I ask you, did I dream enough? / And I wonder, did I love enough? / Did I love my power all too much / And people not enough?" (113). The question is never answered, leaving some room for interpretation and openness within this new configuration of Trudeau's history.

Clarke is aware of Trudeau's mistakes, and does not present him as an idol. In his introduction to the play, Clarke informs us that "His political autobiography leaves out, naturally, many of his grotesque (and revealing) *faux pas*, including, in 1970, his government's plan to assimilate First Nations peoples" (23). Clarke's conception of Trudeau is irreverent and often critical, but never pretends to be accurate: "My Trudeau," he insists, "is not the now-deceased immortal, but rather the Warhol silkscreen; not surreal, but sidereal: an insubordinate reality,

half-Plato, half-Chaplin" (24). Clarke makes clear that his history is not any trustworthier than what Canadians learn about in school, but it is at least honest about its limitations.

The policy of multiculturalism, which Clarke so clearly endorses in *Québécité*, is also called into question in this play, showing a more complex engagement with the ideology. One of the scenes takes place on June 24th, 1968, both Saint-Jean-Baptiste day (Québec's national holiday), and the day Trudeau announced his commitment to a unified, bilingual Canada and to quashing separatist demands. It is also the night before an election, and reporter Simone Cixous asks: "What *is* Pierre's "Just Society?" (80). Trudeau's enigmatic answer is: "The Liberal Party programme is regional Realism, real Regionalism, Romantic Rationalism, rational Romanticism, Revolutionary Royalism, royalist Revolution, and representative Representation—" (81). Supporter Roscoe Robertson cuts him off, yelling, "Freedom nation! Freedom nation!" (81). Separatist dissenter Jacques Fanon yells back "*Domination! Domination!*" (81), and Pierre's wife Margaret chimes in with "Liberation! Liberation!" (81). Without having her question sufficiently answered, "*Cixous exits, huffily escaping the escalating pandemonium*" and adds, offstage, "Hallucination! Hallucination!" (81). This scene of chaos, conflicting voices, and uncertainty is certainly not the harmonious multicultural chorus that was heard in *Québécité.* Rather, both "Liberation" and "Hallucination" join together discordantly. This is a complex biographical history of Trudeau that chooses not to relegate his mistakes to a "hole of memory" (Laub 65).

The play itself sometimes feels like a hallucination. It is full of theatrical magic and never strives for a realism that could be mistaken for reality. For example, Clarke suggests that the actor playing Trudeau "may be an Aboriginal/First Nations (or Métis) person" (27), and that Mao Zedong "may be Chinese or Cuban or Québécois. If he also plays John F. Kennedy, he may also be Catholic" (27). In a characteristic moment of theatrical irreverence, Yu "*sits beside*

Trudeau and plays her flute, releasing, unexpectedly, piano music into the air" (41). The story is playful and imaginative, not rigidly harmonious like *Québécité* or gothically tragic like *Beatrice Chancy*. Paradoxically, *Trudeau* may offer a more honest look at Canadian history in all of its imaginative, contradictory myth-making.

The limits of this thesis prevent me from engaging more fully with *Trudeau* or any of Clarke's other works, many of which I feel are also extensions of the project of remembering history in order to create the possibility of love. Clarke has written poetry, novels, and verse dramas that engage with Black Nova Scotian history, often through the perspective of lovers, including *Whylah Falls, George and Rue,* and *Lush Dreams, Blue Exile: Fugitive Poems*. He has also edited two anthologies of Africadian literature (*Fire on the Water: An Anthology of Black Nova Scotian Writing* and *Eyeing the North Star: Directions in African-Canadian Writing*) and a book of criticism entitled *Odysseys Home: Mapping African-Canadian Literature.* Clearly Clarke is concerned with issues of marginalized histories, and more extensive research into his oeuvre could deepen and complexify the project as I have formulated it here. Fascinating within all of these works is that elements of music and oral storytelling suffuse the literature, and an examination of these elements as tools to recuperate lost African histories is a potentially rich area for further study. I have concentrated most generally on cultural issues within Canada, especially within the context of the trauma of Black slavery in Canada, and a broader engagement with the many other areas of Canada's racial history may begin to illuminate the black—or perhaps multicoloured—hole of Canadian history.

All of these issues may begin to be known through dreams like Clarke's: dreams that imagine a better, more loving Canadian world. It is important to dream of a better future, no matter how flawed that dream may (necessarily) be. The dream of love and peace between races

and identities with conflicting histories may not give us all the answers, but it allows us to begin to question in concrete and productive ways, especially within the performance space that literally brings together a community that can immediately begin to discuss the issues being raised. In concluding here, I return to Frantz Fanon, who ends his book *Black Skin, White Masks* with a "final prayer: O my body, make of me always a man who questions!" (232).

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