alt theatre
cultural diversity and the stage

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alt.theatre: cultural diversity and the stage is Canada's only professional journal examining intersections between politics, cultural plurality, social activism, and the stage.

alt.theatre welcomes suggestions or proposals for interviews, news, pieces of self-reflection, analytical articles, and reviews of books, plays, and performances. Submissions to ***alt.theatre*** are vetted by at least two members of the editorial board as well as external reviewers where appropriate.

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"Change the World, One Play at a Time"

COVER PHOTO
© Christopher Snow. Sarah Waisvisz in *Monstrous* at the undercurrents festival, 2016.

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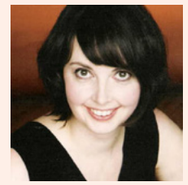

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THE FEMINIST KILLJOY GOES TO THE THEATRE

BY
MICHELLE
MACARTHUR

After the American election, I, like many others, experienced a flare-up of feminist rage. This was not my usual level of everyday feminist rage—the twitch I feel when people use all-male pronouns, the silent (and sometimes audible) screams that escape me when I read news articles on gendered violence and witness the refutations that follow. This was off-the-charts feminist rage: rage towards voters whom I felt made the wrong choice; rage towards the apathy and/or ignorance and/or misogyny and/or racism and/or xenophobia underlying that choice; and, of course, rage towards the new administration that had capitalized on these sentiments. My anger reached a fever pitch when I noticed a distant relative share a propagandist video produced by right-wing Conservatives on Facebook; I proceeded to spend the better part of a Saturday trolling her feed and picking fights I would never win with Trump voters. By the end of the exchange I felt exhausted, defeated, and slightly ashamed. Ashamed because, as someone who professes to be open-minded and compassionate, I resorted to some low blows in order to feel superior over my interlocutors and temporarily quell my rage. (It didn't work. I was still angry.)

I have been thinking a lot since then about the place of anger—in my life, in activism, in theatre. On the one hand, it feels empowering to express anger, as women as well as other marginalized peoples are often encouraged to suppress that emotion, or, if they choose not to, they are dismissed and stereotyped as mad, bitter, unhinged. On the other hand, anger can be stifling if left to fester, as it was for me in the winter. What is the power of anger, I wondered? What can come of it?

Sara Ahmed takes up these questions in her formative 2010 article "Feminist Killjoys (And Other Willful Subjects)." Ahmed reflects on the alienation that feminists experience when they do not find happiness in the "right things" and the ways in which their ensuing disappointment and discontent unsettle dominant power structures. She writes, "To be unseated by the table of happiness might be to threaten not simply that table, but what gathers around it, what gathers on it. When you are unseated, you can even get in the way of those who are seated, those who want more than anything to keep their seats. To threaten the loss of the seat can be to kill the joy of the seated." To Ahmed, feminists kill joy by exposing how happiness is sustained by the suppression of dissention, discord, and feelings of discontent. Perceived as humourless saboteurs of happiness, people who name themselves as feminist are "already read" as "not easy to get along with" and expected to disprove this assumption through displays of good will and happiness (Ahmed). These expectations are also placed on oppressed peoples more broadly, as Ahmed points out by drawing on the work of Marilyn Frye, who writes, "It is often a requirement upon oppressed people that we smile and be cheerful. If we comply, we signify our docility and our acquiescence in our situation" (qtd in Ahmed).

But what if instead of conforming to these expectations, we willfully defied them? Ahmed concludes her piece with a manifesto, urging her readers to reclaim the maligned figure of the feminist killjoy and find agency within her: "*Don't look it over: don't get over it*." Moreover, she encourages killjoys to recognize the implications of being (mis)understood as the cause of unhappiness and to dialogue across difference about our experiences occupying that role. She concludes, "There can be joy in killing joy. Kill joy, we can and we do. Be willful, we will and we are." For me, the theatre offers a space to take up Ahmed's manifesto—to kill joy, and to find joy in killing it. That is what politically engaged and activist theatre can do for its audience: it simultaneously destabilizes our conventional ideas of happiness and fosters moments of pleasure through the experience of communing with others and watching live performers make art on stage And so, in February, at the height of my election anger, on a trip to the US to see theatre, I revelled in the work of fellow feminist killjoys.

I travelled to Chicago, a five-hour journey from the border city where I live, to see two shows: Young Jean Lee's *Straight White Men* and the collectively created *Gender Breakdown*. Lee's play was being produced by Steppenwolf Theater, directed by the playwright herself in a revised version of the script (first produced in 2014). The premise of *Straight White Men* is simple and familiar: a father gathers with his three adult sons over Christmas; they rib each other and reminisce about their childhood; drama ensues. But in Lee's hands, the kitchen-sink family drama is not what it seems, and even before the show's official start the familiar is made unfamiliar. Audiences entering the theatre are greeted by two non-binary, Brechtian stagehands dancing to the loud, infectious Nikki Minaj music pumping through the auditorium. Once we are all seated, they introduce themselves and their preferred pronouns, swiftly explaining the social construction of gender in lay terms. They go on to acknowledge that Lee's pre-show music choice may have made some people uncomfortable, explaining: "We are well aware that it can be upsetting when people create an environment that doesn't take your needs into account. As for those of you who liked or didn't mind the music, please know that we deliberately set up our pre-show to cater to your experience. We wanted to make sure you'd feel welcome in this theater" (Lee 9). This framing device, like the play itself, asks the audience to develop an awareness of identity and privilege in their own lives. Indeed, the family at the play's centre is not blind in this regard—the (now deceased) matriarch has evidently imparted them with liberal values, reflected in everything from the doctored version of Monopoly called Privilege that she created for them as kids to the Hilary 2016 sticker conspicuously adorning their wall. But they also grapple with what to do with their privilege, and as the eldest son Matt's existential crisis is slowly revealed, he elicits varying degrees of outrage from his brothers and father at his refusal to "do more" with the power he has been afforded by his identity as a straight white man.

As a playwright of colour, Lee takes a deliberately anthropological approach to her creative process, researching her subject through conversations with collaborators of diverse identities ("Crossing Paths" 16-18). Informed by this work, she temporarily "inhabits" the identity of a straight white man in order to ask her audience to consider it *as* an identity like any other (rather than the unquestioned norm against which all others are measured). She does not attempt to solve the inequities that are borne of privilege, but rather, through a process of making strange, she asks audiences to "notice their own responses and think about their relationships to their own privilege" (17). Lee takes on the role of the feminist killjoy, in Ahmed's words, "getting in the way of those who are seated" at the table of happiness: in this case, mainstream theatre audiences, whose comfortable position is unsettled from the top of the show. It is perhaps no surprise that Lee describes her audiences as often leaving the theatre feeling bothered, upset, and angry (17). But at the same time, there is an abundance of joy to be found in *Straight White Men*—from the music at the top of the show, to the physical comedy between the brothers, to the laugh-out-loud humour laced through the script. There is joy in killing joy.

Like *Straight White Men*, *Gender Breakdown* also works to (joyfully) unsettle power. Inspired by researcher Kay Kron's 2015–16 study of gender parity in the Chicago theatre

community and based on interviews with 220 people, the play is a devised piece that stages the experiences of a broad spectrum of female identified theatre practitioners in the city. *Gender Breakdown* is also, in its creators' words, "a public conversation on race, gender, sexuality, class, privilege, and intersectional feminism" ("A Note"). It draws particular attention to the barriers faced by women of colour and transgendered, gender nonconforming and/or non-binary individuals and highlights differences in privilege between women. In an unintentional reference to the play happening across town at Steppenwolf, show creator Dani Bryant shares that she began the project with an assumption that "Straight white men take up too much space," but soon realized that "so do cisgendered, heterosexual white women, including myself."

At the top of the show, Bryant's voice welcomes the audience over the sound system: "I have a question. Do you find it embarrassing that we had to make a play titled *Gender Breakdown*? I'm embarrassed and it was my idea. . . . I am hopeful we will not need to make plays titled *Gender Breakdown* in the future. So congrats. Congrats on seeing the world premiere and universal finale of this theatrical production" (Bryant et al.). This mix of humour and exasperation is laced through the show, which comprises vignettes featuring the whole ensemble representing elements of their shared experiences in the Chicago theatre community, interspersed with monologues spotlighting individual stories. Ensemble scenes explore issues such as the impossible beauty ideals placed on performers, harassment and abuse in the rehearsal hall, and the stereotypes that pervade roles available to female-identified actors. Even when commonalities are identified, *Gender Breakdown* avoids purporting a universal experience. For example, in a simultaneously hilarious and depressing scene, ensemble members stand in a line as actual casting calls are read—"Left-wing bitch. Sexless," "Past her prime. Aged 23-30," "Topless scientist"—stepping forward if they fit the description and in so doing exposing the dearth of roles available to women whose bodies do not fit the (light-skinned, thin, big-breasted) norm.

Monologues, in turn, also tackle a range of issues, from the systemic sexism and racism in theatre schools to the underrepresentation of the experiences of migrant women and women of colour on stage. In an impactful moment near the end of the play, dramaturg Kate Hawbaker-Krohn shares their experience of exclusion as a non-binary member of the theatre community, questioning what it means to put a casting call out for a female actor. Adding another layer of meaning to the title *Gender Breakdown*, Kate says, "It's important to acknowledge the stories we are not telling in our show. I dramaturged this work, and well, it's clear that even in our own breakdown, we did not attract the gender diversity necessary to give you a full scope of the challenges, and the hope, of our Chicago theatre community."

Both *Gender Breakdown* and Lee's revised version of *Straight White Men* were developed and performed in the wake of November 8, 2016, a time characterized, for many of us, by anger, confusion, alienation, and sadness. Yet, these plays also sprang from a place of compassion and a drive to foster understanding across difference, as both involved collaborative creative processes and sought to create dialogue with audiences through events such as post-show talk backs. These plays demonstrate that when the feminist killjoy goes to the theatre, s/he can claim a space to talk about "injustices, violence, power, and subordination" (Ahmed) and pull the seats from under those whose privilege has secured them a place at the table of happiness. And s/he can also find joy. As Aimy says at the end of *Gender Breakdown*, "We're told in times of pain, struggle . . . and now in a fucking political dystopia to make art! Find your tribe. Find a space. Make your own work. Produce it yourself. That can feel good for a time. It can feel wonderful. It can feel better, at least. It can feel right."

This issue of *alt.theatre* includes several feminist killjoys. Among them, Sarah Waisvisz, our Reviews Editor but also a talented theatre maker and performer, shares the script for her one-woman show *Monstrous*, which looks at the intersections of gender, race, and culture; Rebecca Benson and Tracey Guptill discuss their work bringing the feminist punk group Pussy Riot to Kingston, Ontario; and DM St. Bernard concludes her excellent Principles Office series with a reflection on what it means to purposefully claim space. I want to thank DM for curating Principles Office for us, as this issue marks the end of the series. She pitched her idea to *alt* shortly after I came on as editor, and I was so excited by the opportunity to collaborate with an artist and activist whose work I have admired for a long time. Many of you have commented on your enjoyment of the series, and I know the myriad conversations it has sparked will continue on beyond the pages of the magazine.

This issue marks another change for *alt*. After thoughtful deliberation with our editorial team and the board of our publisher Teesri Duniya, we have decided to shift to three issues per volume and focus more of our energies on developing original content for our website, including features and reviews about theatre happening across the country (and beyond) with a focus on the intersections of politics, activism, and identity. We are still committed to producing a high quality print magazine, but feel this shift will help *alt* adapt to the current realities of the publishing industry and also allow us to harness the potential of our digital platforms to reach out to more readers. We will be sending subscribers more information in the coming months and look forward to bringing you the first issue of Volume 14 in October.

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© Steppenwolf Theatre Company (Photo by Michael Brosilow). L-R: Elliott Jenetopulos (Elliott) and Will Wilhelm (Will) in Steppenwolf's production of *Straight White Men*, a Chicago premiere written and directed by Young Jean Lee.

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DO NOT TALK ABOUT RECONCILIATION

AYUMI GOTO AND PETER MORIN
WITH AARON FRANKS

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In August 2016 I had the privilege of visiting the Indigenous Summer Arts Intensive at UBC Okanagan in Kelowna.[1]

Now entering its sixth year, the Intensive gathered Indigenous and racialized artists, students, and educators for six weeks around the theme of *complicated reconciliations*. Directed by UBC Creative Writing Professor Ashok Mathur and Associate Professor Stephen Foster, the Intensive involved three concurrent elements with plenty of mix between them: 1) time and support for four full-time and twenty part-time artists-in-residence and their family members; 2) a variety of courses, seminars, and other opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate students; and 3) a series of interventions and facilitations by O K'inādās, a three-member collective comprising Stephen Foster (a video/electronic media artist and associate professor), Ayumi Goto (a performance artist and PhD candidate), and Peter Morin (a performance artist and assistant professor).

Goto and Morin collaborate particularly closely through an intimate performance practice that began in 2013. They shared their time with me in a wide-ranging interview. This excerpt focuses on *complicated reconciliations*. Peter and Ayumi share the origin story of their creative relationship, and along the way expose the limitations of a "reconciliation" that confines witnessing encounters to either discourse or the spectacle of pain, and excludes Indigenous and other non-Anglo/"white" bodies, voices, and timeframes.

© Dylan Robinson. Ayumi Goto and Peter Morin in *this is what happens when we perform the memory of the land*, 2013.

Picture 1
Ayumi watches Peter watching the screen.
Picture 2
Peter prepares to cut Ayumi's mask hair.
Picture 3
Peter cuts Ayumi's mask hair.
Picture 4
Ayumi wears the cut hair mask.
Picture 5
Peter with his drum.

Aaron Franks [**AF**]: How did you two come together, and why?

Ayumi Goto [**AG**]: We first met because I and a friend of ours, Jonathan Dewar, were guest editors for a journal called *Westcoast Line* and we had a special issue called *Reconcile This!* Ashok suggested that I approach Peter about having an essay in the issue, and then we started to have this back and forth and Jonathan and I and all the contributing editors went through at least five cycles of editing. It was like a conversation that was building up, but it was all online.

Peter Morin [**PM**]: Yeah, you have a great editing style. So we met for the first time in Algoma for the launch of *Reconcile This!*, with two days of talking circle and symposium. It was like, "I'm at a symposium where they've asked me to speak on a panel with Roy Miki and Paulette Regan,[2] and I'm like (laughter), 'Who the fuck am I?'" It was a beautiful talking circle, beautiful gathering of people. Then artists stayed behind and talked about their work for a week-long residency.

Because we were in Algoma for this residency, I was like, "I've been gifted this time," so I wanted to use it well. I collaborated with Bo Yeung[3] to make a performance. This was new for me because it was not as planned as I usually do, you know? It was more responsive to space, which is kind of cool. It turns out I have a white button blanket, a cream-colour button blanket, and I said, "What materials do you have Bo?" Bo was in the next room right across the way from me, and she said, "Well, I have this cream-coloured silk that's been in my family for *x* years."

So that moment happened at Algoma, but it's all very interwoven into a series of events and gatherings connecting to reconciliation. Then Dylan [Robinson] asked me to be a part of his truth and reconciliation witnessing at Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Montreal event in 2013.[4] He invited me to contribute to his and Keavy Martin's upcoming collection of essays on art and thinking through TRC. I needed to make a performance for that event and they both really supported me to do that. Initially, for the performance, I was thinking: dreams—all the dreams that I have are ancestors helping me to do the performances. One of the things that was very apparent to me while witnessing TRC was: How do I witness their truths? That's what I wanted to know. What's the truth of the youth, right? And what is the truth of people my age? So, I had this thing where I wanted to say, "What's your truth?" and that's what I asked people involved in the performance: I said, "Make a video of your truth."

AG It was pretty open.

PM Yeah absolutely, and I will trade with you because I'm trying to practice Indigenous methods and privilege them. So I wanted to witness your truth in this performance because these Elders, these residential school survivors, are coming in and they're telling their truth. But the public ones were not the truth: they were versions of the truth, you know? And where are the white people, the racialized people? So that's a whole other thing. There were a lot of complexities. And I invited all these folks to share, and I had specific people in mind, and Ayumi was specifically in my mind.

Where are the white people? Where were they, right? And how is it not entertainment to all of those who go to the Truth and Reconciliation gatherings? Fucked up and also needed, you know, in some weird way, and I don't want to be disrespectful of the solace that our friends who survived the residential school found at these events.

AG Yes. But I think my memory of starting to collaborate with you is probably very different from yours. You were going to do this performance during the TRC in Montreal, and you were asking people to make a performance in exchange for a drum. My memory is here you were in this private conversation that I interrupted and was like, "Hi!" (laughing)—and then I thought you asked me because you felt bad because I interrupted your conversation.

PM (laughing) No not at all, I asked you specifically.

AG Then I sat on it for a long time. Because you said you would make the drum and I wasn't sure if you were going to bring the drum or mail it to me, and then I thought, "Well he hasn't mailed the drum, so maybe I'm not really supposed to do the performance." I was really waffling.

PM Oh. I'm so glad you didn't waffle.

AG Okay (laughing), because I didn't want to crash the party! But you asked us about drumming reconciliation, and then you wanted our stories, right?

PM I asked community members and friends to make "truths" that I knew I was going to witness as a part of the performance in Montreal. Gordie Bear, Brianna Marie Dick, Ayumi Goto, Doug Jarvis, France Trépanier, Randy Cook, Laura Hynds, Barry Sam, Skawennati, Valerie Hawkins, and Robin Brass all contributed to this moment. And I traded a lot of drums for these folks. So, there are a lot of versions of truth.

My friend Laura Hynds, who's Anishinaabe, she made me rattles that I traded for with her: half a drum, half cash, you know? Barrie Sam was a Coast Salish guy, traded him cash. I had a dream about a mask covered in hair, and I had a dream about the carver who was going to carve that mask for me, who I had never met before—Whoa. (laughter) His name is Randy Cook. And I traded him a drum too. I had a dream about making a specific type of drum, which I didn't have time to make before the performance, but I made after, at the 2014 residency in Kamloops.

AF I want to just follow through on truth and how, when the Elders provided their testimony to the TRC, you said, "This is not truth, this was a version of the truth," and you wanted to mutually exchange with people, Indigenous people. And you also said, "Where are the white people; where are the Japanese people?"

PM Where are the white people? Where were they, right? And how is it not entertainment to all of those who go to the Truth and Reconciliation gatherings? Fucked up and also needed, you know, in some weird way, and I don't want to be disrespectful of the solace that our friends who survived the residential school found at these events. The chance to tell your story and have it be witnessed and heard is so important, you know? But I want to back up a little bit in the planning.

AF The truth . . . the drum is the truth? The exchange? What is it about the context of you asking this person—of you making the exchange with this

person—that makes it "truth"? And does it stay "truth" a month later, a week later? That video, the drum?

PM So I had a year to make this happen, and the asking of particular people happened in that time. I never saw what was produced by them until the actual moment of the performance, so I had no idea at all what was going on . . . And so there's that moment of reveal, which is very interesting, right? But part of my thought about this was, "How do we witness these things?" Because [the TRC] are expecting us to witness in a very particular kind of way, but my body is doing something else, right? Perhaps my body is crying when I am hearing the survivor's testimony.

In that moment, in the performance—coming into contact with these truths watching those videos, hearing Robin's recorded song, holding the rattles, feeling the drum—that was the truth. And my body was given the space it needed to witness, to feel all of the complexities and perform them. I inquired about it, you know, I asked for this, and the very most genuine things that my friends could give me, they gave to me. And I think also it's partly that I asked them. If *you* ask them it would be something else. I strongly nurtured relationships with people, or tried to, you know?

AF Can I take up what you said about ancestry—future ancestors and past ancestors. How did you guys come to know each other as artists through that conversation? How did you identify that that's a shared interest?

PM So roll around to May 2013, and it's time to do the performance. And this is the thing about ancestors, okay? Two days before the performance, a little voice says to me, "You should ask Ayumi to perform with you," and I said, "Yeah, all right." Because you know you have to honour these things, you're not being crazy. So I did, and like, holy fuck balls, she said, "Yeah"! (All laughing).

AF Had you made a drum?

AG Oh, I had made a performance that I videotaped and I was waiting for that drum.

PM She was waiting for the drum one year later. It became one year later for everybody.

AG I got a beautiful, beautiful drum, very beautiful.

PM Anyway, so I said to her, "I'd like you to perform; would you perform with me? And I want to make the most space I can for your being to be present, you know. " And she had some of her gear with her.

AG Yukata.

PM And the shoes, say it again?

AG Zōri.

PM Zōri. So she had those. And the obi. And she had a dream about painting our faces in the Noh Japanese theatre tradition. And I really didn't know what that was. But it occurred to me afterwards that the meeting place of these two things made a real genuine space for the ancestors to be present—because we became those ancestors and we were witnessing these truths that people shared with us. And that act of witnessing these truths also meant that we could embody, that the ancestors could be embodied, in witnessing the truths of the residential school survivors, right? Which there [hadn't been] a space made for. I'll shut up and you can tell your part, your version. (laughing)

AF This sounds like a really foundational part of what has kept you guys working together, right?

AG Yeah, I was really taken by Peter's generosity to ask me. I thought it was a very, very generous act—and a generative act—to open up a space for other conversations to take place. A lot of the work that we do separately, too, I think we're talking in different ways or trying to reach between—between and beyond—what we know of our cultural and political histories, and then beyond our imagination. And I see you, Peter, taking great risks, creative political risks to reach, and it makes me very emotional actually. And so I just thought, "Well, this guy's asking me. I should say yes." (laughter). So I was like, "Okay."

And I've been meditating on this Asian, Japanese, precept of filial abidance. Filial abidance is a kind of mix of Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, and then mixed with Japanese philosophy, Shintoism. But it's enthreaded in many Asian societies. Filial abidance tends

In that moment, in the performance—coming into contact with these truths watching those videos, hearing Robin's recorded song, holding the rattles, feeling the drum—that was the truth. And my body was given the space it needed to witness, to feel all of the complexities and perform them.

to be within family lines and it's about showing respect to your ancestors and showing respect to your elders and it's very gender specific too. So I was in this performative experimentation with "How do you take a concept that tends to be apoliticized and make it into a political redirection to engage more deeply with Indigenous communities, beyond one's own culture community?"

And in my upbringing, when someone older than you tells you to do something you have to be really enthusiastic and say ,"Yes!," or else you will get reprimanded, sometimes severely, for showing disrespect. It's about readiness to embrace the moment, and rooted in Buddhist philosophy, actually, which I came to know later. So when Peter asked me, I felt like from my upbringing and that body habit, habituated over generations and generations of filial abidance, I thought, "Yes, I will do that for Peter." But we didn't really know each other that well at that point. And like I said, I was under this mistaken assumption that I had run inadvertently into a private conversation and that he'd said out of politeness, "Yeah, you can send a video in *too*, hey?" (laughing).

AF Can you fill me in on how that work has contributed to forming O K'inādās, and its role here at the Intensive?

AG This year was brought together because of Peter and my collaborative practice, which goes back to 2012, the first time we met.

PM I think to reflect on what Ayumi is saying is that there are histories of joined and aligned interests. Then Canada Council put out some funds for specific reconciliation-focused projects. We applied for that, and we were able to see this kind of temporary collective, O K'inādās, but now suddenly it feels more solid, you know, after six weeks. Once we found out we got the money, we were meeting monthly. Ayumi and I meet all the time— we live through each other, sometimes we live through each other's voices, I guess, as a part of our collaboration. And so all of these specific alignments all came together to be this moment.

One thing that we all talked about in relationship to these funds was: We don't want to talk about reconciliation. That's partly why it was called "Complicated Reconciliations." The idea was not to have a project that was Indigenous specific or an Indigenous–White dialogue, but to talk about historic relationships to land and place and bodies and this thing called Canada with a very diverse range of people, and to come together and not talk about reconciliation but to actually make something.

AG One of the complicated things about having this grant is that the organizers wanted it to be outside of an institution, so it's kind of ironic that it's housed in an institution. I think that deeply affects how people are moving around and having conversations with each other.

AF Speaking of movement and place, I would love to know more about the Tahltan term K'inādās. When I read about it on the website, I love that there is an asterisk that says, "this term refers to a person walking on the land." The specificity implied in that phrase is interesting to me. Can you just talk about that phrase a bit?

PM Sure, of course. K'inādās refers to "the walking on the land." So you would say, "*Dene menh K'inādās*"—"That person is walking by the lake." I came up with the phrase O K'inādās to say that I'm actually "walking around on Canada" – O Canada, O K'inādās. So, I invented a phrase; however, Ayumi and I are doing this work together, and we're inventing new pathways. You have to take these things and extract them, and move them forward.

So there's that—on the very first day we talked about that word and *extracting*. Taking that word and extracting it from the complex relationships that words in Indigenous languages build with each other so that there's meaning, right? And I was awakened to the idea of breaking those complex relationships and the violence that occurs as a result of taking the word out and making it into an object by Olivia Whetung,[5] who is here at the summer intensive, and brought up this subject very articulately. But in talking with her and thinking about our work, it's okay, you know, you have to do that sometimes, you have to produce that violence in order to move our experience forward. The Elders back home who are our fluid language speakers—and there's only thirty of them left out of 3,500 Tahltan people—would say, "This is nonsense. You've made up a fake word. You're just being weird."

I'm going to say that and then Ayumi's going to talk, because she's living with that word too and she's been thinking about it. (laughter) This word for us, and that statement we wrote, refers to people coming together, walking together, sharing knowledge together, right? That word is "walking around on Canada." That's what we're all doing. Okay, your turn!

AG I think about walking a lot because I run a lot (laughter). And so I think about the pace and momentum of a place, and also encounters or lack of encounters depending on where one finds oneself. I think what we're aiming for with O K'inādās is, like Peter said, trying to walk together in a different way than before. When running, I tend to get drawn to the path that's been most trodden because it has the least obstacles in it. But when we're thinking of new ways of walking and at different paces, like skittishly or sometimes very slowly or methodically, it might hurt, it might violate, because it's a new way, perhaps a new way together. I think that the challenge during the residency is to see how we come to understand each other's paces, and then also to question our own ways of being in the world. I know that I get that a lot from working with Peter. We come from quite different backgrounds, but there are also resonances when it comes to really living to respect our ancestors, thinking about ancestry, living to respect future ancestors. And we also do a lot of grappling because of very different histories. I like, too, that with O K'inādās there are different types of dynamics in place: it's the person walking on the land with all of those negotiations of the situation; the person with a past and a future. And then also running into others—maybe inadvertently, maybe coincidently, maybe violently? Hopefully not, but having these chances to encounter one another, human and nonhuman, I guess is what we're hoping for from this.

AF Do you identify yourself as Japanese Canadian—"Nikkei"?

AG Yeah, I guess. "Nisei," sort of. I can comment on that. I grew up in rural Alberta. My father and mother owned a mushroom farm and it was built brick by brick alongside the first two families

5

from Vietnam, who came as refugees. And we didn't think at the time that there would be such a language barrier. You know, my dad and mom don't speak Chinese or Vietnamese. And the newcomers didn't speak English or Japanese. This is how the farm was built. Because there was such a big language barrier, my dad had been freaking out—there was no farm, no buildings. It was just like, a field. And then one day, he was looking furiously through his notes on the people he had just sponsored. He had assumed they were *Vietnamese* Vietnamese but then he went, "Duh!" because he realized they were ethnic Chinese. Chinese characters and *kanji* in Japanese are close enough so that they passed notes silently back and forth to build a farm brick by brick. You know, that's just one of several stories of multiple migrations in and out. Many were sponsored. I think Mom and Dad counted at some point that over a hundred came through. And also many left to go back home or to go to other countries. There was always a lot of traffic. English was maybe the third language spoken at the farm primarily, so there was Chinese (Cantonese), Japanese, Korean, Khmer, Vietnamese, Thai at one point, and Tagalog. And I think about that community that, for a short while—for about twenty-five years— was this sizeable Asian minority in a very small, primarily white community. But I think there were also Indigenous people who were not identifying as Indigenous at the time.

It was a strange kind of Asian enclave, and when I see something like "reconciliation," I think about the families and the people who came through. Some had suffered extreme situations: either on the way in the boats, or in the refugee camps, or in their home countries. And in the way I was raised—and I'm not speaking for all Asians but my interpretation of Asian values for myself, or Japanese values for myself—you don't interrogate people about their traumas. It's like you're forcing something on them, and it's invasive and violent. One time, at the farm, a family had shut themselves into their home for a long time when they first arrived, and they came from very difficult circumstances. I was very young and I asked my Dad why they were acting this way, and he beat me for asking that question. So when I would go to these TRC gatherings, the national and regional ones, and wouldn't see many Asians, it didn't surprise me. I thought, "It's impolite to stare at people as they're being told they have to tell these trauma stories."

AF Ayumi, I don't think this is going to be a good question but I'm going to ask it anyway because your answer will be better than my question. Do you think "reconciliation" is aimed, on this governance level, at reconciling Indigenous society to white settler society in some way?

AG I think the language of "reconciliation" is so big. My Mom and Dad, well my Dad's passed now, but they don't speak good English and so it means nothing to them. It's like looking at a medical text or something, and seeing that there are words on paper but there's no connect. I think there's a real gap between what is mandated of Canadian citizens: only the people who have a particular language capacity, social status, or privilege to some extent, [or] are personally invested in the process, [or] those who have deep, long histories of family or community embeddedness would be attending these gatherings, while those who I don't think were even imagined to participate or attend, in terms of being linguistically, culturally, or politically relevant, are noticeably absent.

I like, too, that with O K'inādās there are different types of dynamics in place: it's the person walking on the land with all of those negotiations of the situation; the person with a past and a future. And then also running into others—maybe inadvertently, maybe coincidently, maybe violently? Hopefully not, but having these chances to encounter one another, human and nonhuman, I guess is what we're hoping for from this.

That's what compelled me to ask a similar question to the one Peter—I think—and I ask of all our practices and collaborations together: "How does this allow our mothers to talk? How do our works involve them? How does it reach them to be able to have a conversation?" I think we try our best.

PM And how does performance make a space for Tahltan ancestors and Japanese ancestors to meet? How does performance as a matrix make a space for Tahltan ancestors and Japanese ancestors to collaborate and build together? For me, this work drives my heart to beat. This shared work, this shared purpose, helps me to protect my mother's knowledge. It helps me to understand the importance connected to how to perform and share heart knowledge. These works are vulnerable, but they are not fragile. They do not break. When Ayumi and I perform together, we are making and re-making, we are breathing and sharing breath, and we are developing new visual and performance languages to contribute beyond reconciliation.

Selected Collaborations

Peter Morin and Ayumi Goto. *To Honour What Is Hidden Underneath*. TRACKS Symposium: Community Play and Arts Symposium, Roundhouse Community Ctr., Vancouver, Traditional Coast Salish Territories, May 10–12, 2015.

Peter Morin and Ayumi Goto. *To Care Far Away Is to Care Close In*. UBCO Summer Intensive on Indigenous Art & Activism, UBC Okanagan, syilx territories, July 21–August 1, 2014.

Peter Morin (with Ayumi Goto). *Escape Stories*. Art Gallery of Algoma, Sault Ste. Marie, Traditional Anishinaabeg Territory, 2014.

Peter Morin and Ayumi Goto. *First Contacts?* Performing Utopias Conference, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Coast Salish Territories, March 15, 2014.

Peter Morin (with Ayumi Goto). *How Does an Artist Apologize?* Cultural Protocols and the Arts Forum, Penticton, syilx territories, March 3, 2014.

Peter Morin and Ayumi Goto. *Hair: The Performance*. Reconsidering Reconciliation Residency. Thompson Rivers University, Kamloops, Secwepemc Territory, August 13, 2013.

Peter Morin (with Ayumi Goto). *This Is What Happens When We Perform the Memory of the Land, Pt. 1*. Truth and Reconciliation National Gathering, Montreal, Traditional Territories of the St. Lawrence Iroquoians and Kahnawake Territory, April 26, 2013.

Peter Morin will be returning to the Indigenous Arts Intensive in July 2017 to teach a course in Performance. Ayumi Goto will be present to witness and learn from the artists and thinkers who gather.

NOTES

1 For more information on the 2016 Indigenous Arts Summer Residency see http://rmooc.ca

2 Roy Miki is a Winnipeg-born academic, poet, critic, editor, and activist, noted as a strong advocate for those who face racial inequities. He was heavily involved in the Redress Movement, which sought equity for Japanese Canadians who were forcibly uprooted from the West Coast during the Second World War. Miki has also helped organize the controversial conference Writing Thru Race (1994), held in Vancouver. This conference's decision to offer a space for writers of colour and Aboriginal writers to discuss common issues without the presence of white writers prompted criticism from some.

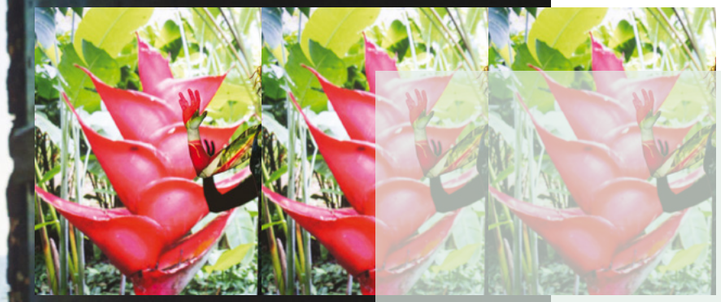
Paulette Regan is a settler scholar and leading critical thinker in the field of reconciliation between Indigenous and settler societies in Canada. She is the author of *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada* (UBC Press, 2011), and is a past Director of Research for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

3 Bo Yeung is an emerging multidisciplinary artist who lives on the traditional territory of Tr'ondëk Hwëchin in Dawson City, Yukon.

4 To explore Goto and Morin's work at the 2013 Montreal TRC event, see Morin 's chapter, "This Is What Happens When We Perform the Memory Of The Land," in *Arts of Engagement: Taking Aesthetic Action in and beyond Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, edited by D. Robinson and K. Martin, pp. 67-92 (Wilfred Laurier Press, Waterloo, 2016).

5 Olivia Whetung is a Mississauga-Anishinaabe artist from Peterborough, Ontario. She works primarily in printmaking, digital media, and beadwork, and her work explores issues of loss, entropy, translation, and access—particularly the limited access Indigenous people in Canada often have to their own languages.

MONSTROUS



© Christopher Snow. Sarah Waisvisz in *Monstrous* at the undercurrents festival, 2016.

BY SARAH WAISVISZ

MIXED-RACE IDENTITY IS, I THINK, A FINAL FRONTIER OF DISCOMFORT IN RACE RELATIONS.

Introductory Notes

I remember when I began writing *Monstrous*. It was the middle of a snowstorm in Ottawa in 2011 and I was having yet another bout of writer's block, this time over the second chapter of my PhD dissertation. My dissertation was about genre-bending contemporary literature by Afro-Caribbean women. The women writers in my corpus dealt with themes of resistance, agency, intergenerational trauma, spirituality, and witnessing by breaking free of limiting literary categories and writing texts that were thematically and structurally bold and radical. Part of the reason I was having writer's block was that the scholarly requirements of the dissertation and the academic articles I had to write didn't permit any space for my own feelings about the work—yet I had come to study Caribbean literature because it spoke to me about my own ambiguous relationship to the Afro-Caribbean diaspora and my own identity as a mixed-race heir to a long lineage of both Afro-Caribbean and Jewish female resistors.

That snowy day I decided to stop struggling with chapter two and instead to write what was in my heart, and I drafted a text that became the core of *Monstrous*. This text was an investigation into a song that, although it spoke to me so much about the feelings of diasporic loss and nostalgia for a lost homeland, in reality is a song that reinforces the insidious power of colonialism. I realized that day that the dissertation was limited in what it could express, and that there was other writing I had to do if I was going to survive the PhD itself. I began writing a second project, in parallel, that would become the play *Monstrous*. I think of the play as the twin of the dissertation, the other side of the story, the blood and guts of the story.

A note on the title: since premiering the play, I have often been asked to explain the title. The play is called *Monstrous* for two reasons. One, the title evokes how I always felt about myself, especially when I was younger: that I was a mixed-race monster, an ugly mutt, in contrast to the "beautiful multicultural exoticism" that our society supposedly believes in. Mixed-race identity is, I think, a final frontier of discomfort in race relations, because it is the result of either unequal sexual relations (often rape) or harmonious mixed-race love—and both of these concepts can be scary and uncomfortable to contend with. The second reason I chose this title is because I wanted to highlight the ongoing objectification of the bodies of women of colour; over the course of the play I challenge spectators to look at my body, to judge me, to evaluate whether I am black enough or white enough. This ongoing "looking" and "judging" is reminiscent of the way slave women were judged on the auction blocks and indigenous women gawked at as exotic specimens at human zoos, and I want spectators to consider how women of colour are still being objectified today.[1]

***Monstrous* was written by Sarah Waisvisz.**
The play's premier production was directed by Eleanor Crowder for the 2016 undercurrents festival in Ottawa, Canada, at Arts Court Theatre.

Stage Management by Madeleine Boyes-Manseau
Dramaturgy by Emily Pearlman
Sound Design and Musical Composition by Mikki Bradshaw
Choreography by Shara Weaver
Performed by Sarah Waisvisz
Produced by Calalou and the undercurrents festival
Copyright Sarah Waisvisz

For more information about the show: **calaloublog.wordpress.com**

NOTE

1 The writing and development of *Monstrous* was supported by Great Canadian Theatre Company (GCTC) and b current, thanks to grants from the Theatre Creators' Reserve Program (TCR) of the Ontario Arts Council (OAC); the City of Ottawa Arts Funding Program for Professional Artists; the underdevelopment program of the undercurrents festival and the Ottawa Fringe Festival; and individual donations and development support by generous friends. Research for *Monstrous* was undertaken during the playwright's doctoral studies in English at Carleton University, supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and the Ontario Graduate Scholarship Program.

MONSTROUS

BY SARAH WAISVISZ

On stage: old steamer trunk and large projection screen.
Inside the trunk: madras cloth, madras scarf, water, book, chalk to draw with, envelope.

1 — THE TEACHER

[The performer enters from back of house; she sings along with the recording of "Adieu les jolis foulards" by Chantal Goya and sets up her playing space.]

♪ VERSE 1

"Adieu mes petits élèves de la Martinique
Je fais la classe aujourd'hui pour la dernière fois
On me renvoie vers la France, adieu la Martinique
Mais tout là-bas je ne vous oublierai pas

(refrain)

Adieu les jolis foulards, adieu tous les madras
Si ce n'est qu'un au revoir on se retrouvera
J'emporterai dans mon coeur un peu de ce pays
Vous resterez dans nos coeurs Mademoiselle aussi
Adieu les jolis foulards, adieu tous les madras
Si ce n'est qu'un au revoir on se retrouvera
C'est comme ça on n'y peut rien
il y a dans la vie
toujours un jour où l'école est finie.

N'oubliez pas votre histoire, votre géographie
Souvenez-vous de l'histoire de Napoléon
Qui épousa Joséphine qui dans ce pays
Récita ses toutes premières leçons

(refrain)

Adieu les jolis foulards, adieu tous les madras
Si ce n'est qu'un au revoir on se retrouvera
J'emporterai dans mon coeur un peu de ce pays
Vous resterez dans nos coeurs Mademoiselle aussi
Adieu les jolis foulards, adieu tous les madras
Si ce n'est qu'un au revoir on se retrouvera
C'est comme ça on n'y peut rien
il y a dans la vie
toujours un jour où l'école est finie.

2 — TOURIST

When I arrive on the French-Caribbean island of Martinique I am conscious that I look like a tourist. My skin is pale like winter: tourist-white. How long will it take for the sun to darken me to a less noticeable shade of brown? But I can never look black. I am not black enough. Not quite white enough either, never quite enough.

With slavery came miscegenation, *métissage*, i.e., sex between the races, which led to procreation and mixed-race children. And then the categorization of people in the Caribbean according to pigmentation and type of features on a spectrum ranging between European and African.

In the French Caribbean, this spectrum included the distinctions

négresse, *mulâtresse*, *câpresse*,
chabine, *quadroon*, *octoroon*.

More complex than the infamous "One Drop Rule," but just as omnipresent. Most people don't want to be divided up and counted like a dog, but I do. I want to count, to belong to something, even if the belonging in me is now so slim, so diluted.

In a slick new supermarket near Fort-de-France, the capital of Martinique, I watch the evening shoppers, mostly families. I am perversely interested in whether the children look like their parents and grandparents. How many are also of mixed race? Are any of them also visibly

Indian, Chinese, Lebanese, Syrian, Jewish?

I compare hues and hair. Is this what slave traders encouraged in potential buyers, this kind of ogling? But I am not looking to purchase someone's servitude. I am looking for someone who looks like me. I am looking for other mixed-race diasporic subjects. In Canada, we diasporans all look a bit lost, removed from our origins by at least one more degree of separation. This is the effect of immigration and double diaspora, multiple diaspora.

But in this shopping centre, everyone acts like they belong. They are from here at least. As I watch the shoppers, I stand immobile because of the stinging sun-burn I got accidentally that afternoon. Accidentally? Or was I trying to tan myself into belonging?

3 — GRADE FIVE SCIENCE

[Performer draws DNA diagram on floor with chalk; uses it like a hopscotch pattern. This is the first map.]

Grade Five Science at Hebrew Day School:
Digestive System, Respiratory System, Reproductive System.
Cells, DNA, heredity: yeah, Genetics in Grade Five.

We draw symbols for DNA strands and we learn the difference between dominant and recessive genes. Brown eyes: dominant. Blue eyes: recessive. Brown hair: dominant. Blond hair: recessive.

Two brown-eyed people will have a brown-eyed child unless each of them has a recessive blue-eyed gene; and two blue-eyed people will have blue-eyed children. I think? Two recessive equals recessive, but brown dominates. So why are blond-haired, blue-eyed people always in charge?

We were asked to make a family tree, and I tried to draw a tree for a family that looks like photo day at the United Nations. What about skin colour? I ask. How does that get passed on? No answer. Shouldn't everything turn to brown, or at least hazel, like when you mix up paint? Could hazel be a good way to describe the colour of my skin: neither brown nor . . . blue?

4 — SONG RITUAL #1

[Small pool of sunlight. Cassette gesture. Curl up on floor. Adieu & heart gesture.]

Ottawa: cold, crisp winter day. Frozen landscape. I am a child.
Pool of warm sunshine on a red shag carpet.
The smell of Pine Sol. Fine dust glittering in the sun.
I place a cassette in a cassette player: it whirs to life, and I settle in to listen.

[Sound cue ♪ *"Adieu les jolis foulards, adieu tous les madras."*]

5 — CARIBBEAN LITERATURE 101: LECTURE A

[The professor uses slides to animate her lecture; the slides appear on the projection screen.]

Good afternoon, everyone.

Okay. Today we will continue the conversation we began last class about the significance that wider culture and cultural symbols can have on literature.

Our case study today is a song that significantly influenced contemporary French Caribbean literature by women. This is an old folk song very popular in the Francophone Caribbean called "*Adieu foulard, adieu madras.*" As you can see from the slide, the word "madras" in the title refers to the check-patterned cloth very popular in the Caribbean and used for everything from tablecloths to curtains, and the "foulard" means a head-scarf or neckerchief, often made out of that cloth, and worn in many different ways.

TWO RECESSIVE EQUALS RECESSIVE, BUT BROWN DOMINATES. SO WHY ARE BLOND-HAIRED, BLUE-EYED PEOPLE ALWAYS IN CHARGE?

Top & bottom Pictures
© Andrew Alexander. Sarah Waisvisz in *Monstrous* at the undercurrents festival, 2016.

The song dates from at least 1769, and it is attributed to the French man who was Governor of the Windward Islands from 1769 to 1771, François Claude de Bouille, a cousin of the Marquis de la Fayette. The song's original title is thought to be "*Les adieux d'une Créole.*" Since then, there have been numerous versions and adaptations of this song in French, Martinican Créole, and Guyanese Créole.

The song is likely about a Créole, here meaning a Martinican woman; I imagine her as a mixed-race woman, saying goodbye to her lover, probably a white French man. In the song, she pleads with the captain of the ship to delay the departure, but he cannot, and she knows her lover is leaving her and her island forever. The Créole chorus is translated like this: "My darling is leaving, alas, alas, it is forever."

♪ PERFORMER SINGS in Créole:

"Adieu foulard, adieu madras
Adieu grains d'or et collier choux,
Doudou en mwen I ka pati
Hélas, hélas, sé pou toujou
Doudou en mwen I ka pati
Hélas, hélas, sé pou toujou."

6 — IN ALAIN'S GARDEN

[The performer interacts with the "tropical garden" slide projected hugely behind her.]

Martinique is known to locals as "*le pays des revenants*," as well as by its indigenous name, Madanina, "*l'île aux fleurs.*" Before I came here, I thought this was the island country of "*adieux*," of "farewells" and goodbyes. But that was just one of the things I thought I knew about Martinique. This is the country of returns and of returnees. It pulls you back.

Yesterday in Alain's garden, I tried to photograph every fruit, vegetable, and flower. He had everything: ginger plants in fuschia and light pink, lime trees, banana trees, coconut, guava, squash, mango. The view of the sea in front and the *morne* behind. Green profusion and trailing vines of blossoms. *Pomme arak. Pomme-cannelle. Dasheen. Christophine.* I crush leaves of lime and giant thyme between my fingers. These are the plants I am used to reading about in the poetry and literature I have studied. *Balisier! Arbre du voyageur! Flamboyant!*

I try to explain to Alain why someone like me would come all the way to Martinique. I don't need to do field interviews or surveys for my research. But: how can you write an academic article about a book set during a Caribbean night—when you have never experienced one?

Listen: Around 6PM every night, twilight is ushered in by the tree frogs; then the mosquitoes come out to feast, the bats begin to fly, and the moths and scarabs emerge. Soon night has fallen and it is "*nuit noire.*" This takes just a few minutes, until CLACK: *il fait nuit noire.* [Snap to black out and then slow fade back to dim light.]

Maracuja is the name for passion fruit.
Have you ever bitten directly into the flesh of a ripe mango? I mean, really sunk your teeth and whole mouth into the mango, fresh from the tree, so that the juice dribbles onto your chin and the skin gets caught in your teeth and your hands are full of sticky sweet juice but it doesn't matter because the flesh is luscious and soft and fills your whole mouth.

I take photographs and I repeat names and I wish I could put my hands around each *maracuja*, each lime. I want to remember everything: *cerise pays, papaye, surette*. Alain gives me half a mango to eat and a *banane-pomme* to take with me. If it has taken me thirty-two years to get here, how do I know I will ever come back?

7 — SLAVE AUCTION / MIXED-RACE BABIES

My brother and I played a game when we were children.
We would hold out our arms and compare their colour. Then someone would be the slave auctioneer and decide which one of us would be sold or freed. I was always sold. He was always freed.
"Skin-coloured" Band-Aids, ballet leotards, and crayons never matched me. "Your skin is dirty coloured," say my friends:
"Where are you REALLY from?" they ask.
"WHAT are you, exactly?"

Mixed-race Babies. That is a Thing on the Internet. On Tumblr—which is also a Thing on the Internet. Type "miscegenation" into Google and you see Tabloid articles about mixed-race DNA miracles such as twins born in alternating colours! You see page after page of fetish objects: "Mixed-race girl drinking milk!" "Mixed-race boy playing the violin!" "Mixed-race family having a picnic in a meadow!"

Apparently, Halle Barry has taken out a court order preventing her white French-Canadian ex-husband from straightening or lightening their young daughter's hair. Halle Barry says: "I am black therefore she is black because I believe in the one-drop rule."

You see old posters warning Americans not to marry outside their race.
You see a picture of Barack Obama with a target photo-shopped onto his chest and the caption, "See what happens when you mix?"

You see images of the Klu-Klux-Clan. And Nazi doctors measuring children's skulls. Eugenics. Charts of African phenotypes.

You see Oprah Winfrey TV specials on shadeism, the paper-bag test, and colour bias, and you see pictures of mules and dogs. Mixed breeds. Heinz 57. Mutts.

8 — MAP: A MAP OF AFRICA

A Map of Africa.

[Music. The performer draws a huge map of Africa on the floor, around the DNA square, and then dances on it / to it.]

Ibo. Ashanti. Ga. Mandinga. Dahomey. Fon. Congo.
Most slaves brought to the New World were captured from the west coast of Africa, the Gold Coast. But my mother maintains that at least one of our ancestors came from the east coast of Africa, from a place like Kenya. But it doesn't make sense. And in any case, how will we ever prove it?

When a person was captured into slavery, he or she lost their ties of kinship. The West African word for slave—*obruni*—meant stranger, one without family, orphan.

To then pass through the slave castles on the coast, be pushed through the Door of No Return, and be thrown onto a slave ship, made all those former ties even more impossible to recover. Those who made it to the Caribbean shores had to start over, make new families, invent new names, like Zizi and Zizine, our family name.

© Andrew Alexander. Sarah Waisvisz in *Monstrous* at the undercurrents festival, 2016.

My ancestors, those who stepped through the Door of No Return onto the slaving ships, they didn't have suitcases. My ancestors, those who stepped through the doors of cattle cars onto platforms, they had to give up their suitcases.

9 — DESPERATE

"Perpetually tanned" "olive" "swarthy" "dark" "Middle Eastern" "Turkish" "Brazilian" "French" "Dutch?" No one can ever guess the exact combination of what I am, the exact miscegenation equation that resulted in my features, but generally the most common description that I get is that I look "exotic," "unusual."

In Sicily, Israel, and Lebanon, I am not unusually Semitic looking. I am spoken to in Sicilian, Hebrew, *and* Arabic, and shop-keepers laugh out loud when I tell them: "No no, I am a tourist."

But who are you, who can you truly be, if your identity is defined, and not always the same way, by other people? A kind of schizophrenia can set in, an uncertainty that other mixed-race people will recognize, but that those who are fully settled in their identity will trivialize as a waste of time.

My mother: "You just are who you are. What's the big deal?"
My father: "You're too sensitive. It doesn't matter."
My ex: "You're mostly white anyway."
Or, paradoxically: "This country isn't racist. Canada is a Multicultural Society."

If you are skeptical about my identity, then you can imagine I am desperate. So this January I decide to spend $300 I do not have on a DNA test that will, eventually, give me scientifically irrefutable proof, with numbers and percentages, about what is in my blood. Where I am from. Who I am. What I am. I should be getting the results any minute now.

10 — PROOF #1: *TATIE*

Martinique. Humid late afternoon inside a *boulangerie* near the town of Rivière Salée. I am with my professor colleague, the beautiful high-heeled Marie-Hélène, and we have just picked up Marie-Hélène's six-year old daughter, Judith, from school. I am drinking coffee and contemplating the coconut cookies and *sablés au fromage* laid out in front of us when Judith calls me "Tatie":
"*Pourquoi tu n' habites pas ici, Tatie?*"
"Why don't you live here, Auntie?"
Auntie.
Marie-Hélène: "*Chérie, ce n'est pas Tatie, c'est Sarah.*"

Why would little Judith call me *Tatie*? Did she think I looked enough like Marie-Hélène to be her sister? To be *her* aunt?

Marie-Hélène dismisses it quickly, smiling indulgently, and Judith returns to devouring her *pain au chocolat*, but I want to hold Judith's small hand all evening and stay with her in that *boulangerie* in Rivière Salée until the sun sets on us and we can't make out the colours of our skin.

11 — PROOF #2: THE MILKMAN'S CHILD

[The performer can use the DNA square to tell her story.]

A favourite family joke goes like this:
The kids are like day and night, night and day—one of them must be the milkman's child!

It's not a very funny joke.

My mother claims she carried us both, and maybe indeed she did, yet how can we completely disregard the possibility that one of us wasn't switched at birth? Since we were both born in Germany, I think it must have been him. I actually have a Roma-hued biological brother, but he was swapped out for this cherubic Aryan Gerber-Baby. My parents know this is the truth, but they pretend otherwise, which accounts for the thick tension in our house, especially when my brother categorically refused to do his *Bar-Mitzvah* and instead began to grow into the figure of someone who could be a strapping Hitler-Youth member.

Or, as is just as likely: my father is not my brother's biological father.
One of us is the milkman's child, and it is him. We lived in a charming apartment building in Frankfurt, then West Germany, until I was four. My brother was born just before I turned three. In that time, we probably had several different milkmen: all handsome and Nordic-looking, tall and blonde. My gorgeous mother, home alone most days and some nights with a young daughter, feels alone and abandoned by her husband who is always on business trips. She is half-black though light-skinned, but for Frankfurt in the early eighties, that is exotic.

She begins her affair with the milkman one day when, for several days in a row, she is heading out the door when he arrives late for his deliveries.
The first time they almost collide, but I am in the stroller and the structure acts as a barrier. The second day she is holding me by the hand as I toddle out the door. He must stop and acknowledge her—and me, because I am adorable. He bends closer to my level and says hello to my mother who is confident and exotic, and over the next few days they begin an affair . . . just like that, while I entertain myself in the playpen . . .

Or I am the milkman's child, in which case the milkman is a swarthy illegal alien from the former Yugoslavia who delivers milk in the morning and plays viola in a Gypsy orchestra in the evenings.
Or I am the milkman's child, in which case the milkman is a Tunisian Jew my mother meets at the art gallery when she is on a lunch break.
Or I am the milkman's child, and he is a Martinican boy from her father's village and she feels drawn to him for reasons beyond logic.

But either way, I was conceived in Ottawa, where there has not been door-to-door milk delivery service since the 1970s.
Or both my brother and I are my parents' biological children.
Or neither of us is.

This page and next page
© Christopher Snow.
Sarah Waisvisz in *Monstrous* at the undercurrents festival, 2016.

12 — MAP OF EUROPE

A Map of Europe:
Paris. [Smiles.]

[Music. The performer dances a map of Europe in classical ballet style.]

Oslo.
Berlin.
Poland [She hesitates to go there].
Budapest.
The Vatican.
Barcelona.
Paris!

13 — THE BARBIE CONCENTRATION CAMP

My brother and I built a prison for my Barbie dolls.
After being forced to walk either right or left, left or right, the less pretty dolls and the ones who weren't real Barbies were rounded up and put inside a cardboard box. We cut their hair off and one doll lost her foot. They were naked and sometimes they took showers and died. It was fun to select who was tortured and with what punishment.
I wonder if our parents ever discovered the box.

14 — DOCUMENTS

I have some documents to prove my ancestry, but the documents only go back as far as the end of slavery in Martinique. Going back further to Africa is impossible.
BUT: there are Enfranchisement Records, Records of Freedom, marking when my ancestors legally became People (again) rather than Property.

I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING. THIS GIRL IS JUST MAKING A BIG DEAL OUT OF NOTHING. SHE LOOKS PRETTY WHITE. LOOKS NORMAL.

There is even a marriage certificate for one African ancestress of mine, Elisabeth Eliza Escrabe, great name, exact birth-place unknown, brought to the New World around 1820 after the end of the French Slave Trade. In other words, she was captured illegally, bought illegally, and sold illegally, after the Slave Trade was over—which means that the capturing and the buying and the selling did not stop when it was supposed to.

There is nothing more scary that the thought that I might not, in fact, be unusual in any way.

I know what you're thinking. This girl is just making a big deal out of nothing. She looks pretty white. Looks normal. Ok, maybe a little exotic. But this race card is just a gimmick. Does she even have a right to tell this story?

Well, I anticipated this opinion, and so I have been collecting some scientific data for you. I believe in rigorous research, so I have been keeping a record of every time someone talks to me about my racial and ethnic identity. See this notebook? It includes interactions from the past few hours, as well as some gems from my youth. [Approaches an audience member and gives them the Notebook of Racist Comments.] Go ahead: choose an example. You can read it out loud if you like. [Audience members take turns reading examples out loud from the Notebook.]

FYI, in Martinique, the first week I am there, white people tell me that race is no longer relevant and that everyone should just get over slavery, stop talking about colonialism, move on. The longer I stay there, and as my skin gets darker and darker and my hair curls tighter and tighter, black and mixed-race people begin to tell me stories, every day, about how the exact shade of your skin impacts your life.

Nègre	*mulâtre*	*câpre*
chabin	*quadroon*	*octoroon*

15 — SONG RITUAL #2

[Reprise: Pool of sunlight. Cassette gesture. Curls up on the floor. Reprise.]

Ottawa: cold, crisp winter day. Frozen landscape. Pool of warm sunshine on a red shag carpet. The smell of Pine Sol. Fine dust glittering in the sun.
I place a cassette in the cassette player: it whirs to life, and I settle in to listen.

[Sound cue ♪ *"Adieu les jolis foulards, adieu tous les madras."*]

16 — ALL US CRÉOLE LADIES

Marie-Hélène is decidedly *antillaise*. She walks the walk, confident in her high-heeled sandals and gold hoop earrings. Her *Créolophone* accent is rounded and musical. We have similar hair. We have the same skin.

My eyes are that indefinite blue, while hers are brown. Does this colouration make her a *chabine*? Technically, she is a *mulâtresse*. *Antillaise*, decidedly. I learn later that her father was white from France and secretly Jewish, and that her mother was a *négresse*. If I look like her, what does that make me? Maybe Judith is right . . . And so from the recognition in the shining eyes of that little girl, I feel, finally, accepted—for five glorious minutes.

17 — RUE ZIZINE ET DESÉTAGES

I went to Martinique to learn about my maternal grandfather, Pierre.

Instead, I found his brother, Charles. My grandfather was one of those colonial schoolchildren who won all the prizes and scholarships. As a teenager, they put him on a steamer ship to France with all their hopes and dreams, and waved goodbye: *Adieu*.

In France, he earned two PhDs and wrote his Pharmacy dissertation on: *The Medicinal Benefits of Martinican Rum*. No, I am not making this up.

Later, he patented many important medications and mentored other bright black boys from the colonies. Everyone remembers him fondly as "*le Docteur Zizine*."

But what's better than a famous doctor in the family? A political assassination, of course! I went to Martinique to find out about my grandfather, but instead I found his murdered brother, Charles. Charles Zizine was a municipal politician interested in land reform. There were high hopes for him too. But in 1924, he and his colleague, a man named Des Étages, were shot dead the day of an election. Marie-Hélène, ever the professor, takes me to Ducos, the town in which they were killed.

We walk along the Main Street, which has been re-named in their honour: Rue Zizine et Desétages. I like the ramshackle *Créole*-style houses with their friendly faces and broken-down

shutters. We go to the *Mairie*, explain our request, and I am introduced to the mayor as the grand-niece of Charles Zizine. I explain to the mayor that Charles Zizine's brother Pierre had had ten children and that I was the daughter of the youngest, hence why I could be related to someone killed in 1924. I don't mention that I am from the illegitimate side of the family.

The mayor smiles and shakes my hand: "*Enchanté, Madame. Je voudrais vous montrer l'expo et le film qu'on a fait pour la commémoration de la mort de votre grand oncle. ATTENDEZ! ATTENDEZ! Connaissez-vous les artistes HIP HOP martiniquais: SKED SKWAD et SISTA JAHAN?? Ils ont signé une chanson et un clip vidéo qui s'appelle "Rue Zizine et Desétages*!" [Cue the song *"Rue Zizine et Desétages"* by Sked Skwad.]

All this even though we had arrived late, quite near to closing time.

> "*Pourquoi habitez-vous au Canada?*" me demande Monsieur le Maire.
> "*Pourquoi tu n'habites-pas ici, Tatie?*" me demande la petite Judith.

A MAP OF THE NEW WORLD!

[The performer dances the Hip Hop choreography to "Rue Zizine et des Etages." This is the dance for the Map for the New World.]

18 — A MAP OF THE NEW WORLD

[Performer walks the DNA square like it is a tightrope.]

The DNA test is pretty simple, really. All you need is a sample of your saliva, which you put in a specimen envelope and then send away. It's the waiting . . .

It took me weeks to decide which DNA testing service to use. There were options: Canada DNA Services; 23andMe; Ancestry.com. I couldn't decide. Would they give me different results? It's science.

But . . . what if my DNA sample is so complicated that it breaks their system and confounds their experts? Or . . . what if it is ludicrously simple and I am predominantly European and

> Caucasian
> Caucasian
> Caucasian.

I don't want to be white. I want to be—extraordinary.
In the end I went with 23andMe because they had a prettier website.

19 — LECTURE B: COLONIAL TRUTH

[The Professor uses slides and music to animate the lecture.]

Okay, the truth is that sometimes research can lead us to disappointment. In the Caribbean, colonial and slave history is so deeply ingrained that the most famous version of that traditional song "*Adieu foulard, adieu madras*" simply reinforces colonial stereotypes. The most famous version is a children's song performed by French pop songstress Chantal Goya, and it is about a young French schoolteacher saying goodbye to her Martinican students as she prepares to leave for France. Let's listen, shall we?

[Music: Chantal Goya's song *"Adieu les jolis foulards."*]

Chantal Goya's song is over the top, what with the children's choir, seventies' production values, and sappy soaring vocals.

[The Professor sings along sarcastically until she gets frustrated and stops the music.]

Arrête! Also the lyrics are problematic: the singer reminds the children of Empress Josephine's Martinican heritage, a legacy that is fraught at best, considering Josephine's influence on Napoléon Bonaparte's re-institution of slavery! The song evokes the dependency of the former colonies on France for everything, including schoolteachers and pop stars.

But the original Créole song "*Adieu foulard, adieu madras*" is problematic too: attributed to that man related to the Marquis de la Fayette—de la Fayette!? Like Les Galleries de la Fayette? The posh Parisian department store?! Colonialism is so insidious. This Créole anthem is not necessarily Créole in origin! And yet, Chantal Goya's song, this song, it is my song—it is all I know of Martinique . . .

[The Professor clutches at the lyrics to the song on the screen.]

20 — WATER 1: BLACK WATERS

[Projection of sandbar and sea; the performer interacts with the sea.]

"The sea, the sea is history," wrote the poet Derek Walcott. The sea, the sea is everything.

Sainte-Marie, a town on the far eastern coast of Martinique, faces a little island. For three months of the year, you can walk to this little island along a sandbar revealed by the tides—

[The performer takes off her shoes and leaves them at the top of the map of Africa / DNA square. She is now barefoot.]

So, one afternoon, I walk on the bottom of the sea, on the ocean's sandy floor. I step one foot in front of the other on the soft sand: on either side of me the Atlantic beckons. I face eastward: Africa. West Africa.

This island off the coast of Martinique was once used as a cargo stop to load sugar cane onto ships sailing north to Bristol, Liverpool, Amsterdam, Nantes . . . These same ships then sailed south to West Africa: the Gold Coast, the Slave Coast— before returning here, full of human cargo.

African slaves were not born slaves, they were not born cargo. They were human beings who were captured from their villages and ripped from their full and rich lives and made to take amnesia potions to forget who they were or walk around forgetting trees to further lose themselves, because a person with no past has no home to return to.

And then they were shackled and force-marched through inhospitable jungle or scorching desert; then they were thrown into dungeons; then they were pulled through openings

"THE SEA, THE SEA IS HISTORY," THE POET SAID. THE SEA, THE SEA IS EVERYTHING. WATER, WATER.

through the Door of No Return

[The projection is now the Door of No Return, and the performer approaches the Door until she is framed by it; then she flees.]

Then they were thrown onto slaving ships and made to cross the gaping ocean: black waters.

Those who survived the journey—when their babies husbands wives brothers sisters fathers mothers did not and were thrown overboard like waste—those who survived the journey, they prayed that the spirits of their lost loved ones would fly back to Dahomey, to Guinin, to home.
Those who survived the journey, after they stepped onto the shores of the New World, some of them turned right around and threw themselves back into the water.
Tried to fly back to Guinin.

I want to pour libations here, to say a prayer for the souls who were lost on the journey, and for those who were lost after making landfall. But I have nothing to pour out, nothing to light. So instead I close my eyes and I pray the *Shema*, in Hebrew, a fallback for every occasion.

[The performer prays the Shema outloud.]

If I stand here and look out over the horizon, I can imagine the whole world. The water is the same, and it leads to everywhere. This is what keeps us connected. I can follow this water to Amsterdam, to Ghana. With my bare feet on the sand, with my face made hazy by the setting sun, I look east towards Africa. "The sea, the sea is history," the poet said. The sea, the sea is everything. Water, water.

[The performer interacts with the sea projection until it fades out.]

[The performer goes to the trunk and takes out the book.]

When I travel somewhere, I take my passport and I take my copy of Dionne Brand's memoir *A Map to the Door of No Return*. In the first pages of the memoir, Brand asks her grandfather where their family was originally from: "*Yoruba? Ibo? Ashanti? Mandingo?*"

Her grandfather could never remember.

She writes: "We were not from the place where we lived and we could not remember where we were from or who we were."
"*Pourquoi tu n'habites pas içi, Tatie?*" me demande la petite Judith.

[The performer places the book on the map of Africa, near the east.]

21 — #I LOVE WHERE I LIVE

My brother and his fiancée live in a trailer in the woods in the Kootenay Mountains of BC. You first have to fly to Calgary, then to Vancouver, then to Cranbrook. I rarely make this trip because it takes longer and is more expensive than going to Paris.

My brother and his fiancée live in a town that is smaller than a town. It is in the snowbelt and it is populated by ski bums and ATV drivers—more deer in the streets than cars.

They pick me up from the airport in their pick-up truck. My brother is a stone mason and there is heavy, dirty machinery in the truck bed—he taught me that word. Truck bed. He throws my suitcase under a tarp and we head out to the trailer. When we arrive, we are greeted by the dog—a half-German Shepherd half-coyote named Honey Bear: she is sweet as anything but

when she howls at the moon, my skin crawls.

We go on a walk with the dog in the April snow and my brother tells me about fishing licenses, truck payments, and his dream of building a log house to replace the trailer. The dog races ahead to chase birds. I ask my brother how he is doing and he says, "I love it here. I never want to leave." He posts photos on Facebook with the hashtag #IloveWhereILive."

22 — A MAP OF ALL THE MOVING

A Map of all the moving, travel, and journeys of my family.

[The performer dances the map of all the travelling.]

If you're my Mom: Paris. Morocco. Martinique.
Then, if you're my Dad: Rotterdam. Ottawa. Florida. Bahamas, Saint Maarten, Martinique.
Then, together: Martinique. Saint Maarten. Ottawa. Paris. Ottawa. Paris. Ottawa. Paris. Ottawa. Frankfurt. Paris. Tokyo. Paris. Ottawa. Ottawa Ottawa.
Then, if you're my brother: Ottawa. Fernie. Lethbridge. Marysville, near Cranbrook BC.

23 — LECTURE C: GRIOT

[There are no slides used in this lecture.]

Did you know, that on the plantations in the New World, slaves were forbidden from reading or writing? Although they descended from traditionally oral cultures, this prohibition on reading and writing was an additional humiliation.

Though some stories were lost, some stories had lived. Despite the catastrophe of the Middle Passage, some *griots* remembered their stories and songs and dances, and they shared them with their people and with other *griots* from other villages, who remembered their stories and songs and dances in their own languages. And then these stories songs and dances became mixed up with those of the Europeans, and with those of the Indigenous peoples, got all mixed up like *calalou*. Until the Europeans saw how emboldened the slaves became by these stories and so they made all kinds of prohibitions:

no more stories no more songs no more dances
no more gods
no more remembering.

But something survived.

And later someone learned to read, and someone learned to write down the *griots*' stories, and the writers on your reading list are the heirs to these stories, songs, and dances. They are the new *griots* of their people. They can help us to remember what we have lost.

My great-grandmother was the daughter of slaves. She was illiterate, but she was the one who insisted her children and grandchildren did well in school. She was illiterate, but she was the one who made them revise their lessons. When someone told her she was holding a book upside down, she chided them:

"When you know how to read, you read in all directions."
"Quand on sait lire, on lit dans tous les sens!"

24 — WATER 2

[Projection of deep sea. The performer wades in, dives in, floats.]

There is a relief. A feeling of calm in my chest when I am near the Caribbean Sea. So, one afternoon, in Sainte Marie, I step into the sea, in my clothes, and I walk out until my head is just above water

and I float as close to Africa as possible.

[Prays.] *Mami Wata*: watch over your children who have fallen into your depths. Watch over their souls and help to guide them back to *Guinin* where they belong, guide them to the land their hearts break open for. *Mami Wata*: protect them when they are lost.

[The performer emerges from the water and walks along the sand.]

To be in the diaspora is to be always in unbelonging, to not know the dances, to not remember the words to the songs. To be lost in the diaspora is to always be longing for a belonging that is lost to you.

To be of the diaspora is to know you will never be home, that there is no home possible for you here or there. You are of nowhere, and though in some way you are of everywhere, or so they say, you know the difference between "home" and "address," between lost and found, between longing and belonging.
So you keep seeking, because what else can you do?

[The performer looks like she will pray the Shema again, but instead she sings a Créole-Vodou prayer to African gods. Her prayer guides her to walk backwards the Map of Africa, along the West African coast up to the North of Africa, then down through the centre of the DNA square.]

"Papa Legba, ouvré barièrre pour moi, Godé
Ti beau Legba, ouvré barièrre pour moi, pour moi passé
Le mato ya, Massa l'ouvré barrio …"

[The prayer becomes forceful until she is cut off by the sound of distant drumming that becomes louder and more present. Music: African drumming, Malinke Lamba rhythm. The performer dances Lamba, a West African griot / invocation dance, to the ancestors.]

25 — THE STINGER

[The performer retrieves the large envelope from the steamer trunk.]

23andMe. The results are in. The whole story. Should I open it?

FIN / END OF PLAY

SERIES: THE PRINCIPLES OFFICE

CURATED BY
DM ST.BERNARD

— For Volume 13, *alt.theatre* is running a series of short articles (one or two per issue) called The Principles Office (PrOf), curated by artist DM St. Bernard on behalf of ADHOC (Artists Driving Holistic Organizational Change). ADHOC is a national advocacy organization dedicated to the sustained forward movement of ethno-cultural and socially diverse performance works, processes, and traditions.

PrOf offers a platform for practising professionals to engage in a nuanced analysis of contemporary issues in the performance community. With a focus on clarity, values, and distinction of voice, PrOf features disparate views in an ongoing conversation where it is not impolite to eavesdrop.

In the articles that follow, contributors have been asked to reflect on a shift in position, perspective, or practice.

BECAUSE CHANGE

IS BEAUTIFUL.

© New Harlem Productions. Catherine Hernandez, DM St. Bernard, and Yvette Nolan. 2008

BEING THE FIFTH BEAR

BY
DM ST. BERNARD

LADY, I CANNOT ALLOW YOU TO MOVE ME. I CANNOT ALLOW YOU TO BE REAFFIRMED IN YOUR CERTAINTY THAT IT IS YOUR RIGHT TO MOVE ME. THERE ARE TIMES WHEN IT IS CRITICAL TO TAKE UP SPACE, ALTHOUGH IT IS PREFERABLE TO DO SO WITH PURPOSE.

Things are changing, in our world and in our work, and one does not necessarily precede the other. This change is not new; it is constant.

I rarely walk a paved road without imagining away the pavement. I can assume that at one time it was more arduous to traverse this territory. That before this road, someone went down into that culvert, climbed up over that hillock, stumbled over protruding roots, and that person paved this path so that I could take it for granted and complain that it is too narrow for the passage of a mobility aide, that it could be made smoother still with effort. Conversely, I am aware that for many paving is not progress, but rather the loss of good dirt underfoot and water rushing over ankles. Regardless, "the way things are" at this point is the result of purposeful action, much of which takes place without our knowledge or input.

Standing Still Is Also Moving

In 2007, Native Earth Performing Arts was one of 106 PACT (Professional Association of Canadian Theatre) members and its sole Indigenous organization. Representing NEPA, Yvette Nolan and I gathered in Halifax with our colleagues to discuss the course of this boat we are all in together. We had just passed through an unusual round of federal funding (SOFI, or the Supplementary Operational Funding Initiative), one in which a one-time-only infusion of significant cash was allocated to major undertakings outside of regular programming (does this sound familiar?). We were encouraged to be aspirational, imaginative. Yes, more so than usual. The process was a mystifying combination of peer adjudication and staff judgment calls. The results were divisive; the communication of the rationale exacerbating. Three CCA staff attended PACT's AGM in order to speak to the general discontent, to offer clarification, to answer questions and be accountable for the process they had constructed. They said what they came to say. We didn't hear anything new. Were we expecting to? A number of organizations had written with no response, spoken, and been brushed off. We had nothing new to say, so we said nothing, sitting at the back of the packed theatre.

In the Q&A that followed their prepared remarks, a colleague asked, "Why were no Indigenous organizations funded?"

The reply was, "We funded excellence. When those organizations achieve excellence, they will be funded."

Remaining silent, we rose to our feet and stood for the remainder of the session, occasionally meeting the eyes of colleagues who turned around uncomfortably from time to time. The Q&A continued until we ran out of time, and were promised a follow-up session the next morning.

That evening, Yvette and I met over dinner with Onelight Theatre's Shahin Sayadi, Maggie Stewart, and others to debrief. Then we were invited to have a drink with a general manager from Toronto.

"The thing is," she told us, "the members had a meeting and we agreed that it would be best if you two not attend the follow-up. We feel that your presence could be . . . disruptive."

"Oh really?" Yvette and I raised an eyebrow each.

"But we don't want to silence you..." she continued.

"Oh?" We each raised a second brow.

"So if you have any questions, you can tell them to me, and they will be asked on your behalf."

She put a notebook on the table. Our eyebrows shot up past our hairlines and were never seen again. (We just draw them in, now. It's fine.)

Imagine this was a story being written, not recalled. What would be the author's implication? What symbolic import would we derive from the substitution of the protagonists' literal voices?

For me, it matters little what took place at that follow-up session, even if it was awesome and fixed everything.

© NEPA. Yvette Nolan, Tara Beagan, Nina Lee Aquino, and DM St. Bernard. 2005.

© NEPA. DM St. Bernard, Yvette Nolan, and Nina Lee Aquino. 2003.

THE TRUTH IS, THOSE WHO "JUST FOUND OUT" ARE, MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, THE ONES WITHIN ARMS-REACH OF ALL THE BUTTONS, WHILE THOSE OF US WITHOUT BUTTONS ARE SITUATED WELL WITHIN THE BLAST RANGE.

We had been told.

Our silence in an upright position was disruptive.

Our presence caused discomfort to an intolerable degree.

Our peers determined that the remedy was our removal.

In Transit

Once, I was sitting on a crowded bus. We pulled up at a stop and a mother boarded with her three year old in tow. The woman seated next to me got the mother's attention.

"Excuse me," she said, "would you like a seat?"

How nice, I thought. What a nice lady.

The woman pointed to me, adding, ". . . because you can have hers."

Suddenly I stopped hearing, became absorbed in my book and definitely was not giving up my seat, with mental apologies to the mother and child. Lady, I cannot allow you to move me. I cannot allow you to be reaffirmed in your certainty that it is your right to move me. There are times when it is critical to take up space, although it is preferable to do so with purpose.

Relocation

In 2017 I was invited to speak at Modern Times' Post Marginal Symposium—Beyond Representation: Cultural Diversity as Artistic Practice. As I sat in the third row awaiting the event's commencement, I was approached by a Toronto-based executive director. A few feet away stood another colleague of high status.

"Hey DM," the ED greeted me warmly, then indicated the other woman. "You can't expect her to stand for the whole event," she said. I did not disagree. "So, she's gonna sit here," she concluded, indicating my seat.

Oh. Okay. I got up and relocated myself, both because I respect these women, and because I could clearly see additional chairs being brought out to accommodate the growing audience.

But I had been moved. It was incredibly significant to me that my friend and colleague had evidenced no doubt that I would comply. And I could not help but wonder what past interactions had served to solidify her certainty, and how many times I had contributed when I could have held my ground.

Occupying space is real.

So is having agency in that space.

So is having a space of your own.

It's Always Been That Way

In a conversation about arts equity, the facilitator posed this challenge, "Canada's dominant culture is white. Does anyone disagree with that?"

"It's always been that way," remarked one participant.

More than half the room nodded, because that's the way we are conditioned to understand it. And I suppose it is accurate in the context of Canada, the formal nation state; but in considering the history of human life on Turtle Island, this becomes a lens identifier.

Settlers, do we think the clock started when we got here?

Activists, do we think the movement started when we signed up?

Thinkers, do we think this thing became known in the moment that we came to know it?

Pushing Buttons

"No one knew health care was so complicated," said the last person to find out, and all the knowing people in the room nodded and smiled and let him take credit for bringing about a shared epiphany.

"That's real good, what you done," said people who knew better. "Real good. Have a cookie and don't press any buttons."

The truth is, those who "just found out" are, more often than not, the ones within arms-reach of all the buttons, while those of us without buttons are situated well within the blast range.

Our Four Bears

Folks in various art equity conversations have said "we are starting something here, today" of their own enlistment in work that has been ongoing. After Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives' Matter Toronto's first intervention, the recent Women's Marches, there is always distanced discussion about whether 'this movement' will sustain momentum, as though each gathering is composed of an entirely unrelated group of people, entirely distinct from proximate and even progenitorial actions.

Communities of thought complicate attribution.

Traditional Indigenous knowledge has been co-opted repeatedly from art to pharmaceuticals. The individualistic orientation of North American copyright law has no mechanism for acknowledging a community's collective "property." As a result, knowledge shared and developed over generations is legally attributed to Aveda, or whomever files the "right" paperwork. This kind of misattribution is in part facilitated by the idea that a roomful of scientists is more credible than an intergenerational lineage of traditional practice.

Now, in any given week I have to read fifty-eleven scripts, try to stay on top of relevant CTA (Canadian Theatre Agreement) clauses, learn the names of the latest victims of police violence, plus track my step-count. Obviously none of us has the time to know all the things, but in our unknowing we can avoid the erasure of pre-existing work, of the giants on whose shoulders we stand, the fruits of whose labour we eat to get strong, whose names may never be spoken aloud even as the product of their thinking is acclaimed. The least we can do is to know that the clock has long been ticking, even if we just got here ourselves.

Looking Forward Too

When I take my Delorian back to that PACT AGM, I see Yvette and me standing silently at the back of the room, looking down the raked seating at the backs of our national theatre community's heads. I look behind us and see Debajehmujig Storytellers, being the first "only Indigenous PACT member" before NEPA held that dubious honour, not to mention the countless uncelebrated First Nation artists who were making their way when there was no Indigenous organization to support and advocate for them.

I see my then-self's narrow shoulders and I urge them to become broad and strong, so that someone might one day hope to stand on them. I urge myself to keep standing still, if only to offer a steady platform to others. I try to remember that standing still is also moving, when done with purpose.

ANYBODY CAN BE PUSSY RIOT

by Rebecca Benson
and Tracey Guptill

The inaugural Storefront Festival took place last summer in Kingston, Ontario, as part of the Kick and Push Festival. Fifteen productions performed over eight days in empty storefronts in the city's downtown core. One of its sell-out shows, Anybody Can Be Pussy Riot, co-created by Tracey Guptill (anARC), Rebecca Benson (RAFT), and local female punk band PELT, featured two imagined members of Pussy Riot—Pinkhead and Smoosh—on the run since their fateful performance in a Russian church. They escaped imprisonment but still hadn't found a place to call home. For six nights, Pinkhead and Smoosh gathered local artists and feminists to determine the character of feminism and art in King's town: Should they stay here?

Recently, Guptill and Benson were interviewed about the show for alt.theatre by their characters, Pinkhead and Smoosh.

© Julia Balakrishnan. *Anybody Can Be Pussy Riot*, 2016.

PINK Okay. Hello. We are Pinkhead and Smoosh—

SMOOSH —yes. We are members of Pussy Riot. Last July, we hosted this show called *Anybody Can Be Pussy Riot*.

PINK Yes, and here we are talking with Tracey Guptill and Rebecca Benson, the makers of this show that we hosted —

SMOOSH We want to know why it is they make this feminist/activist live talk show. Yes?

PINK Yes.

SMOOSH Yes, exactly.

PINK So Rebecca, tell us please the what and why.

REBECCA Well, it started on YouTube. I was watching the video of the first song Pussy Riot recorded after Nadya and Masha were released from prison. They were protesting the Sochi Olympics, and while performing there, they were whipped by a Cossack militia. This was all filmed and here I was watching it. I was horrified and now insatiably curious, so I started researching. In one interview, Nadya, who was responding to former bandmates critical of her performance with Madonna, said "Anybody can be Pussy Riot, you just need to put on a mask and stage an active protest of something in your particular country, wherever that may be, that you consider unjust."[1] And I wanted to take up that call and create a show to draw together and celebrate the activist and feminist communities in Kingston. So I found PELT, an amazing local female punk band. And I found Tracey, a performer and activist who also wanted to be Pussy Riot, and together we found many other local feminist performing artists and activists who had thoughts, ideas, work, and stories, personal and political, to share. And we were all Pussy Riot together—including the people in the audience too by the end of each show, who were up out of their seats dancing with us.

PINK Yes, that was a fun part. I very much enjoyed that. Every show had its own character, didn't it? I think because in every performance we interview different guests, even though we ask them all the same questions.

Do you identify as a feminist?

Where have you encountered patriarchy in Kingston, in your life, in our society?

What are you doing to counter patriarchy in your life?

PINK Now we get to ask you. So, Tracey: Do you identify as feminist?

TRACEY Yes. I would say feminism is a formative part of my identity. I believe that women are important in shaping our future social dynamics. We need more women in politics. Also more men being at home. And we need to value the role that women have played in the home for so long, that unpaid work being so important to social cohesion.

PINK And what are you doing to counter the—well I bring up the word "Patriarchy" because it was big word in our show and it is big word—so . . .

TRACEY Well I first of all made sure I had a partner who . . . well he is sometimes more feminist than I am. (laughter) That is a big part of it for me. Making sure the dynamics in my relationships foster a more anti-patriarchal vision of the world. And then also I teach children. I deal with a lot of independent young women, a lot of opinionated strong children and I just love to see that and foster that in them. And I continue to school myself, because we've been so deeply trained that even though some things come very natural to me . . . to speak my mind, you know . . . I know it's important to keep learning about how to change my own programming. For example, learning about intersectionality and how to make space for different voices, and the importance of sitting back to listen to what is being said by those who have critically different lived experiences than I do.

PINK So for you it's very personal. In the fabric of your life?

TRACEY Yeah . . . and putting on this show is a way to make spaces to talk about these important ideas that need continual rehashing. And feminism is one of those key ideas that for me is related to the environment, related to politics, related to so many other areas.

SMOOSH And you, Rebecca Benson! Are you feminist?

REBECCA Yes, though I have to confess that creating this show made me reexamine how I have lived as a feminist. By inviting me to step into that ring and ask "What am I willing

to say, to do and to live?" this show has emboldened me, shaken me and given me a new vitality. To work with so many extraordinary women on the show made me confident and feel I had a community that I hadn't connected with before.

SMOOSH Ah, that connection is more powerful sometimes than we expect.

REBECCA Yes, and life-changing.

PINK What was your favourite part of working on this show?

TRACEY The first thing that came to mind is playing you guys. You are so bold, and so much fun, and it's so freeing to have that mask on and to be so completely out there! But then the depth of the work and the way that it touched others, and the way that community around theatre is so inevitable, especially around theatre that matters . . . to see the stories that came up in people, how deeply important it was for them, how pleased they were to be working on such a show, I have a much more profound gratitude for that.

REBECCA I always think of Lisa Figge,[2] one of our interview guests, who was just so filled with this . . . grace, and so vocal about her appreciation for the space that had been created, both the physical space created for the festival and also the social space that it allowed, to speak. A kind of forum, a place—a coffee house . . .

SMOOSH A bed!

REBECCA Yes, a bed! That's a great metaphor for what the space—the show—was like in that it was casual and spontaneous and intimate—

SMOOSH And cozy . . .

REBECCA Cozy and safe, to talk about things that really mattered. Like a bed.

SMOOSH A little sexy too. Very sexy maybe . . .?

POSTSCRIPT

One stayed in Kingston, one relocated to Ottawa, but Pinkhead and Smoosh are preparing to join forces again as they found that the show got people talking and thinking in important ways. They want to bring this forum to university campuses where both women and men need to think about patriarchy and women's empowerment while singing and dancing and listening to voices that are not often put on the stage.

The Storefront Festival in Kingston continues to host innovative theatre in 2017, adding Kingston to the Fringe Festival circuit. The Woman's March on Washington (Kingston) was a major rallying point for feminists in January of this year, when important conversations about trans inclusion and the voices of women of colour were sparked by the speakers and continued on social media. Informal gatherings continue: in March the AKA Autonomous Social Centre hosted events for focused discussion around feminism and the limitations of current feminist politics and the Kingston Community House hosted a feminist t-shirt-making blitz in April.

NOTES

1 Dan Kedmey, "Those Two Pussy Riot Women? They're Not Actually in the Band Anymore," *Time* 6 February 2014, http://time.com/5570/those-two-pussy-riot-girls-theyre-not-actually-in-the-band-anymore/.

2 Lisa Figge is an artist filmmaker and cultural critic and thinker who uses the problematic of dis-identification and is transitioning away from a "clear" gender consciousness. With a BFA; an MA in Environmental Studies; and a PhD in Cultural Studies, all from Queens University, she identifies as disable crip and recently started to identify as the character Fitch Elton.

REVIEW OF BITTER-GIRL–THE MUSICAL

BY LISA JEANS

Written by Annabel (Griffiths) Fitzsimmons, Alison Lawrence, and Mary Francis Moore

Directed by Adam Brazier, with music direction by Diane Lines

Featuring: Amanda LeBlanc, Tara Jackson, and Rebecca Auerbach

Co-production with Confederation Centre for the Arts

October 4 – November 6, 2016 (Review of opening night performance)

Club Stage, Citadel Theatre (Edmonton)

My response to *Bittergirl–The Musical*, which debuted in June 2015 and played at the Citadel Theatre's Club Stage early in the 2016/17 season, has been conflicted on a variety of levels. On the one hand, I see a group of women who have created this work from their own experiences, touched audiences, and achieved sufficient commercial success to build a brand with spin-off products (the book; the musical), and I want to cheer for that level of achievement. On the other hand, *Bittergirl* is a reworked play from the late nineties with hit tunes from the sixties and seventies that has received public support for its productions.

Moreover, it occupied a coveted spot at Edmonton's Citadel Theatre, one of Canada's most important regional theatres, when that space could have introduced audiences to fresh work by a strong emerging talent, or a culturally diverse work offering Citadel audiences a rare view into a world unlike their own, or a risk-taking work experimenting with form and audience expectations, or some combination thereof. Of the nine productions in the Citadel's current season, only three, including *Bittergirl*, have women writers, and two of those credits are shared with men. A brief scan of Citadel's season suggests that racial and cultural diversity fare worse.[1] It is difficult to separate any critical response to the performance itself from a critical response to the lack of equity.

The primary source material for the musical was provided by *Bittergirl–The Play*, written and first performed circa 1999 by Annabel (Griffiths) Fitzsimmons, Alison Lawrence, and Mary Francis Moore. The original play was contemporaneous with the *Sex and the City* juggernaut and addressed similar subject matter, which led to three sold-out runs in Toronto; performances in London, England; and an off-Broadway showcase at the John Houseman Theatre.

All photos © Epic Photography (Ian Jackson). Jay Davis, Amanda LeBlanc, Rebecca Auerbach, and Tara Jackson *in Bittergirl—The Musical*, 2016.

This comedy about the "outrageous and sometimes unbelievable experiences of getting dumped"[2] positioned the trio of charismatic actor-writers as relationship experts, and their frequent appearances as media pundits on the topic resulted in a self-help book that solidified the Bittergirl brand. The new musical incarnation of the *Bittergirl* text is directed by Adam Brazier, with music direction by Diane Lines, and it features Amanda LeBlanc, Tara Jackson, and Rebecca Auerbach as Girls A, B, and C in the roles previously performed by the creators, with Jay Davis as D, or Everyman.

The plot of *Bittergirl–The Musical* begins at the end of three romantic relationships and is told from the point of view of a trio of women friends, who look back at the events leading up to their breakups. Flashbacks show the women as they experience different levels of commitment: one of the women is single and has been in a series of short-term relationships but wants more; another has been living with her partner; and the third is married and has a child. Dramatic moments from the women's individual post-breakup lives are also portrayed, from the challenges of juggling single parenthood with work responsibilities, to awkward run-ins with exes, to sheer loneliness and the loss of self-esteem. The trio of friends meet over drinks periodically to commiserate, talk about their lives, help each other get over their breakups, and, ultimately, come into their own and thrive. Music and dance punctuate the storytelling, with songs by Phil Spector, Burt Bacharach, Aretha Franklin, Ashford and Simpson, and a host of other sixties and seventies classics.

It seems fitting to apply the Bechdel test[3]—which first appeared in a 1985 comic strip created by its namesake, Alison Bechdel—to a play that is rife with so-called girl talk, particularly given the test's criteria: Are there at least two named women? Do they talk to each other? And is their conversation about something other than a man? Neither the play nor the musical passes the Bechdel test—specifically, *Bittergirl* fails to meet the test's final criterion, because the process of getting over the breakup is about getting over an archetypal "him." The presence of the archetypal man is so entrenched in the staging and choreography that I had trouble sensing any irony or bitterness. The chorus of three women is identified as Girls "A," "B," and "C"—so *girls* rather than *women*, and nameless—and they orbit around "D," or Everyman, in many of the scenes. One of these in the second half of the play places "D" on a tall riser, towering above the girls at the top of a pyramid. Although the physicality of Everyman is a comedic parody of masculinity—echoing, for example, that of Disney's animated Gaston from *Beauty and the Beast*—making him laughable does not adequately redress the power imbalance. Many of the jokes rely upon traditional gender stereotypes, either celebrating or gently subverting them. Although Everyman is often outnumbered by the Girls, especially during musical interludes, this does nothing to diminish the power the character wields over the their lives. He dumps each of them in turn, and breakup conversations and shenanigans ensue.

For a show about bitter *girls*, Everyman occupies a lot of space and time on the stage. Everything that I have read or seen in promotional videos for the show suggests that it is intended to be an empowering and ironic look at relationships; but for me the bite is missing, and I wonder if this is in part the result of a male directorial gaze. The choreographer included a pose from the opening title silhouette of seventies-era television show *Charlie's Angels*, a choice that visually reinforces the idea of three women orbiting a powerful male figure without any sense of irony, self-referentiality, or empowerment. I wonder how some of these criticisms might change if the Everyman character had been portrayed by a woman. Such a choice would certainly have affected the gender power relationships offered by the staging, and might have offered critical distance as well as comic effect. While some of the women in the audience loved Everyman's *Full Monty*-esque choreography—as he worked the floor, flexing and thrusting—their earnest enjoyment of this moment left me feeling ambivalent about the intentions of the creators and the director, and wondering whether the creators' aims were at odds with the director's interpretation.

The only time that the Girls seem to get a win over Everyman and come into their collective own is at the end of the show: They are out for drinks at their favourite bar and Franco, the invisible proprietor, refuses to serve Everyman. It seems cold comfort, and no rousing iteration of "I Will Survive" can lead me to believe that these girls have moved past their breakups and into their own power—because the action is still in relation to that archetypal "him." One of the themes of the text is that in telling or owning your story, you can take back your power and cease to be a victim. I agree with that in principle, and acknowledge that the *Bittergirl* creators have achieved a win by telling their stories and controlling their narrative and professional brand. But Girls A, B, and C are in a world where they rationalize Everyman's behaviour, and position themselves and their own personal narratives in relation to him, rather than as independent women who should reasonably expect to find someone who loves and accepts them on their own terms. When one of the Girls wonders whether "he was suffocating in our mythology," explaining Everyman's action and in some sense taking the blame for being rejected, she reveals an implicit acceptance of being subordinate, of being acted upon and of reacting rather than acting—as though the Girls don't even have a right to their own mythology let alone a satisfying self-actualized reality.

When one of the Girls wonders whether "he was suffocating in our mythology," explaining Everyman's action and in some sense taking the blame for being rejected, she reveals an implicit acceptance of being subordinate, of being acted upon and of reacting rather than acting.

The amalgamation of various collected breakup stories and the use of character types without specifying individual character names suggests the intention to depict universal experiences. Yet the characters and their situations feel very specific to an educated, straight, white, middle-class world: in other words, a privileged experience of life, romance, and romantic rejection that is straight out of *Sex and the City* and does not encompass relationships that may be based on diverse cultural traditions, identities, or values. One of the breakup scenarios, later played out with Barbie and Ken dolls in one of the show's most funny and heartbreaking moments, involves Everyman as a university professor who is recently offered tenure and wants to give it all up to run away and become a Mountie. By positing the specific stories and life circumstances of all three bittergirls as universal—even though they are views into a specific milieu that is limited to dominant culture, heteronormativity, and white privilege—the text betrays a major blind spot. Casting one talented person of colour, in the person of Tara Jackson as Girl B, does not make those issues in the text go away.

The addition of music is what makes this production new, but the music itself is not new. Productions of *Bittergirl–The Play* used hits from the sixties and seventies as interludes and scene transitions; and as the play evolved into a musical, those songs were kept and integrated into the text to be sung by the performers instead of functioning as commentary.[4] The characters range in age from their mid-twenties to their early forties, so even though they would have heard music from the sixties and seventies, this is not their music. These songs are fun, many are in the "girl group" tradition, but I found myself questioning the choice. With the performers now singing them, the songs no longer function as commentary but are heartfelt and earnest. Rather than contributing to the empowerment of the Girls or offering an ironic wink, many of the song lyrics uphold old stereotypes related to women's roles in romantic relationships. I also felt that the songs were not necessary to advance or enhance either plot or character development. The show progressed as a cabaret or revue, and this was reinforced at the very end of the show by the inclusion of a medley of songs performed earlier in the performance. While all of the performers are capable musicians and the band was tight, the vocal standout was Tara Jackson, a Berklee College of Music graduate. The music was well done and provided excellent entertainment value, but I was left unsatisfied: I am not sure that the combination and integration of musical selections with the source text created a new musical show that adds something to the source material of *Bittergirl–The Play*, or if the outcome of *Bittergirl—the Musical* is a well-produced cabaret performance of familiar pop music that ultimately detracts from the bitter girls' original message.

Whatever impressions and questions I was left with about the show as a new take on an existing text, a few of those old songs linger in memory. They throw us back to a contradictory time in North America—when assumptions about sameness in gender, race, and culture were the norm, but at the same time girl groups like The Shirelles topped the music charts and the civil rights movement was awakening in the US. In the end, the bitter girls' narrative, as humorous and distressing as some of their breakup stories are, is no match for the determined disco pulse of that relatively timeless, ultimate, and inclusive I'm-over-you song, "I Will Survive."

NOTES

1 Only one production, as far as I can discern, *Disgraced by Ayad Akhtar*, was written by a PoC. The only other play for the 16/17 season that was written by a woman was *Sense and Sensibility* (Jane Austen); the adaptation for performance was written by Tom Wood. The forthcoming 17/18 season under the artistic direction of Daryl Cloran includes three shows with primary women writer/creators: *Hadestown* (Anais Mitchell), *Silver Arrow* (Mieko Ouchi), and *Undercover* (Rebecca Northan); Mieko Ouchi is one of two Asian playwrights, the other is Tetsuro Shigematsu. Corey Payette's play *Children of God* offers an Indigenous perspective.

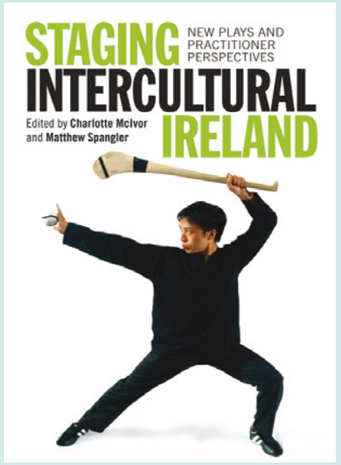
2 This is taken from Citadel Theatre, *Bittergirl—The Musical* Program Notes (Citadel Theatre, October 4, 2016).

3 Bechdel Test: at http://bechdeltest.com/.

4 Liz Nicholls, "Getting over getting dumped: *Bittergirl–The Musical* knows how," *Edmonton Journal*, October 4, 2016.

BOOK REVIEW

BY
EMER
O'TOOLE



STAGING INTERCULTURAL IRELAND: NEW PLAYS AND PRACTITIONER PERSPECTIVES. EDITED BY CHARLOTTE MCIVOR AND MATTHEW J. SPANGLER. CORK: CORK UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2014. 246 PP.

Between 1995 and 2007, Ireland experienced the economic boom known as the Celtic Tiger. One of the most profound socio-political effects of the period was that net inward migration replaced net outward migration for the first time in the country's history. Ireland changed from a comparatively homogenous society to a multicultural one in what felt, for many of us living through it, like the blink of a tiger's eye. Where Irish film and TV have been slow to respond to this transformative demographic change, scholar Jason King argues that Irish theatre is at the forefront of dramatic engagements with immigration, multiculturalism, interculturalism, cultural relativism, race and racism, producing a fascinating slew of productions and performances ranging from the agit prop to the experimental.

Charlotte McIvor and Matthew Spangler's thoughtfully curated anthology of intercultural Irish plays is an important resource for those of us who study and teach Irish theatre, intercultural theatre, or, more generally, the "social turn" in theatre practice, in which art and its activist function are inextricable. McIvor and Spangler's comprehensive introduction does the complex work of providing Irish economic and social context as well as connective tissue between Irish Interculturalism—which is enshrined in state policy (McIvor, "Staging")—and the broader global field of intercultural theatre scholarship, dating from the 1980s, and delineated and contested by scholars including Richard Schechner, Rustom Bharucha, Ric Knowles, and Daphne Lei. The eight plays anthologized have introductions by expert scholars including Jason King, Charlotte Headrick, and Maurya Wickstrom. To complement these play texts and contextual framings the volume concludes with six practitioner interviews that highlight the activist function of Irish intercultural theatre and reveal the wrangling with state and social exclusion that happens behind the scenes.

Bisi Adigun—theatre-maker, academic, social commentator, and founder of Ireland's first African theatre company, *Arambe Productions*—contributes a play from his company's repertoire, *Once Upon a Time & Not So Long Ago* (2006). The piece is, in many ways, a teaching play influenced by the political theatre of Brecht. The first half (*Once Upon a Time*) presents traditional African morality tales narrated by a storyteller and played out, danced, and sung by an ensemble. Also a meditation on justice, honesty, confusion, and political corruption, *Once Upon a Time* offers a complex parable for why we tell stories at all, highlighting art's potentially propagandistic qualities even while easing us into laugher. In the second half, *Not So Long Ago*, the storyteller is replaced by the host of an Irish TV chat show and the company performs a new set of morality tales drawn this time from the experiences of immigrants and people of colour in Ireland. The themes of justice, honesty, confusion, and corruption remain, while we're asked to reflect on the kinds of tales our mediatized storytellers offer us. This philosophical and lively ensemble piece has already proved an excellent impetus to conversation in my classroom, encouraging students to recognize the subtle differences between equality and equity in intercultural situations and the potential of stories to teach us or deceive us.

Playwright and practitioner Donal O'Kelly has been dealing with themes related to the immigrant experience in Ireland since 1994 when his play *Asylum! Asylum!* was performed on Dublin's Peacock stage. *Asylum! Asylum!* pre-dated and in some ways foreshadowed the implementation in 2001 of the human rights disaster that is Ireland's system of direct government provision for asylums seekers. O'Kelly contributes a different kind of immigration narrative to *Staging Intercultural Ireland*. *The Cambria* is a historical rendering of Frederick Douglas's 1845 sea-voyage to Ireland at the height of the famine and of Daniel O'Connell's campaign to achieve Catholic emancipation.

This multi-character two-hander play is typical of O'Kelly's highly physical, evocative, and "poor" (in Jerzy Grotowski's sense[1]) aesthetic. The madcap drama aboard the good ship Cambria is bookended by contemporary scenes in an airport, where an Irish teacher has come to helplessly watch the deportation of her Nigerian student. Throughout the rapid-fire, rig-climbing, melodramatic sea shenanigans—which feature alongside Douglas a villainous Southern slave owner, a wily Stage Irish steward, a precocious little girl, and an abolitionist choir-mistress—there are constant allusions to the links between the Irish oppressed under Britain's penal laws and African Americans oppressed under slavery in the United States. *The Cambria* gives scope to reflect on immigration to Ireland in the context of centuries of Irish emigration; it does the important work of framing Ireland's treatment of its asylum seekers within the nationalist historical narrative of colonialism, resistance, and liberation.

Scholar Ronit Lentin is quick to remind intercultural and multicultural commentators that Ireland was home to diverse cultural identities before the boom, and that it is important to acknowledge the Irish racisms that pre-existed net inward migration. Complicating the narrative of a homogenous pre-Celtic Tiger Ireland in *Staging Intercultural Ireland* is Rosaleen McDonagh's *Rings*, which gives us the story of a young deaf woman in Ireland's marginalized Travelling community.[2] Norah is fiercely proud of her heritage, suspicious of "buffer" (majority settled community) attempts to assimilate her, yet also determined to fight the gendered limits that her father has set for her and pursue her dream of becoming an Olympic boxer. This politically layered, emotionally rich short piece pulls us towards Indigenous interculturalisms and, as Maurya Wickstrom notes in her introduction, manages to be at once productively critical of state policy towards Travellers and of the status of women in Traveller society. With a wealth of settler-authored representations of the Travelling community on the Irish stage, the availability of this script by an accomplished Traveller playwright will prove a boon to anyone who wants to understand the contemporary community with the nuance it deserves, not to mention to anyone who enjoys that rarest of things in the Irish canon—a good play with a happy ending.

Ursula Rani Sarma is amongst my favourite playwrights and, as an Irishwoman of mixed Irish/Indian heritage in a predominantly male and pale theatre culture, she certainly deserves to be anthologized in an intercultural volume. *Orpheus Road* is a Northern Irish Romeo and Juliet story set during the Troubles and featuring a Republican boy and a white girl from South Africa. With a characteristic Sarma punch-to-the-guts tragic arc, the play weaves art with politics, love with violence. McIvor's introduction locates *Orpheus Road*'s relevance to the volume in its foreshadowing of immigrant experiences in Northern Ireland, experiences often characterized by dislocation due to lack of affiliations in Nationalist/Loyalist struggles. This makes sense after a fashion, but it is also a bit of a reach, especially because the play touches only very lightly on the South African character's cultural affiliations. It seems more likely that the inclusion of a piece by Sarma trumped immediate intercultural thematics, and perhaps that is a positive thing. We need to privilege the voices of Irish people of colour in intercultural discourse, and the work of Sarma, who tends to defy expectations by *not* focusing explicitly on race and gender in her work, who refuses to be defined by those things, is important to intercultural theatre partially for those reasons.

Northern Irish playwright Nicola McCartney's *Cave Dwellers* fuses a Beckettian purgatorial aesthetic with a faux-verbatim testimony style, blurring the line between truth and invention, and staging both palpable fictions of asylum seekers' tragedies and a more atmospheric, absurdist sense of hopelessness. *Cave Dwellers* is written and staged in Scotland, and the shores McCartney's immigrants land on are clearly British shores, as evidenced by an allusion to the destination country once having ruled the waves. I'm no subscriber to the "but is it Irish enough?" school of Irish cultural criticism, but other than McCartney's country of birth, I had to do some mental wrangling to connect the play to the specifics of the volume. Perhaps, taking Sarma and McCartney's contributions together, we might surmise that the editors wanted to avoid policing the word intercultural in the Irish context; to encourage Irish intercultural discourse to admit stories at its margins; and to find the connections between straightforwardly intercultural Irish plays and other work operating in adjacent cultural spaces. After all, Ireland's interculturalism is not happening in a vacuum, but, rather, in a rhizomatic globalized world. Whatever the motivation, I'm very glad to have had the chance to engage with both pieces.

As I'm sure is apparent from this review so far, I believe *Staging*

Intercultural Ireland to be a timely, productive anthology, and as both a pedagogue and scholar I am grateful for it. However, in the name of healthy academic critique, I feel I must discuss an aspect of the volume that sits uncomfortably with me. Of the eight plays anthologized, three are by white, settled, non-immigrant Irish men, and one is by a white, non-immigrant, settled, Irish woman. All of the academic introductions are by white, Western people. It is interesting that the plays by women tend to speak from an immigrant, Person of Colour, or Traveller perspective, while the male playwrights require no such lived experience to nevertheless comment on issues of race, ethnicity, and marginalization. McIvor and Spangler address the preponderance of white, Irish-born playwrights in their introduction by highlighting these playwrights' activist commitments and presumed distantiation from white hegemonic privilege.

To be blunt: I am unconvinced. The playwrights often workshopped their projects with immigrant individuals and groups, but where are these collaborators' names on the finished products? There is a clear throughline here to the postcolonial critiques of Western-driven interculturalism made so vehemently in the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s by Rustom Bharucha, Gautam Dasgupta, Jacqueline Lo, and Helen Gilbert, as well as the contributions of many others. I am not suggesting that majority voices cannot or should not engage with minority experiences. Rather, it is incumbent on scholars, playwrights, and spectators to pay close attention to the nature of majority-authored representations and to ask tough questions: What cultural assumptions do the representations contain? How do they represent the people whom they are—to borrow a postcolonial term—speaking for?

In this vein it should be noted that two of the plays anthologized, Charlie O'Neill's *Hurl* and Paul Meade's *Mushroom*, are not only sexist but also stage ostensibly humorous ethnic caricatures, which, given the authorship, strike an uncomfortable chord. O'Neill's *Hurl* is the worst offender. The lack of substantial female characters can be explained by the fact that this is a story about a multicultural Hurling[3] team (a story about Camogie would be unthinkable, obviously), but the representation of the sole woman of colour in the play can only be explained by the kind of nonchalant sexism that, sadly, still pervades much Irish cultural production. Here's how Lofty, an ex-missionary priest and unlikely Hurling coach, meets Fatmata:

FATMATA Fatmata Mansaray, Sierra Leone (Lofty gives her the once over. She enjoys it.)

LOFTY Hello. Lofty McMahon. (91)

As we all know, there's nothing asylum-seeking women like better than being sleazed on by Irishmen. In her next appearance on stage, Fatmata complains about untidy Irish males and then spends most of the scene trying to convince Lofty that she doesn't have a boyfriend. In her next appearance, Lofty jokes that she has testicles. In her next, she's commenting on Lofty's derriere; and in her final appearance in the play, when the referee is discriminating against her heroic hurling team, here is Fatmata's contribution:

FATMATA I had seen enough. So while he was writing in his note-book I stormed onto the field. I went right up to him (Kisses him full on the mouth) And, I kicked him in the sliotars. (123)

Clearly, Fatmata is almost exclusively described or presented in terms of her sexual relation to men, as are the other women briefly portrayed or discussed elsewhere in *Hurl*. If the play aims to foster intercultural understanding, then I worry about what Irish men are being asked to understand.

Meade's *Mushroom* is a play in which men discuss the incomprehensible machinations of the universe and women discuss men. It is also a play in which an immigrant woman says no to a man's sexual advances but really means yes. I am tired of sexist male-authored Irish theatre in which women cannot be imagined except as love interests and sex objects, but when it comes to intercultural topics I am doubly troubled because the sexualization of immigrant women in cultural products feeds the dehumanization of these same women in real life. It's exasperating that supposedly "anti-hegemonic" work panders to stereotypes of women of colour and of women in general, and O'Neill and Meade's substantial and commendable activist credentials do not make it okay.

Gender and immigration are explored with more nuance in Mirjana Rendulic's one-person show *Broken Promise Land*. A semi-autobiographical piece, the play narrates the coming-of-age of a bright, brave young woman named Tea who is languishing in a dead-end existence in Croatia. Tea becomes a lap dancer to chase her *Beverly Hills 90210* engendered dreams, and she travels to Italy, Japan, and finally to Ireland where she works in a club that smells like "Guinness farts and cows." In spite of the fact that Tea gets cheated out of money and is often in precarious situations, this is not another cautionary tale about the evils of the sex industry. Rather, it is one woman's story of escaping the drudgery of subsistence wage-slavery; of doing first, thinking second; and, ultimately, of waking up to the illusion of the capitalist dream. In the end, it is not lap dancing but a marriage proposal—the offer of being the kept woman of a rich American—that sends her running from a life based on male sexual patronage and that pushes her to recognize her intrinsic worth so that she can make new, better promises to herself. As Ireland prepares to introduce legislation on sex work following the Nordic Model—that is, criminalizing the buying of sex—Rendulic's play is a reminder, whatever your politics on sex work, to foreground the personhood of the immigrant women in Ireland's sex industry, and to be alert to gendered differences in migrant experience.

Ireland's new cultural fabric gives us much to celebrate—whether it's Adigun's commitment to fusing African and Irish themes and stories to create aesthetics and poetics beyond the sum of their parts; or renewed reflection, à la O'Kelly, on our vision for an anti-oppressive Irish Republic; whether it is new frameworks for understanding the richness Traveller culture has always brought to Ireland and tackling the prejudice the Travelling community has so long endured; or the simple humanity of the desire—on behalf of the "New Irish"—to tell their stories, and of the desire—on behalf of the "Old Irish"—to listen. Yet *Staging Intercultural Ireland* does not let us forget that human rights abuses and bigotry pervade a newly multicultural Ireland and that theatre artists have a duty in engage with this.

Staging Intercultural Ireland is an immensely valuable volume, which, in conjunction with Charlotte Headrick and Eileen Kearney's *Irish Women Dramatists*, also released in 2014, gives me faith in a more inclusive Irish theatre culture and scholarship. The Irish stage has long been thought of "a mirror up to nation" (Murray). In 2016, the centenary of the declaration of the Irish Republic, it is heartening to see volumes of this kind emerging. We may already be on our way—to echo the sentiments of the signatories of the 1916 proclamation—towards an Ireland that equally values all the artists of the nation.

NOTES

1 Jerzy Grotowski coined the term "poor theatre" to denote a style eschewing ostentatious sets, effects, lighting, and costumes, and relying instead on the skill of the performer and minimal props.

2 Irish Travellers are an itinerant people indigenous to Ireland, who also live in large numbers in the United Kingdom. They are regarded under Irish law as a distinct social group and under British law as an ethnic group. Their origins are disputed, but it seems most likely that they are a "social isolate," that is, a group differentiated from the majority Irish population over time (North et al.). The term "settled" is used in Ireland to refer to people who are not Travellers.

3 Hurling is a Gaelic game with ancient origins. The revival of hurling and other Gaelic games in the late nineteenth century was a key contributor to the cultural nationalism that ultimately led to an independent Ireland. It is a team sport played on grass with wooden sticks called hurleys and a hard ball called a sliotar. The women's version of the game is called Camogie.

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