Beyond Truth: Materialist Approaches to Reconciliation Theories and Politics in Canada

by

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Abstract

In the last decade, reconciliation, apology, and forgiveness have become omnipresent forces in the international political sphere. Since the Nuremberg trials, strict retribution is no longer the responsible method for dealing with atrocity. Reconciliation offers conflict resolution that redresses historical injustice by appealing to reparative models of justice aimed at healing the rifts between victims and perpetrators. In 2006, Canada became the latest country to adopt a state-sponsored process of reconciliation. The Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established to “contribute to truth, healing and reconciliation” (“Schedule ‘N’”, 1) between Native and non-Native groups in Canada. This dissertation maps out the history of reconciliation as it is connected to Canada and identifies the ways in which the TRC facilitates and confounds conflict resolution in a colonial state. By critically analysing contemporary literature, film, politics and social movements, my dissertation develops a materialist approach to reconciliation via the ideas of “the call,” apology, reparation and forgiveness, applying these ideas to the lived experience (emotional, political, financial) that individuals and communities have to contend with in the reconciliatory process. In this dissertation I argue against those who suggest that the emergence of reconciliation in the modern era indicates that the international community is “returning to harmony” (Wagamese 134). As opposed to defining it as an indicator of burgeoning ethical politics, I suggest that “reconciliation,” particularly in how it is being articulated in settler states, is being deployed as a means to close off difference and contradiction and facilitate self-interest. As such, reconciliation must be approached as an ideological instrument rather than as “a potentially new international morality” (Barkan ix).

Keywords: reconciliation, apology, redress, forgiveness, Canada, Indigenous studies
Dedication

For Kathy and Oliver. All my love.
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1. Introduction: ‘The Climax of Reconciliation’: Articulating a Material Response to Conflict Resolution

Reconciliation appears to have come into its time. Talk of its potential is widespread, and calls for its practice are now heard as a serious alternative to realist doctrines that offer little solace to those caught in the grip of total violence. While worrisome to those who believe that atrocity demands strict retribution, reconciliation now enjoys a certain presumption in some quarters, a belief that it has a definitive role to play in resolving particular forms of conflict.

- Eric Doxtader (380)

As Eric Doxtader argues in the above epigraph, reconciliation appears to have come into its time. Now more than ever, governments are embracing restorative models of justice that forgo retribution and work towards rehabilitating victim/perpetrator communities. Although apology, forgiveness and reconciliation are certainly not new ideas, one is still led to question why there has been such a proliferation of these terms in politics in recent years. Why has this era been labelled by critics as “the age of apology” (Brooks 3)? Why has compassion and the rhetoric of guilt become such a prevalent aspect of modern politics? And why have an increasing number of nation-states, such as South Africa, Australia, and most recently Canada, embraced reconciliation as a means to deal with their pasts? In this dissertation I argue against those who suggest that the emergence of reconciliation in the modern era indicates that the international community is “returning to harmony” (Wagamese 134). As opposed to defining it as an indicator of burgeoning ethical politics, I suggest that “reconciliation,” particularly in how it is being articulated in settler states, is being deployed as a means to close off difference and contradiction and facilitate self-interest. As such, reconciliation must be approached as an ideological instrument rather than as “a potentially new international morality” (Barkan ix).

In order to structure my argument, I use the set of steps towards reconciliation laid out by the sociologist Nicholas Tavuchis in Mea Culpa: A Sociology of Apology and Reconciliation (1991). Tavuchis’ text, along with Michael Ignatieff’s Warrior’s Honour (1997) and Martha Minow’s Between Vengeance and Forgiveness (1998), form the
basis of scholarship on reconciliation which began to find its place in the academy in the 1990s. Tavuchis sees apology as the beginning of a teleological progression towards reconciliation. For him, it is only through the call for justice, followed by apology and forgiveness that one can arrive at what Lewis B Smedes calls “the climax of reconciliation” (19). The movement towards reconciliation is linear: “call, apology, forgiveness, and reconciliation” (Tavuchis 22). As I illustrate in the subsequent chapters of this dissertation, there are plenty of reasons to be suspect of the teleology that Tavuchis presents here. For instance, it is not clear that one must forgive in order for reconciliation to occur, or that an apology must be offered in order for forgiveness to be possible. These issues notwithstanding, Tavuchis offers a comprehensive means for me to organize my argument and break the conversation down into a series of smaller, more manageable steps.

Following and responding to reconciliation theorists such as Tavuchis, Minow and Ignatieff, I argue that as it is popularly conceived by critics and activists, reconciliation is an idealist conceit. As Rey Chow argues in Ethics after Idealism, idealism is the tendency “to relate to alterity through mythification; to imagine the ‘other,’ no matter how prosaic or impoverished, as essentially different, good, kind, enveloped in a halo, and beyond the contradictions that constitute our own historical place” (xx). In other words, for Chow, idealism is founded on the notion that individuals can occupy a space free from the ambiguities of fear, guilt, anger and shame. Chow’s description of idealism here is particularly applicable to reconciliation--as it is commonly depicted--insofar as both concepts imagine a space in which relationships with the other are no longer hindered by the past or the contradictions that arise out of interpersonal difference. In this sense, the call, apology, forgiveness and redress are all steps towards smoothing out contradiction in anticipation of shared community that has transcended violence and history.

1 I use Kevin Avruch and Beatriz Vejarano’s “Truth and Reconciliation Commissions: A Review Essay and Annotated Bibliography” as a literature review for my research.
Opposed to idealism, As the title of my dissertation suggests, the work I have done here has been philosophically structured around the idea of materialism. I recognize that this is a loaded word, which critics and philosophers (most of them coming from a Marxist tradition) have used in a number of different ways. However, because it would take me too far away from the primary topic of my dissertation, I do not contend with etymology of materialism or the way it has been developed in philosophy in any extended way. However, it is still useful to point out the tradition I am borrowing from here.

My use of materialism is based on a very simple definition derived out of Marxist theory. According to Raymond Williams, materialism is “a rejection of presumptive hypotheses of non-material or metaphysical prime causes [which] defines its own categories in terms of demonstrable physical investigations” (“Problems,” 111). Or, put differently, materialism moves away from the investigation of an imagined ideal— for instance Kant’s notion of perpetual peace—studying instead physical, experience-focused manifestations of our given moment. My materialist approach is perhaps unconventional in that I am not contending specifically with issues such as means of production or the distribution of resources, the “big” issues in materialist theory. Rather, borrowing from Williams and his notion of “structures of feeling,” I contend with the material psychic realities generated across formally instituted ideologies and personal experience. Following Williams, I argue that reconciliation is a series of “changes in presence” that “do not have to await definition, classification, or rationalization before they exert palpable pressures and set effective limits on experience and on action” (Marxism, 132). According to Williams, such changes can be defined as changes in structures of feeling. The term is difficult, but ‘feeling’ is chosen to emphasize a distinction from more formal concepts of ‘world-view’ or ‘ideology’. It is not only that we must go beyond formally held and systematic beliefs, though of course we have always to include them. It is that we are concerned with meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt, and the relations between these and formal or systematic beliefs are in practice variable (including historically variable), over a range from formal assent with private dissent to the more nuanced interaction between selected and interpreted beliefs and justified experiences. (132, my emphasis)
At stake in this dissertation are the ways in which “reconciliation” evokes the genealogy and historical contexts of a history of human rights stretching back to World War II, creating a “structure of feeling” in which participants are compelled to act and interact in a complex series of ways that stretch far beyond the purely economic.

As opposed to materialism, the idealist approach to reconciliation is evident in much of the work that comes out of the academy. For instance John B. Hatch argues in his essay, “Reconciliation: Building a Bridge From Complicity to Coherence in the Rhetoric of Race Relations,” that “Reconciliation ... works towards a cathartic release of guilt, shame, blame, and resentment, while also struggling for epistemic coherence” (739). In this argument the assumption is that reconciliation expels pain and generates unity. Once reconciliation is achieved, both victim and perpetrator will be able to transcend the feelings of guilt and resentment that were previously impeding intersocial resolution. In a similar idealist vein, in an essay entitled “Returning to Harmony,” Richard Wagamese argues that “it is a big word reconciliation. Quite simply, it means to create harmony” (146). Moving from the political to the personal, Fred Kelly argues that “reconciliation is the means by which one regains peace with oneself” (11). In both Wagamese’s and Kelly’s formulation, reconciliation represents an end to conflict: it is the achievement of resolution and the realization of personal fulfilment.

In the political field, one of the most important idealist studies of reconciliation comes from Archbishop Desmond Tutu. According to James L. Gibson, “Tutu’s message of forgiveness, although irritating to many, set a compelling frame of reference for moving beyond the atrocities uncovered during the TRC [Truth and Reconciliation Commission] process” (418). While many disparaged Tutu’s leadership, dismissing his TRC as a “Kleenex Commission” (qtd. in Graybill 110), he has also been portrayed as the model of reconciliation management. Peter Storey reports that, Tutu “wept with the victims and noted every moment of repentance and forgiveness with awe. Where a jurist would have been legalistic, he has not hesitated to be theological. He has sensed when to lead an audience into a hymn to help a victim recover composure, and when to call them all to prayer” (qtd. in Graybill 110). Tutu himself has proclaimed the efficacy of his program. During the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Nelson Mandela and F.W. de
Klerk, he told the audience, “once we have got it right, South Africa will be a paradigm for the rest of the world” (qtd. in Graybill 126).

In his seminal text, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, Tutu argues that victims of apartheid should be willing to forgive “not just once, not just seven times, but seventy times seven, without limit” (273) on the basis that forgiveness represents “the only way we can be whole, healthy, happy persons” (156). The use of “whole” here is indicative of the ideology that dominates reconciliation discourse. “Whole,” used in conjunction with the pronoun “we,” suggests a utopian future in which the contradictions that make up our shared history can be overcome and perpetrators and victims can exist in a unified, healthy community. In imagining “wholeness” for South Africa, Tutu generated a space in which perpetrators and victims were compelled to share their stories and victims were encouraged to move past feelings of anger, resentment and vengeance. While subsequent studies of the South African TRC have uncovered flaws, Tutu’s work is roundly regarded as resulting in “one of the most successful transformations in the world today” (Gibson 341).

However, while Tutu has an undoubted impact on the conceptualization of reconciliation, as I demonstrate throughout this dissertation reconciliation does not necessarily create “whole” subjects and it is not always used to heal communities. As Chow draws attention to above, idealist logic relies on the premise that the other has at least a minimal ethical respect responsibility to those that s/he engages with. To borrow from Sigmund Freud, idealist thinking relies on the fact that society believes “that everyone else fulfils ethical demands--that is, that everyone else is virtuous” (81). Unfortunately, this is not always the case. In the field of political reconciliation, the potential for *unethical* action was established in the first Commission enacted in the wake of the Nuremburg trials and the establishment of Human Rights law. As I discuss in chapter one, Idi Amin’s “Commission of Inquiry into ‘Disappearances’ of People in

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Uganda Since the 25th of January, 1971 was little more than a front for the dictator to continue to rule via political repression, ethnic persecution and extrajudicial killings while maintaining the appearance of morality necessary to participate in international trade.

Indeed, as I illustrate in chapter five with examples from Joy Kogawa and Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, perpetrators are sometimes beyond moral redemption. In fact, as Amin helps to illustrate, certain individuals can use the rhetoric of reconciliation to facilitate criminal action. As such, inviting the irredeemable other into the community or home invites new violence and suffering that is inflicted under the camouflage of forgiveness. Because of the potential for violence that reconciliation opens up, Kogawa demands that those who are striving to generate healing and wholeness must be willing to “see the contradictions” (197) of forgiving the enemy. In many cases, this means deferring, if not negating, the possibility of wholeness and healing that Tutu argues for and pausing to reflect on the pain that forgiveness can inflict on the victim. For Kogawa, reconciliation is possible, but it necessitates a certain “brokenness” from its participants, a suffering that problematizes idealist notions of harmony and wholeness.

As opposed to idealism, the materialist approach I take up in this dissertation, following from critics such as Minow and Susan Dwyer, refrains from imagining harmony and wholeness and instead focuses on the contradictions that are always already taking place towards reconciliation. As Dwyer puts it, the nation state needs to embrace contradiction, not ignore it: “the continued well-being, or the very survival, of a community or nation depends on how it manages to incorporate and accommodate these disturbances and challenges to its prevailing narrative of self-understanding” (4). Materialist reconciliation does not seek to solve contradictions or promote wholeness; rather it aims at identifying contradiction as part of the reconciliation process itself. It is important to dwell on the incongruous, problematic and contradictory because reconciliation proponents must be willing to incorporate such messiness into their “conclusions.” If there is a case to be made for reconciliation, and I believe there is, it is based on outcomes that recognize that some conflict, albeit philosophical and emotional, is and will continue to be a part of resolution. Put simply, any ethical study of reconciliation must resist the temptation to close itself off to contradiction by constructing a wall of “common sense” around itself; contradiction is a large part of what it takes to achieve reconciliation, but it also precludes any secure or absolute definition of
wholeness. This is not to say that reconciliation does not exist, but rather, as Minow puts it, the goal in such a delicate situation is not to “seek precision,” but to open up questions and debates, which automatically necessitates a “resistance to tidiness” (4).

This dissertation is written in reaction to the world’s most contemporary Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which is currently under way in Canada. On May 10, 2006, just before I began my PhD, the Canadian federal government approved the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA). As part of this 1.9 billion dollar agreement, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)\(^3\) was initiated in order to both acknowledge and document the injustices and harm committed against Native Canadians as a direct result of the Residential School programs. About 150,000 First Nations, Inuit and Metis children were removed from their homes over the course of most of the last century to attend Residential Schools. Schools used coercion to get parents to send their children away. In 1920 the Indian Act was amended to make attendance compulsory between the ages of seven and fifteen and truant officers were authorized to remove children whose parents did not comply, and to prescribe penalties. According to J.R. Miller, “the missionary objectives for Residential Schools were conversion and assimilation” (416). Students lost connection with their families, culture, religion and language and many of them were mentally, physically, emotionally and sexually abused.

Developed out of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP),\(^4\) the Canadian TRC was given a five-year mandate during which survivor testimony was to be collected from former Residential School students, seven national reconciliation events were to be hosted, a comprehensive historical report was to be prepared and a national research centre was to be established.\(^5\) During RCAP, “the primary message of the

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\(^3\) Originally named the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission.


\(^5\) The goals of Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission are:

- to acknowledge the experiences of survivors
- to promote awareness in the Canadian public
Assembly of First Nations … was the need to restore treaty relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada in the way that it is understood by First Nations” (6). Following RCAP, the TRC was established to “contribute to truth, healing and reconciliation” (“Schedule ‘N’”, 1) between Native and non-Native groups in Canada. The TRC mandate “is to inform all Canadians about what happened in Indian Residential Schools (IRS). The Commission will document the truth of survivors, families, communities and anyone personally affected by the IRS experience” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, website). Two national reconciliation events have taken place in Canada (Winnipeg [2010], Inuvik [2011]), as well as a number of smaller regional events. Although they have not all been scheduled, the government promises another five events to come.

On June 11, 2008, following the IRSSA, Prime Minister Stephen Harper offered an official apology to the survivors of Residential Schools from the House of Commons. Hundreds of former students gathered in the Commons gallery to witness the apology and thousands more watched on television and joined gatherings at Parliament Hill and other locations across the country. Harper’s words marked the first time that a Prime Minister offered a formal apology for the physical and psychological abuse that took place in Residential Schools. Most importantly, Harper also acknowledged the ongoing, generational impact of Residential Schools: “[t]he government now recognizes that the

- to provide a safe and culturally appropriate space for storytelling
- to "witness, support, promote and facilitate truth and reconciliation events at both the national and community levels"
- to support commemoration
- to identity sources and create a historical record
- to produce a report with recommendations

6 “Schedule ‘N’” was written in direct response to a class action law suit filed on August 20, 2007 by the Honourable Frank Iacobucci, National Chief Phil Fontaine and legal representatives of both former Indian Residential School students and the Churches involved in running those schools.
consequences of the Indian Residential Schools policy were profoundly negative and that this policy has had a lasting and damaging impact on Aboriginal culture, heritage and language” (“Full Apology,” web). The TRC and the official apology ushered Canada into what Roy L. Brooks calls “the age of apology” (3), a political epoch in which state leaders acknowledge historical injustice in a public forum.

Both the TRC and Harper’s apology extend out of a short history of Canadian conflict resolution politics. On September 22, 1988, Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and the National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC) president Arthur Miki sat down to sign the Redress Agreement, one of the world’s largest and most comprehensive restitution accords. Under the Agreement, survivors of Japanese Canadian Internment Camps were allotted $21,000 each in individual reparation, along with $12 million for the Japanese Canadian community and another $12 million for the creation of a Race Relations Foundation. The agreement also cleared the names of any Japanese Canadians convicted of violations under the War Measures Act and returned Canadian citizenship to any Japanese Canadian who had had it revoked between 1941-1949. Over twenty years after the fact, Japanese Canadian Redress, along with the Japanese American Agreement that preceded it, is largely considered to be one of restitution's greatest victories, not just in financial terms, but “in Japanese Canadians’ renewed faith in the country they have worked so hard to be a part of” (Greenaway, web). According to Miki, “The NAJC had ... established a major human rights precedent in Canada as the first group of citizens to negotiate a substantial redress settlement for past injustices” (Redress, 8). Japanese Canadian redress marks an important beginning in Canada's discourse of reconciliation and it is a major point of reference in this work. This is not to say that reconciliation and redress are essentially the same concept, or that one can move effortlessly between the two words. Indeed, as I illustrate in chapter four, “redress” in Canada has its own very specific history. Further, the colonial politics that are necessarily at the centre of any conversation on reconciliation in Canada are not easily compatible with migrant politics. However, my goal here is not to outline rigid definitions of the “R” words and phrases that take shape out of Nuremburg and Human Rights law (“reconciliation,” “redress,” “reparation,” “restitution,” restorative justice”). Again borrowing from Williams, I argue that it is more instructive to illustrate the historical contexts and genealogies of these words and the ways in which they generate the
“structures of feeling” that constitutes our present moment in the new international morality. In this sense, reconciliation and redress are keywords used to understand society. Rather than focusing on the fixity of these words I illustrate the ways in which they take on new meanings, and how these changes reflect the political bent and values of society in “particular formulations of meaning” (Keywords, 15)

Following the 1988 redress agreement, Canada saw four apologies from churches for Indian Residential Schools in the 1990s (including two from the United Church) and the first from the Canadian government (Jane Stewart’s “Statement of Reconciliation,” also offered to survivors of Residential Schools). In this period Canadian officials were also essential in establishing the International Criminal Court (ICC), chairing a coalition of States called “The Like-Minded Group” that helped to motivate the wider international community to adopt the Rome Statute.7 Canada was also instrumental in contributing to a United Nations Trust Fund that enabled lesser developed countries to participate in ICC negotiations. Indeed, in its contributions to the ICC and the development of international criminal law, Canada helped to implement a retributive model of justice in which political criminals are brought to trial for their actions. On June 29, 2000, Canada enacted Bill C-19, the Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Act (CAHWCA), and became the first country in the world to adopt comprehensive legislation based on the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The CAHWCA criminalizes genocide, crimes against humanity, and a variety of war crimes. While the Canadian state does not recognize the historical injustice perpetrated in its own name as “crimes against humanity,”8 the CAHWAC was yet another step towards the “string of apologies” (Akkad; Globe and Mail. May 14, 2008) that officials offered to Chinese Canadians (for the head tax), Indo-Canadians (for the Komagata Maru incident) and Aboriginal peoples (for Residential Schools).

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7 Building on the precedent set at the Nuremberg trials, the Rome Statute established a permanent international tribunal to prosecute individuals accused of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and crimes of aggression.

While much of the scholarship I engage with in this dissertation comes from law and the health/social sciences, I arrive at the topic of reconciliation as a student of literature. I use a methodology that is transnationally comparative in order to locate Canada within the Truth Commission genealogy. The movement between disciplines and geographies has the potential to generate analytic havoc. However, borrowing from Robert Skloot, I argue that literature and the arts “map out a landscape of inquiry” (6) for issues of apology, forgiveness and justice that helps to extend the limits of our understanding of these topics. The texts I examine here do not provide answers to reconciliation; rather they provide a topography for investigation into the complexities of the issues in ways that quantitative and qualitative analysis cannot always realize. As opposed to sociological, medical and legal approaches to reconciliation, I argue that literature and the arts invite, if not insist upon, analytic disorientation; novels, poems and plays allow the analyst to think through dilemmas of reconciliation on new levels, to test new ideas and reflect on philosophical impasses without the same constraints of time, space and ethics of field research. This is not to say that literary analysis does not have its own ethical constraints. However, I do argue that literature provides more space in which limitations can be tested.

As mentioned above, Tavuchis’ progression towards reconciliation--the call, apology, forgiveness and reconciliation--serves as the guiding structure for this dissertation. Still, I have had to make a few minor adjustments in order to contend with some of epistemological difficulties I encountered while unpacking my argument: first and foremost, after all of my research I am not very comfortable with leaving “reconciliation” as an endpoint or goal in my own work, even if I am doing so in form only. Assigning “Reconciliation” as the concluding chapter would tacitly confirm the goal-oriented teleology I argue against here. I am not attempting to provide any definition for “reconciliation” in this dissertation, but rather demonstrate how the term is put to work strategically. As such, I have not included a “reconciliation” chapter, per se, in this work.

Further, in order to clarify the discourse and time period I am working with, I have added a chapter preceding my work on “the call.” Chapter one, “The Theatre of Regret: Performance and Materialism in the TRC Legacy,” establishes my research in the period following World War II and the Nuremberg trials. As opposed to idealist approaches, which subscribe to the notion that reconciliation exists outside of history and ideology, a
material approach grounds reconciliation historically. Following Jacques Derrida, I argue that Nuremberg established a “theatrical space” (Derrida, *Cosmopolitanism*, 29) in which subsequent Truth Commissions, Tribunals and TRCs would have to be enacted. Nuremberg structures a grand scene of forgiveness in which political actors, such as Amin, Patricio Aylwin and Nelson Mandela, along with the leaders of colonial states, such as John Howard and Stephen Harper, are obliged to repent for historical injustice in a public forum. I trace the connections between Nuremberg and reconciliation movements in Uganda, Chile, Yugoslavia, Australia and Canada to demonstrate how reconciliation, as Canadians now know it, is a historical construct and not an ahistorical ideal that comes without ideological baggage.\(^9\)

In chapter one I suggest that the echoing of Nuremberg, heard in modern commissions and tribunals, is required because the very notion of “crimes against humanity” is neither historical nor legislative, but *performative*. To put it differently, with reference to Derrida, J.L. Austin and Judith Butler, I argue that rather than representing a Truth, the phrase “crimes against humanity” actually generates a state of affairs in its utterance. Arguably, “crimes against humanity” does not simply report on an unjust action (for instance, genocide, cultural repression, or violence). The utterance, and its repetition (which has grown exponentially since the Nuremburg trials), also generates a new code of moral conduct. As Judith Butler puts it, “a felicitous performative is one in which I not only perform the act, but some set of effects follows from the fact that I perform it” (17). In other words, the felicitous performance creates a new way of responding and interacting with the world. In this case, “crimes against humanity” takes on a special importance, insofar as “the force of the utterance” (Austin 33) actually *generates* the effects that make the terms of reconciliation iterable as such. What is

\(^9\) For the sake of space I have had to leave a number of important historical examples out of this analysis. Other communities/countries that could be involved in this conversation include, Northern Ireland, Brazil, Ghana, Guatemala, Fiji, Liberia, Morocco, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, South Korea, Sri Lanka and East Timor, Liberia and Sierra Leone among others. Reconciliation has also found some traction in the United States. See the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission: [http://www.greensborotrc.org/](http://www.greensborotrc.org/)
conceived as the moral “truth” of reconciliation is thus actually a means of ordering our understanding of political violence and maintaining an order of Law. In this sense, reconciliation is not so much a reaction to society’s need to achieve wholeness and harmony as it is a means to create the conditions in which this need becomes tenable. Conceived as a performative, reconciliation is not necessarily any less effective as a method to achieve conflict resolution. However, shifting emphasis from the actor to the action more readily illustrates the ways in which reconciliation can be instigated by political parties and activist groups in the times and places that best serve their interests.

Moving back to Tavuchis’ progression, chapter two is entitled “‘Listen to the bones’: Hearing the Call for Reconciliation.” This chapter focuses primarily on the work of Cree poet and activist Louise Bernice Halfe as a means to explore Tavuchis’ notion of “the call.” For Tavuchis, the call initiates the progression towards reconciliation. It identifies pain and draws attention towards the wrong. In this chapter, however, I suggest that Tavuchis does not give due attention to impediments to voice and the ways in which the call may be stifled. In her long poem Blue Marrow, Halfe explores the difficulty of making colonial violence against Aboriginal people heard. The silence enforced on Canada’s Aboriginal people is built right into the middle of her text. On what would be page sixty-six there is nothing but a blank sheet, an instant in which what the poet ironically calls the “whiteout” (15) momentarily overtakes the narrative. Indeed, while Blue Marrow is itself an attempt to establish the trauma of colonization for Aboriginal people in the Canadian symbolic, it acknowledges the strain and difficulty in doing so. The Grandmothers, to whom the narrator constantly appeals throughout the poem, compare it to threading a needle:

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eye y ey nosisim
here is this needle
thread its eye
of these acimowinisa --
stories so small
pull them out
squeeze them through (59)
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Ultimately, for Halfe, what can and cannot be heard is a matter of power and the ability to discredit voice. Blue Marrow’s Old Pelt Man, a white fur trader, perhaps sums it up best in his effort to silence Wandering Stone Grandmother, a Cree woman attempting to
tell the story of her abuse at the hands of white settlers: “Her, don’t believe a word she says. / She’s just a toothless squaw / who laid with me after her father died” (44). Here, Wandering Stone Grandfather illustrates the ways in which testimony is discredited by non sequitur appeals to sexuality and gender. In this sense, testimony can be both given and taken away in the same instant.

Still, it appears that in this “age of apology” more and more victim testimony is being heard. While I acknowledge that there are still voices that go unheeded, the concerns about voice and power that Halfe raises force us to ask why are we now caught up in this age of apology? Why is it that suddenly all of these voices are being “heard”? As mentioned above, in Canada alone, under the current Conservative government, official apologies have been offered to Chinese Canadians, survivors of the Komagata Maru incident, and survivors of Residential Schools. However, because of the lack of structural change (as I argue in chapter one) this “hearing” ends up functioning as yet another way to maintain silence. By playing with the language and conventions of Catholicism, Halfe helps to illustrate the ways in which voices and narratives are absorbed into the colonial system. Here, testimony is automatically conflated with “confession” (21). Eternal Grandmother thus finds herself in the ridiculous position of asking for forgiveness for her own murder (20): “Forgive me father. I ask for absolution. / I promise to say my rosary and serve my time. / I promise to keep my hands to myself, / swallow my tongue. Amen.” (37). Forgiveness, in the Christian paradigm, precludes testimony; rather it invites repression and a swallowing of the tongue in order to maintain social harmony.

Chapter three, which takes up the issue of apology, is titled “To Acknowledge, But Not to Accept: Critical Reflections on Canadian State Apologies.” Using Coyote’s “sincere” apology in Thomas King’s Green Grass, Running Water as a starting point, this chapter questions the validity of what Brooks calls “the age of apology,” with particular emphasis on the “string of apologies” (Akkad, web) that have occurred in Canada in the last two decades. Using King’s depiction of apology in Green Grass, I argue that the limited amount of space between official Canadian “sorries” did not provide adequate time for the reflection and debate needed to initiate a genuinely transformative politics of reconciliation. While many people spoke out against the validity of these apologies, no group stepped forward to “acknowledge but not accept” them. Indeed, in this period of
time, as Roland Chrisjohn and Tanya Wasacase point out, “so many people ... embraced the government’s own characterization of their words (‘truth,’ ‘reconciliation,’ ‘apology,’ and so on) and deeds (‘mistakes,’ ‘forging new partnerships,’ et cetera) at face value” (219). By the time Harper reached his 2008 apology, the space for debate and analysis was entirely cut off, insofar as this statement of regret is entitled a “Full Apology” by the government: a sorry that covers all ground, that leaves no wound unhealed, and thus needs no further thought, conversation or deliberation.

Using J.L. Austin’s How to do Things with Words, I illustrate how “apology” has been manipulated by the Canadian government in order to secure financial sovereignty and maintain the Canadian fiction of benign colonialism. To borrow from Carl D. Schneider, “Apology is repair work” (268). However, if these repairs are instituted in order to disavow or forget an earlier trauma, researchers and activists need to be willing to challenge their validity and look towards the strategic intentions of the repairer. By reading Harper’s remarks at the G20 (in which he stated that Canada has “no history of colonialism”), the audience of the apology is forced to acknowledge the way “sorry” is being deployed strategically at the political level in Canada.

Chapter four, “‘Redress as a Gift’: Historical Reparations and the Logic of the Gift” is another deviation from Tavuchis’ original script. Indeed, Tavuchis does not include redress as a significant stage in his progression. Homelessness, starvation, and sickness are realities of historical (or ongoing, colonial) violence, and they need financial restitution to begin healing. Unlike Tavuchis, I am not of the opinion that apology “itself serves a reparation without requiring additional actions on the part of the transgressor” (16). This type of analysis elides the necessity of financial compensation, which is often the mediating step between apology and forgiveness. As such, I have added reparations to my adaptation of his original progression.

Arguably, if there is sincerity in apology, it is in redress for wrongs done. I am unsympathetic to arguments that suggest that money isn’t the answer, and that no amount could ever compensate for the trauma a victim has gone through. Rather, I defer to Brooks on this point: “true, a price cannot and should not be placed on suffering ... But when rights are ripped away, the victim or his family is entitled to compensation and much more” (6).
As a means of theoretical entry into the problem of reparation I use Roy Miki’s suggestion in *Redress: Inside the Japanese Canadian Call for Justice* that we consider “redress as a gift” (322). According to Lee Anne Fennell, “a true gift embodies and perpetuates empathetic dialogue between giver and recipient, facilitating and documenting each party’s imaginative participation in the life of the other” (93). In other words, in order to give a proper gift I must consider not only who you are, but who I am in my relationship with you; I must understand the context of our relationship and the history and culture you come out of; I must be willing to imagine myself in your place and, consequently, work through what would be the most appropriate gift, in a given context, for you. However, at the same time, as Marcel Mauss demonstrates in his seminal text on gift theory, “the form usually taken is that of the gift generously offered; but the accompanying behaviour is formal pretence and social deception, while the transaction itself is based on obligation and economic self-interest” (1). Gifts both facilitate interpersonal relationships and generate a culture of obligation. Theorists such as Fennell and Mauss, along with Derrida and Rauna Kuokkanen, provide deeper insight into the subtleties of the gift and gift giving, which allow me to conceptualize redress outside of the notion of “compensation.” The logic of the gift allows me the theoretical space to unpack Miki’s shibboleth and reflect on redress neither as good or bad, but rather as something which can be mobilized by both the perpetrator and the victim towards specific ends.

I close chapter four with a reading of Nalo Hopkinson’s *Brown Girl in the Ring*, an award-winning dystopic fiction novel that structures its narrative around a redress agreement. One of the ideas that Hopkinson explores is the hysteria surrounding the idea of redress. The dystopia in which the majority of the action in *Brown Girl* takes place is represented (by the newspapers in the novel) as an effect of a land claims agreement with the Temagami First Nations. The focus of the novel is on the fallout from that collapse brought on by riots and police crackdowns, and it offers an important and trenchant social critique of the police state that quickly is established in a supposedly “tolerant” city like Toronto. In the last section of this chapter, I tease out the implications of Hopkinson’s representation of redress and the cause and effect relationship the novelist uses as a foundation for her text. Since settler society is based on privileges accrued through the denial of Aboriginal rights, when these rights are
acknowledged the very structure of the state comes under threat. As such, redress can be perceived as a threat to national stability and employed as the justification for the extension of state violence.

Finally, chapter five of my dissertation, “Suffering Mercy: Confronting the Risk of Forgiveness and Empathy,” takes on the issue of forgiveness via Joy Kogawa’s third novel, *The Rain Ascends* and its protagonist, Millicent. In a materialist perspective one must be ready to admit that those who forgive or are forgiven may still inflict pain and suffering. In this chapter I illustrate that forgiveness may facilitate pain and violence. Particularly in South Africa, the demand to forgive is so powerful that it has almost eliminated choice. The title of Tutu’s book on the South African TRC process provides evidence to support this claim: *No Future Without Forgiveness* (1999). It as if the Archbishop is insisting that the victim *must* forgive, and that one *must* exonerate one’s perpetrators despite the horrors of their crimes. If s/he does not, there is simply no future (a rather bleak calculation to say the least). Arguably, this position is contrary to the very idea of what forgiveness, particularly as a step *towards* reconciliation, is. As Minow puts it, “Forgiveness is a power held by the victimized” (17), and that power consists solely of the ability to *withhold* forgiveness. By holding the power to forgive, I am granted some measure of control, but it is only in the *choice* to forgive that this control is present.

Following from *Rain*, which deals with forgiveness in the context of child abuse and the Church, I argue in this chapter that the demand to forgive over-emphasizes the sublime qualities of mercy and thus elides the physical pain and suffering of the community of victims that are compelled to forgive. Or, to put it in the terms I am working with in this dissertation, the demand to forgive ignores the contradictions that arise when an individual (either on his/her own accord or in response to someone like Tutu) attempts to empathize with an “enemy.” In order to make forgiveness a realistic step on the road to reconciliation, one needs to be willing to confront the suffering implicit in the “divine” act of forgiveness and the further violence it can inflict on the victims of historical injustice.

The purpose of this final chapter is neither to define forgiveness nor to offer a program of forgiving that might be employed by victimized communities. Indeed, built into my argument is the insistence that such a position is in fact counter to the very
project of forgiveness itself. In opposition to the Abrahamic tradition, championed by reconciliation leaders such as Desmond Tutu and (at least initially) the protagonist of *Rain*, I argue that one cannot be taught, persuaded or compelled to forgive. The emotional knot of forgiveness is what is at stake here. While one may *want* to forgive or even *choose* to do so, this does not mean that one can simultaneously overcome the intense emotional and physical responses evoked by trauma. What is at stake in *Rain* is the conception of “wholeness” and whether an individual can maintain epistemological coherence while reconciling with an other that is beyond redemption.

The most basic guiding principle I have followed throughout this work is that while the call, apology, redress and forgiveness are steps on the road to reconciliation, reconciliation itself is not a teleology. While these individual moments allow us to move toward reconciliation, the “climax” should not be seen as a strict endpoint. As Edna McDonagh points out, the English use of “reconciliation” is taken from the Greek *katallassein* (or *diallassēn*), which derives from the word “other” (*allos*). As such, reconciliation “is related to overcoming hostile otherness or estrangement” (565), the emphasis being on the act of relating to the other, of finding a space in which the distance between self and other can be mediated. The Sudanese word for reconciliation perhaps illustrates this act best. Here, reconciliation is an image: “sitting to talk with your enemy under a tree” (*qtd.* in Shriver 4). In sum, reconciliation is a condition of the circumstances at hand, an intervention based in an ongoing conversation that both the victim and the perpetrator engage in indefinitely. Both the Greek and the Sudanese definitions rely on the present participle. Reconciliation is occurring and continuing in the present moment with the intent of furthering the discussion and expanding the ideas that make it important. This dissertation is a contribution to that discussion. It is intended to elaborate on the complexity of reconciliation and to illustrate more concisely exactly how important this conversation is to a larger discourse of modern politics and intra-national relations.

As Mohammed Abu-Nimer puts it, “studying and mapping” reconciliation is “more effective for peacebuilders than attempting to generate a standard process of forgiveness or reconciliation” (344). As such, this dissertation will trace Canada’s position in a historical/theoretical matrix of reconciliation via a materialist methodology that maintains a focus on the problems and contradictions implicit to these events. In
what follows, I hope to open up more discussion about the issues that reconciliation raises rather than about the ways in which one can achieve harmony and wholeness. The “map” of reconciliation I lay out here, which moves across the provinces of the call, apology, redress and forgiveness, presents a new way for theorists, policy-makers and activists to enter into the conversation.
2. Chapter One: The Theatre of Regret: Establishing the Politics of Reconciliation after World War II

An immense wave of anti-colonial and anti-imperial activity, thought, and revision has overtaken the massive edifice of Western empire, challenging it, to use Gramsci’s vivid metaphor, in a mutual siege. For the first time Westerners have been required to confront themselves not simply as the Raj but as representatives of a culture and even a race of accused crimes—crimes of violence, crimes of suppression, crimes of conscience. -Edward Said (95)

With good reason, many Truth and Reconciliation Commissions have been treated with scepticism and suspicion by critics and activists. In settler states such as Canada, in which “postcolonialism” is more conceptual than practiced, reconciliation can seem especially suspicious. As Roland Chrisjohn and Sherri Young argue, the program of reconciliation that Canada has initiated “must be seen as another rhetorical manoeuvre designed to obscure ... the moral and financial accountability of Euro-Canadian society in a continuing record of crimes against humanity” (3). For these critics, the function of reconciliation is to “talk us [Aboriginal People] out of our justifiable anger; to put some time between the ‘wounding’ and the present; to trick us into accepting our psychic murder as restitution” (64).

As a researcher, I agree that those studying and participating in reconciliation must be ever-vigilant and cautious of government intentions. However, it is too short-sighted to insist that every TRC is entirely directed at promoting state interests. Governments are not one-dimensional villains interested only in maintaining power and increasing wealth, just as those who are being redressed are not one-dimensional victims mired in suffering and poverty. While I argue that researchers need to be sceptical of political reconciliation, at the same time one must be willing to accept that many political actors actually are committed to healing and the more compassionate elements of reconciliation. In fact, compassion may be the primary goal of a government TRC. Even if there are ulterior motives, it is exceptionally unlikely that any government official would say otherwise. A more nuanced critique illustrates the ways in which compassion itself results in harm; the ways in which reconciliation can be understood as
what Louise Bernice Halfe calls a “med-sin” (Blue, 30). Regardless of the intention of a governmental policy direction, individuals and groups can seize the term in question and use it for their own political ends. Indeed, another (very clichéd) way of putting this is that “the master’s tools can take down the master’s house.”

The deeper issue that arises out of reconciliation is often that the program of healing has the potential to inflict its own injury. Indeed, as Kevin Loring illustrates in his play Where the Blood Mixes, Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission can reawaken pain and suffering that some Residential School survivors would rather leave buried. In this sense, “reconciliation” is an agent of harm that doubles as a remedy. Blood tells the story of Mooch and Floyd, victims of Canada’s Residential School system, who are now middle-aged men living in a small town and spending most of their time in the local pub. The plot of Blood is derived out of the announcement that the Canadian government will be providing compensation for any survivors that can prove that they attended one of the facilities. As the bartender of the pub informs Mooch and Floyd, “[p]eople are getting compensated. I guess the government and the church are finally going to compensate people for what happened at those Residential Schools” (emphasis in the original, 24).

While financial redress means that Mooch and Floyd will be able to make minor improvements to their lives, as Floyd is quick to point out, the compensation offered is distributed in a pay-for-pain system in which survivors must manifest their pain for public consumption: “it depends on how bad it was, eh. Most people are getting about fifteen grand. If it was real bad, you get lots more” (24). In this system, what Canadian restitution rewards, and thus ultimately provokes, is victim testimony that manifests suffering on the deepest level possible. Ultimately, the effects these memories have are of the same (if not greater) consequence than the compensation itself. As Mooch puts it, compensation is great, “But you gotta talk about it, though. That’s the thing, eh? You

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10 Blood was first produced in 2008 for Luminato, Toronto’s Festival of Arts and Creativity, the same day that the Conservative government officially apologized to Aboriginal communities in the House of Commons.
gotta talk about what happened” (26). Indeed, the demand that one produce grief and pain in order to receive redress contributes to a folding of experience in which the time of the event itself is omnipresent. From Mooch’s perspective, within the Canadian reconciliation system it is difficult to contain the abuse suffered in Residential Schools in the past: “it happened yesterday, it happened today, it'll happen tomorrow. Every day is every day” (58). In this sense, compensation for survivors and Canadian risks inflicting further suffering on the victims because the politics of redress, which take on the form of dispensing compensation here, do not take into account their bifurcated agency.

My aim in this chapter is not to reiterate the difficulties that Loring points out in his work, but rather to illustrate the complexity of the politics of reconciliation and the links these politics have (or, more to the point, do not have) to materialism. By invoking a materialist approach to reconciliation, I argue that in its movement from Nuremberg, to Yugoslavia, South Africa, Australia and eventually Canada, reconciliation risks becoming a performance for performance’s sake, insofar as the basis of reconciliation (i.e. political transition) is ignored. Initiated by the Nuremberg trials, a new era of conflict resolution has begun in which politicians must put their regret for historical injustice on display at the expense of devising and implementing programs and policies that address and redress past injustices. The result of the theatre of regret is a “sorry” which acknowledges historical injustice, but also threatens to dilute the impact of apology and reconciliation by over-emphasizing the performance of regret as opposed concrete structural change.

The fact that Canada is the inaugural “First World” country to hold a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as well as the first liberal-democracy to host this particular form of conflict resolution, makes it an important point of study for those interested in reconciliation, peace-building and transitional justice. How Canada builds on the legacy of past tribunals, Truth Commissions and TRCs, including Human Rights movements in Yugoslavia, Chile, South Africa and Australia, and adapts this history for its own purposes, will play a large role in shaping the future of reconciliation and its political implications. In what follows, I will map out how the most prominent and influential examples of political conflict resolution intersect with and diverge from one another, beginning with the Nuremberg trials and moving towards reconciliation movements in Yugoslavia, Australia, South Africa and Chile. To examine these seminal instances of
conflict resolution I use reference to the tribunals, Truth Commissions and TRCs held in these countries, reading them alongside Where the Blood Mixes and Frances Reid’s documentary film Long Night’s Journey Into Day. I then illustrate where Canada fits into the history of reconciliation and the contemporary international model. Ultimately, I demonstrate Canada’s unique position in this genealogy and the ways in which “reconciliation” is conceived in post-Nuremberg states. From an historical perspective I argue that Canadian reconciliation represents a culmination of redress politics which privileges political performances over the materiality of lived conditions, such as the psychological damage caused by compensation. This is not to suggest that politics cannot have very real material effects in an environment. Indeed, what I hope to make clear in this chapter is that the Nuremberg trials initiated a “theatre of regret” in which politicians must stage national remorse for historical injustices and that this theatre draws attention away from the pain and contractions that are implicit to apology, forgiveness, redress and reconciliation.

2.1. The Nuremberg Legacy

Reconciliation as it is known today developed out of the Nuremberg trials. These hearings, in which former Nazi leaders were indicted and tried as war criminals, took place between 1945-46 and were prosecuted by the International Military Tribunal (IMT)-a body composed of two judges from each of the Allied powers. The authority of the IMT stemmed from the London Agreement of 1945, which gave the tribunal the authority to declare any individual, group or organization criminal under the following charges:

1.) Conspiracy to wage an aggressive war
2.) Waging aggressive war
3.) War crimes
4.) Crimes against humanity

On October 1, 1946, following 216 court sessions, twenty-two verdicts were handed down. These verdicts sentenced twelve of the defendants to death by hanging and the remainder to various terms of imprisonment. The trials came to an end in the spring of 1949 and were lauded by supporters as “one of the most significant tributes that Power has ever paid to reason” (Justice Robert Jackson qtd. in Ehrenfreund 13). In order to
pass its verdicts, the tribunal overruled almost all of the key arguments offered by the
defense, including the contention that only a state, and not individuals, could be found
guilty of war crimes, and that the trial and adjudication were *ex post facto* (retroactively
effective or forceful). However, inasmuch as they devised a precedent for charging
Human Rights violations, the Allies also initiated a structure of morality in Nuremberg
that would need to be continually reinstated in order to remain viable. Human Rights
Law, in this argument, is based on *repetition of precedent*, as opposed to a universal
Truth.

The Nuremberg decision had major implications on the way the world perceives
and administers punishment for “war crimes” and on how governments would/could treat
Human Rights violations thereafter. As Desmond Tutu discusses throughout his work,
“the Nuremberg paradigm” (8) is a central, albeit contested, model for all following
commissions. Nuremburg provides the legal foundation for Human Rights and a model
for publically addressing historical injustice which set the stage for reconciliation politics.
Indeed, Norbert Ehrenfreund connects Nuremberg to the Human Rights legacy in his
analysis of the trials:

Just weeks after the sentences were carried out following the first
Nuremberg trial, the United Nations General Assembly endorsed the
Nuremberg principles on December 14, 1946. This was followed in 1948
by the American Declaration of Rights and Duties of Man. Six months
later, the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human
Rights, which is often called the bill of Rights for the World, a fitting
description. These were all products of the Nuremberg precedent, all
declarations by the international community that Nuremberg law was
alive. (123)

As Ehrenfreund indicates here, out of Nuremberg the international community is first
given the legal structure to address Human Rights abuses and the politics to begin a
process of redress for their abuse. However, at the same time, Nuremberg initiates the
political pressure to conform to the Human Rights discourse it “discovers.” Nearly all of
the major institutions and bills, such as the International Court of Justice, International
Bill of Human Rights and the International Criminal Court, which now provide the
infrastructure for dealing with historical injustice, arose out of Nuremberg.
Furthermore, these trials introduced the language of Human Rights on which the entire edifice of modern conflict resolution and reconciliation itself is now based. Article six of the London Charter of the International Military Tribunal (IMT) defines “Crimes Against Humanity” as,

namely, murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, and other inhumane acts committed against any civil population, before or during the war, or persecutions on political, racial or religious grounds in execution of or in connection with any crime within the jurisdiction of the Tribunal, whether or not in violation of the domestic law of the country where perpetrated. (Ehrenfreund 121)

London Charter sanctions have now been adopted into the constitutions of most countries and, as of 2002, these sanctions are enforced by the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Truth Commissions and TRCs are founded on the definitions provided by the IMT. Canada’s own TRC was developed out of Nuremberg mandates to prohibit racial/religious persecution, one of the central issues concerning Residential Schools. Obviously, it is the act of creating precedent, and thus laying the ground on which future

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11 There was large debate over the use of a semicolon in the wording of Article 6(C), the Nuremberg Charter’s definition of crimes against humanity, which draws attention to the importance of language in these movements:

Crimes Against Humanity: namely, murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, and other inhumane acts committed against any civilian population, before or during the war[,][,] or persecutions on political, racial or religious grounds, in execution of or in connection with any crime within the jurisdiction of the Tribunal, whether or not in violation of the domestic law of the country where perpetrated. (8)

In the English and the French texts, there was a semicolon between the phrase “the war” and the phrase “or persecutions.” Russia had a comma in the corresponding place. The Soviet Union insisted that all texts be replaced with a comma: “As a consequence of this seemingly minor grammatical change, the phrase ‘in execution of or in connection with any crime within the jurisdiction of the Tribunal’ became a limitation on all crimes against humanity, not just persecutions as originally written. This substantially limited the jurisdiction of the Nuremberg Tribunal with respect to crimes against humanity committed before the German invasion of Poland in 1939 (which the Tribunal determined to be the start of the war). While the public perception is that the Nuremberg trial provided a comprehensive account of the Holocaust, in fact that was the one thing the Nuremberg trial was legally precluded from doing” (Scharf 9).
actors could work toward reconciliation, that makes Nuremberg such an important part of conflict resolution and Canada’s own TRC, which aims to identify the “systemic harms, intergenerational consequences and the impact on human dignity” (*Mandate*, section 1, line f).

Still, despite the massive support to prosecute the Nazis, the Allies were not *applying* a Law or enforcing legal consequences for war crimes; rather they were staging a new production of law. Indeed, regardless of the chief prosecutor’s appeal to the Kellogg-Brand Pact\(^\text{12}\) as a foundation for the tribunal’s charges, in 1947 “Crimes Against Humanity” could not be anchored to any legal or historical reading of international politics. It was therefore only a “crime” insofar as the Allies named it as such. As U.S. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas put it,

No matter how many books are written or briefs filled, no matter how finely the lawyers analyzed it, the crime for which the Nazis were tried had never been formalized as a crime with the definiteness required by our legal standards, nor outlawed with a death penalty by the international community. By our standards that crime arose under *ex post facto* law. Goering *et al.* deserved severe punishment. But their guilt did not justify us in substituting power for principles. (qtd. in Ehrenfreund 54)

As the Supreme Justice helps to point out here, the disavowal implicit in the Nuremberg trials is that “Crimes against Humanity” are founded on what Jacques Derrida calls “the simulacra of legalization” (“Force of Law,” 295). That is to say, despite the consensus that the Nazis on trial deserved punishment, there was no legal way to justify that punishment. In fact, on a purely technical level, punishing the Nazis via the law was, in a strictly juridical sense, more criminal than the crime itself. International law clearly states that, “if a person commits an act at a time when there is no law against it, the person should not be held liable” (Ehrenfreund 52). Thus, the Nazis were guilty only via some

\(^{12}\) Also known as the General Treaty for the Renunciation of War or the World Peace Act, the Kellogg-Brand Pact was signed on August 27, 1928 by the United States, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Japan, Weimar Germany and a number of other countries. The pact renounced aggressive war and prohibited the use of war as an instrument of national policy except in matters of self-defense.
form of anachronism in which they set a precedent for a law that they retroactively transgressed.

As such, the Nuremberg trials were not dependent on the accurate and rigorous application of established regulation. Rather, the tribunal was reliant on what Catherine M. Cole calls the "spectacle of legality" (169). To put it differently, with the world watching, Chief Justice Robert Jackson, head prosecutor for the Allies, had to suspend his audience’s disbelief in the validity of *nullem crimen sine lege*\(^\text{13}\) by demonstrating that the defendants were *a priori* guilty of a moral crime. This was achieved via an elaborate legal event in which Allies and Nazis were drawn out as distinct representations of good and evil, respectively. Indeed, as Hannah Arendt notes, these trials were constructed so as to directly challenge the liberal position which maintains that we can “discover […] an ‘Eichmann in every one of us’” (113). Depicted as an other (or even a banal other), the defendants were thus capable of inhuman acts that had, until this point, been unaccounted for in either natural or positive law. As such, it was necessary to draw new boundaries to account for their actions, even if this meant breaking the law to do so.

As Derrida argues, it is only through this use of theatrics in Nuremberg that today’s parlance on Human Rights has come to have any direct impact in the international judicial forum. According to him, Nuremberg founded and sanctioned the discourse of morality that political actors continue to appeal to today:

> Even if words like ‘crime against humanity’ now circulate in everyday language [sic]. That event [the Nuremberg trials] itself was *produced* and authorized by an international community on a date and according to a figure determined by history. This overlaps but is not confounded with the history of a reaffirmation of rights, or a new Declaration of Human Rights. This sort of transformation structured the theatrical space in which the grand forgiveness, the grand scene of repentance which we are concerned with, is played, sincerely or not. (*Cosmopolitanism*, 29)

\(^{13}\) No crime, no punishment without a previous penal law.
Derrida provides us with the tools to think more concisely about how and why Nuremberg marked the beginning of a new moral epoch, in which state politicians (such as Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper) are compelled to perform certain principles of “human dignity.” For Derrida, Nuremberg structures a grand scene of forgiveness in which political actors are obliged to repent for historical injustice in a public forum. As such, Nuremberg sets the stage, so to speak, for the cascade of tribunals, Truth Commissions and TRCs that the world has witnessed in the modern era and generates the discursive space in which “reconciliation” is grounded.

While Nuremberg provides the foundation for modern forms of conflict resolution, Derrida’s logic is much more complex than simple cause and effect. For him, the echoing of Nuremberg, heard in modern tribunals, truth commissions and TRCs, is required because the phrase “crimes against humanity” is neither historical nor legislative, but rather *performative*, in that it creates a state of affairs in its utterance. Ultimately, what Derrida is suggesting is that “crimes against humanity” is not a Truth with universal meaning—even though it now circulates widely as if its meaning were self-evident. As Derrida puts it, “with the Nuremberg Tribunal, the international institution of a juridical concept such as the ‘crime against humanity’ [became] a ‘performative’ event of a scope still difficult to interpret” (Cosmopolitanism, 29). Indeed, the performative implicit to Nuremberg is so difficult to read because of the breadth of its implications in politics, interstate relations and basic moral interaction between individuals. Who has to be sorry and for what remains a question obscured by the omnipresent demand to integrate apology into the very structure of state politics.

In his evocation of “performative” in reference to Nuremberg, Derrida is borrowing from the linguist J.L. Austin, who defines this particular type of speech act as “the uttering of the sentence [in this case ‘crimes against humanity’] … which again would not normally be described as, as ‘just’, saying something” (Austin 5). “‘Just’ saying something,” in Austin’s conception is merely reporting on a phenomenon as the subject encounters it in the world. The performative, however, actually *causes* phenomena in its utterance. What makes the performative so evocative for a study of Nuremberg and reconciliation is that the utterance “crimes against humanity” does not name or describe something; rather, insofar as it is “felicitous,” or successful, it brings something into being and creates and orders the behaviour that follows. Indeed, for Austin, “the whole point of
having such a procedure is precisely to make subsequent conduct in order and other
conduct out of order” (Austin 44). Indeed, the judicial sentence is, in some respects, the
sine non quon of performative utterance for Austin.

Nuremberg is thus a “felicitous” performative insofar as it establishes the modern
convention of Human Rights law. As Judith Butler puts it, “a felicitous performative is one
in which I not only perform the act, but some set of effects follows from the fact that I
perform it” (17). In other words, the felicitous performance creates a new way of
responding and interacting with the world. In this case, “crimes against humanity” takes
on a special importance, insofar as “the force of the utterance” (Austin 33) actually
creates the effects that make the terms of reconciliation iterable as such.

However, as with any performative, Nuremberg is effective only insofar as it
continues to generate a new code of moral conduct out of its inception. It is only in its
reiteration that the necessity of the Allies’ “laws” are established and the general public
can continue to suspend their disbelief in the validity of nullem crimen sine lege. While
the felicitous performative brings into being a set of new effects in order for the category
itself to be maintained as a viable ideological order, it must be repeated, or restaged, ad
infinitum. As Butler puts it, “a structure only remains a structure through being reinstated
as one” (Excitable, 139). “Crimes against Humanity” thus becomes a convention in
which each utterance is informed by its echoes. To put it differently, it is only in the
reiteration of “crimes against humanity” that this utterance gains its force as a legal and
moral category:

If a performative speech act succeeds ... then it is not because an
intention successfully governs the action of speech, but only because that
action echoes prior actions, and accumulates the force of authority
through the repetition or citation of a prior and authoritative set of
practices. (Butler, Excitable 51)

What makes a performative successful, or felicitous, is not the aim behind it, but the
authority it garners from a tradition of similar actions. It is repetition, not “truth” that
makes it viable. What Nuremberg helps to demonstrate, then, is that the authority of
reiteration is, temporally speaking, a two-way process. Because the tribunal was not
founded in a tradition of Human Rights, it gained its authority after the fact, thus
determining its legitimacy via subsequent commissions which demonstrated the validity of the initial break from law.\textsuperscript{14}

As such, in order to maintain the foundation of the edifice, the “structure” of “Crimes against Humanity” needs to be continually re-enacted on an international stage so as to maintain its force as Law. The massive wave of tribunals, including Canada’s own TRC, retroactively determines the Allies’ transgression as just. Hence, the Nuremberg Legacy is not simply a set of laws and institutions, but more importantly the beginning of a set of performances that continually revitalize, recode and galvanize an ideological determination of Human Rights. Materialized as law, this ideology is a powerful tool to address historical injustice which forces government agents to take responsibility for past actions.

However, political performances of morality do not necessarily amount to ethical change. Indeed, the most striking example of performed morality is also the first example of modern conflict resolution in the TRC lineage. Idi Amin’s infamous “Commission of Inquiry into ‘Disappearances’ of People in Uganda Since the 25\textsuperscript{th} of January, 1971” (commissioned in 1974) was conceived by Amin as a means to address political “disappearances.”\textsuperscript{15} Under Amin’s regime it is estimated that somewhere between 100,000 and 500,000 people were murdered or “disappeared.”\textsuperscript{16} In response to these crimes, the commission was staged as an attempt to investigate and report on violence and bring peace of mind to the families of lost loved ones. The obvious conflict of interest in this commission was that while it was mandated to investigate Human Rights abuses, prepare a report that would outline these mistreatments and suggest how to

\textsuperscript{14} I am drawing on Girorgio Agamben’s notion of the sovereign here. See Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life.

\textsuperscript{15} The 1974 Commission is not to be confused with Uganda’s second inquiry in 1986 (which has received much more attention). The full mandate for the 1974 commission has been published by the United States Institute of Peace and can be found here: http://www.usip.org/files/resources/collections/truth_commissions/Uganda74-Report/Uganda74-Charter.pdf


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redress them, the investigators worked under, and made recommendations to, the very government it was examining. Further, although most hearings in Uganda were public, a report was never published. A confidential copy was handed over to Amin, who continued to rule via political repression, ethnic persecution and extrajudicial killings. As such, any conclusions that did not align with Amin’s administration were quickly and violently quashed.

Despite how calculated it may look from a contemporary perspective, Amin’s gesture towards Human Rights was enough to soothe the economic superpowers of the time, who, at this point, were still heavily advocating for the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT, later to become the World Trade Organization) and the trade decisions made in Tokyo in 1973. Indeed, as a direct result of Amin’s Commission, Uganda was able to escape the threat of coffee boycotts from the West—coffee being its primary source of trade revenue—and reverse opinions set in motion by the U.S. withdrawal from Kampala in November of 1973. As the Amin example helps to demonstrate, international pressure to perform the politics of reconciliation does not necessarily amount to material change for the victims of crimes against humanity. In fact, the performance, in this instance, can actually work as a substitute for ethical change. Amin’s duplicitous politics make explicit the ways in which the politics of reconciliation can be employed towards self-interest. However, the stakes of re-performing Nuremberg ideals, and thus substantiating Human Rights Law, were simply too high for Commissions of this sort to abandon. Amin’s Commission was thus written

17 The purpose of the GATT Agreement was to reduce tariffs and other trade barriers on a mutually advantageous basis.
18 When confronted with pressure to boycott Uganda’s coffee trade in order to force Amin into Human Rights restructuring, the U.S., then under the Carter administration, used GATT specifically as a means to argue against interference: “Boycott actions are not consistent with the principles of the General Agreement of Tariffs and Trades (GATT). To which the United States is committed as the basis for international commercial relations. Whenever these principles are set aside, their overall authority as a protection for our own international trade interests is undermined. Therefore, as a general matter, we are extremely reluctant to take actions which contradict these principles” (Douglas J. Bennet. Jr. Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations; qtd. in Ullman 534).
off as an anomaly in the reconciliation genealogy. The 1986 Truth Commission: Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights in Uganda, helped to cover up Amin's abuses of Human Rights principles and recover the international potential of Nuremberg law.

Following Amin's Initial Commission, the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia (ICTY, 1993) made the most significant contribution to maintaining Nuremberg law. The ICTY was quick to acknowledge the importance of the performative in substantiating the notion of Crimes against Humanity instituted after World War II and it established a firm regiment for implementing its primary mandates:

The United Nations, which over the years has accumulated an impressive corpus of international standards enjoining states and individuals to conduct themselves humanely, has now set up an institution to put those standards to the test, to transform them into living reality. A whole body of lofty, if remote, United Nations ideals will be brought to bear upon human beings. Through the Tribunal, those imperatives will be turned from abstract tenets into inescapable commands. (First Annual Report of the Yugoslav Tribunal. Qtd. in Scharf 215, my emphasis)

This passage from the ICTY's inaugural report emphasizes the necessity of performance in the maintenance of Human Rights. Without some event to ground these “abstract tenets,” morality never enters into the force of law. What is at stake here is the materiality of language, the making concrete of abstract claims so that they have a real bearing on human life. Giving “living reality” to language is accomplished through its reiteration, breathing new life into that body of law by evoking it in new contexts. This is also a way of saying that performativity and materiality need not be strictly opposed, that, indeed, the materiality of the performance of justice/reconciliation is in its performativity--what it does as a “saying.”

19 See Hayner, Priscilla B. “Fifteen Truth Commissions--1974 to 1994: A Comparative Study.” Hayner argues that, “The 1974 Ugandan commission has been all but forgotten or discounted in history” (613).
Indeed, the ICTY was followed quickly by a similar tribunal for the Rwandan genocide (1994). As Michael P. Scharf argues, “the creation of the Rwanda Tribunal showed that the machinery designed for the Yugoslavia Tribunal could be employed for other specific circumstances and offences, thereby avoiding the need to reinvent the wheel in response to each global humanitarian crisis” (227). This “machinery” was eventually made into a tool of international governance. On April 11, 2002, the International Criminal Court was ratified by ten countries, bringing the total number of ratifications to sixty. As of this writing, 116 states are members of the ICC, including all of Southern Africa and nearly all of Europe. Grenada and Tunisia are the most recent states in which the Statute has entered into force.20 Canada made its own contribution with Bill C-19, the *Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Act* (CAHWCA), and became the first country in the world to adopt comprehensive legislation based on the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

The weight of the ICC is complemented by a growing number of Truth Commissions and TRCs which take up Human Rights issues through new and “progressive” approaches that parallel Nuremberg principles. Following Derrida and Butler, however, I argue that the Nuremberg trials also generated a space in which the recital of morality supersedes responsibility to the law. In order to maintain an international definition of morality, states have to conform to and repeat this performance; thus, after Nuremberg, political actors are caught up in a political space in which nation states are called upon to perform specific attitudes in order to maintain a specific category of Human Rights.

While maintaining Human Rights as a structure is undoubtedly a worthy endeavor, the drive behind this compulsion to repeat threatens to obscure the lived conditions of people living in the wake of historical injustice. Amin established that it was necessary to perform morality to the world after Nuremberg, but he also made it clear

20 Famously, the United States voted against the Statute in Rome, along with six other countries, then they signed on, then they unsigned. They were concerned about a lack of accountability for granting *proprio motu* to an independent prosecutor.
that political performances of regret could be empty gestures, devoid of any real change for the citizenry they were composed for. As performances, Tribunals, Truth Commissions and TRCs are not only about “finding the truth”--punishing perpetrators and redressing victims--but on a larger scale, they are about (re)establishing an abstract moral order as a living body of international law. In terms of theory, then, there is potential for some confusion between the materialism of language (making abstract moral ideas “matter”) and the materialism of lived conditions (the subjective impacts of reconciliatory exchange). The making “real” of Human Rights discourse is one way of summating what I call the philosophical materialism of reconciliation. This is not to say that there is a strict delineation between “performance” and “reality.” Indeed, part of my argument here is that performativity constitutes reality insofar as it provides the frame through which an otherwise incomprehensible wave of information is processed. However, what I am suggesting is that this “frame” is not, despite our desire to see it as such, independent of ideology. In the Nuremberg paradigm, language is made into a “living body” and, as I illustrate above, is identified in the discourse as law made “alive” (Ehrenfreund) or morality transformed into “living reality” (Yugoslav Tribunal). The difficulty with the reiteration of Human Rights is that while it materializes law (making it alive” in its repetition across borders it also risks eliding the personal and societal nuances of particular instances insofar as it is determined as a Truth, rather than an historically/ideologically established means of interpreting the past.

2.2. Turning to South Africa

As opposed to the model of performance and forced repentance found in the ICTY and the tribunal system, Truth and Reconciliation Commissions seek to bypass the ethical dilemmas of the Nuremberg script by finding the means to involve the perpetrator as much as possible in the act of reconciliation, thus helping to relieve him or her of the role of “enemy.” As Everett Worthington puts it, the legal procedure endemic to the tribunal, “is designed without any attempt to minimize suffering; rather, it is all about fairness and justice” (254). Thus, rather than widening the gap between victim and perpetrator by alienating him or her from the community, TRCs work at bringing parties together in a new, cooperative environment under a model referred to as restorative (as opposed to retributive) justice. According to Martha Minow:
Unlike punishment, which imposes a penalty or injury for a violation, restorative justice seeks to repair the injustice, to make up for it, and to effect corrective changes in the record, in relationships, and in future behavior. Offenders have a responsibility in the resolution. The harmful act, rather than the offender, is to be renounced. (91)

Minow’s description helps to define the difference between retributive (tribunal) and restorative (TRC) justice and explain how these systems contribute to reconciliation. Both retributive and restorative models of justice appeal to performance in order to affect the terms of reconciliation that they strive for. Tribunals achieve this by applying strict character delineations, which, both figuratively and literally, alienate the “enemy” from the community. However, while retributive justice works to delineate strict roles and scripts for its characters, restorative justice works to collapse these distinctions by developing new relationships between the actors. Consequently, the latter is often seen to be a much more progressive, humanist approach to conflict resolution because it “acknowledge[s] the shadow sides of oneself and one’s group” (Cohen 271) rather than confirming preconceived notions of good/bad, victim/perpetrator.

As such, Desmond Tutu’s major contribution to reconciliation is in his use of restorative justice which stems from his recognition of the performative limitations of the Nuremberg model. According to the Archbishop, the Nuremberg paradigm functions by “bringing to trial all perpetrators of gross violations of Human Rights and letting them run the gauntlet of the normal judicial process” (19)--an analysis that evokes the theatrical elements of the tribunal in which new actors are simply inserted into an old play. Tutu rightly acknowledges that it was only because the Allies were the clear winners of World War II that the Nuremberg paradigm was effective. Today, however, restorative justice is more progressive and humanist, acknowledging the shadow sides of oneself and one’s group.

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21 What is known today as restorative justice is actually a Canadian development. In 1974 two drunken Ontario men vandalized twenty-two properties. Mark Yantzi, the Mennonite probation officer assigned to their case, suggested to the court that the criminals meet their victims and negotiate compensation. Judge McConnell eventually ordered the two offending men to go with Yantzi to meet their victims and negotiate compensation and then come back to the courts with a report on the damage suffered by the victims. According to Marc Forget, “this was the first experience with what came to be known as victim-offender reconciliation programs” (118), which went on to include group conferencing and Aboriginal based methods of reconciliation (i.e. Sentencing Circles, Healing Circles, Peacemaking Circles, Gacaca Courts).
War II that they were “able to impose ‘victor’s justice’” (20), which allowed them to blithely assign participants to static roles, be it Nazi monster or enlightened prosecutor. As Tutu suggests, “the Germans … accepted [their positions] because they were down and out and the victors, as it were, could kick the vanquished even as they lay on the ground” (20). Because Nuremberg casts its characters in terms of absolute “good” and “evil”, it was relatively easy for the Allies to construct a scene in which retribution was not only fitting, but also necessary.

Relative to Nuremberg and Yugoslavia, however, Tutu’s form of “justice” is not informed by character assignment, but rather by more flexible notions of reconciliation in which “one sees the other as having acted in a way as human beings do, out of his or her own perceptions” (Worthington 75). As opposed to retributive models, Tutu’s TRC is empathy-driven, aimed at collapsing the fourth wall, not only between the victim and the audience, but, more radically, between the victim and the perpetrator. What Tutu popularizes with the South African TRC, is forgiveness-based justice, which, in its emphasis on identification across victim/perpetrator borders, collapses rigid distinctions between self and other. Indeed, one of his most resonant statements, aside from the title of his book itself (No Future without Forgiveness), is that “the only way we can be whole, healthy, happy persons is to learn to forgive” (156). Here, forgiveness is presented as the only model that will facilitate healing and reconciliation.

To be clear, I am arguing that TRCs are not alternatives to Nuremberg-like tribunals; rather they are modifications of it. The type of forgiveness Tutu is demanding is in itself performative and is still in service to the manifestation of a moral order brought to life by Nuremberg. While the “living body” of morality he wants to corporealize is certainly based on religion, it is no less a case for substantiating the ethical claims made following World War II (which were themselves based in a certain Christian ideology). As the Archbishop states in No Future, “theology helped us in the TRC to recognize that we inhabit a moral universe, that good and evil are real and that they matter” (86). As a Christian, Tutu’s notion of “morality” begins from the imperative to “love thy neighbour,” which forms the baseline against which all interpersonal interactions are measured. However, this imperative is not grounded in any law outside of Christian faith: “this mercifully is a moral universe. Right and wrong matter, and when you contravene the moral laws of this universe, one day you will pay” (248). The key word in this statement
is “matter;” in his conception good and evil are given corporeal significance via their performance on an international stage. They “matter” insofar as they generate subjects that can be guaranteed as such. Tautology notwithstanding, the TRC manifests that morality and also uses that manifestation as proof of its claims to existence.

The performance of forgiveness is where analysts can locate the most explicit link between the ideological imperatives of Nuremberg and South Africa. This link becomes clearer if researchers are able to break down clemency into separate categories. As Worthington points out, forgiveness operates on a continuum in which there are three key stages: hollow, decision-based and emotion-based. To briefly summarize, hollow forgiveness is that which is offered under societal duress when the victim actually feels no forgiveness at all. In this stage, one forgives in *logos* only and even then only because one is forced to; on the other end of the continuum, emotional forgiveness is offered freely, when the victim actually feels an end to his or her pain and resentment. Emotional forgiveness is akin to a release of the stress, anxiety and hatred held against a perpetrator. In this stage the body reflects language; the forgiver feels no discrepancy between *logos* and *soma*.

Finally, decision-based forgiveness falls somewhere in between hollow and emotional. Decision-based forgiveness, “is defined as the cognitive letting go of resentment and bitterness and need for forgiveness. However, it is not always the end of emotional pain and hurt” (Worthington 21). This intermediate category between hollow and emotional suggests that forgiveness is not simply a black and white category. While there is certainly forgiveness and unforgiveness, there is also a curious combination of the two in which one can affect forgiving qualities while still holding on to one’s pain and anger. This affect is not so much a lie, but rather a performance so personal that it actually works to suspend the disbelief of the actor him/herself, thus generating a split subjectivity in which s/he is simultaneously (un)forgiving.

Arguably, the forgiveness Tutu requires from South Africans can be classified as decision-based (and thus bifurcated, as opposed to whole) simply because one cannot *demand* that a suffering individual let go of their resentment toward a murderer or the pain they feel over the loss of a loved one. Indeed, it is precisely at the point of the imperative that forgiveness will always exceed rationality: no matter what the reward (or
punishment), mourning is not a process that any individual, no matter what their authority, can compel a subject to undertake. At the same time, however, the Archbishop is also not obliging South Africans to forgive, which would amount to hollow forgiveness and only perpetuate fear and anxiety. Rather the Archbishop is encouraging them to forgive by promising them a richer, healthier life when they do so: “[forgiveness is] the greatest good, communal harmony that enhances the humanity and personhood of all in the community” (Tutu 35). When forgiveness is unpacked into a series of differently enacted stages, it is clear that Tutu is asking the victims of apartheid to act as if they have forgiven, to perform compassion and goodwill to the enemy without abandoning their physical and emotional pain. This is one way to flesh out the meaning behind Derrida’s “grand scene of forgiveness:” in privileging decisional forgiveness, Tutu and TRC proponents who follow in his path call for a performance that clearly separates action from the subject him/herself. What the subject does on this stage is not a reflection of an inner state of being, but it is a contribution to an idealized moral order that promises to heal pain after the ideal itself is accepted.

Indeed, by emphasizing the performance of forgiveness as a means to achieving a healthy, reconciled nation, Tutu evokes what Slavoj Žižek identifies as the Pascalean formula of “fake it till you make it,” in which the performance of an action will eventually lead to the actor becoming the subject of his/her performance. As Žižek points out, what makes Pascal’s contribution to religious philosophy so interesting is that he does not begin with the idea that belief comes first. Rather habit and gesture, what I am calling performance, instill belief retroactively. In these regards, the famous quote from Pascal is, “kneel and you will believe that you knelt down because you believed” (qtd. in Žižek 306). Here, kneeling does not describe an inward, spiritual act, but rather creates one.

This Pascalean mandate resonates with Nuremberg itself. With no firm precedent in place, the Allies could not operate strictly on the principle that the Nazis were being charged because they were guilty. Rather it was the act of prosecution which manifested guilt retroactively. Tutu’s insistence that South Africans perform forgiveness operates under the same principle. His translation of Pascal would be: “Take on the affectation of forgiveness and you will believe that you have forgiven.” Another way of looking at this is to consider the effect of perpetrators imposing the affectation of repentance on the victims. When the victim sees the perpetrator take on the affectation of repentance, in
front of TV screens, before the nation, their families, their friends, and on permanent record, there opens up the potential for the victim to take on the affectation of forgiveness. As such, rather than offering an explanation of how forgiveness emerges, the action itself offers the justification. In this sense, decisional forgiveness manifests a certain ideology of morality, in which victims release their fear and anger towards their perpetrators.

Of course, what makes Pascal’s and Tutu’s performances very different, is that while Pascal calls for a very specific action--kneeling down to pray--Tutu is asking that people perform something that is much more abstract and difficult to capture in a single action or gesture. As such, there needs to be some sort of sujet-supposé-savoir for people to model their actions against. Mandela himself was continually offered up as this model in South Africa. Tutu’s own reflections on the president are pointed in these regards: “he [Mandela] invited his white jailer to attend his inauguration as an honoured guest, the first of many gestures he would make in his spectacular way, showing his breathtaking magnanimity and willingness to forgive” (Tutu 10, my emphasis). However, Mandela’s benevolent “gestures” were still rather broad and parliamentarian and did not provide details on how to hold one’s body, or shape one’s face when in the direct presence of one’s murderer. Arguably, it is on this minutia that the success of a performance hangs; thus other representations aside from Mandela were necessary.

As Cole argues, some of the film from the South African TRC can be invaluable in identifying the subtle details of forgiveness, which were left out of the larger political acts. Cole identifies the hearings for the South African TRC as “good theatre” (180), an attribution, she argues, which made them so successful: “the TRC’s live hearings were affective, and consequently they were effective in facilitating, however imperfectly, a transition from a racist, totalitarian state, to a non-racial democracy” (Cole 179). The issue of “transition” is of central importance in my analysis of Canadian reconciliation and something I will return to momentarily. However, for the time being it is necessary to

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22 Thank you to Sophie McCall for pointing this out to me.
note that for Cole, film of the hearings acts as an archive, a space to study affect and its contribution to forgiveness and reconciliation.

The documentary *Long Night’s Journey*, for example, conveys the deep pain of the South African community both through a number of tight close-ups of the faces of the perpetrators and the victims as they confront one another. The cinematographic choice replicates the intensity of the face-to-face interactions that took place between victim and perpetrator during the TRC. In fact the face becomes the primary site of the possibility of reconciliation in this film. As one of the victims’ mothers tells her son’s killer, “your face is something I will never forget. And I have no forgiveness for you.” Here, reconciliation does not hinge on the mother’s ability to forget, but rather to alter the memory and see the representation of sincere grief and contrition. Thus, inasmuch as the face represents and holds the past, it also becomes the field on which reconciliation and forgiveness is played. As such, the intimate and beseeching gaze of the camera in *Long Night* is searching for signs of forgiveness and remorse in the “actors’” faces so that the audience is compelled to partake in this decision-making process. The film allows its audience to dissect and augment this performance in ways that are not strictly possible in a typical face-to-face encounter. Close-ups, for instance, provide the viewer with the microscopic detail that constitutes the actions of a forgiving (or unforgiving) subject. In this sense, the gaze of the camera in *Long Night* can be seen as a representation of the way in which the outsider privileges performance in reconciliation. What is at stake, then, is the “actors’” ability to perform their regret, to make it visible to the gaze. In making it available for close study, “actors” and the filmmakers provide a model from which future subjects can draw their own decisional performances, thus furthering a state in which the theatre of regret actually begins to constitute forgiving subjects and materializing a particular category of morality. In this sense, *Long Night* creates the very conditions in which these extraordinary acts of forgiveness and repentance can occur.

23 See Emmanuel Levinas on the ethics of the face-to-face encounter. See also Butler (*Precarious*) and Peggy Phelan on face-to-face interaction and its application in an ethics of performance.
This is not to say the individuals in *Long Night* are faking their pain, or that the trauma of apartheid is some sort of act. What I am suggesting, however, is that the way in which the camera seeks to locate and magnify emotion in the documentary is indicative of the ways in which an international audience comes to find the legitimacy of reconciliation in South Africa in the perceived sincerity of a *performance* of grief and remorse. As in my reading of the performer “faking it” until he or she feels forgiveness, spectators can also be understood as suspending cynicism in order to find genuine grief and remorse.

### 2.3. Political Performances of Regret

Cole argues that the healing effects garnered through performance have been, up until this point, largely regarded as a side-effect of conflict resolution. Her work suggests that governments and policy makers need to make performance more central to the direct goals of the world’s various commissions and that scholars need to shift the focus of their analysis towards the theatrics of TRCs. In doing so, Cole is clearly drawing from the same genealogy of reconciliation that I am here: she makes clear distinctions between the types of performance found in Nuremberg versus South Africa and demonstrates the progressive nature of Tutu’s hearings in how they utilize it. However, as I gestured towards briefly above, Cole’s analysis focuses on *transitional justice*—“how emerging democracies reckon with former regimes” (Arthur 331)—whereas I am focusing on the settler justice found in Canada. Indeed, the Cole essay I am drawing from here is entitled, “Performance, *Transitional Justice*, and the Law: South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission” (my emphasis). The primary difference between transitional and settler justice, which has thus far been under-represented in the literature, is that that TJ is a political response to the crimes committed by a government *which is no longer in power*, while SJ is implemented by the same government that committed the transgression. As I discuss below, this essential difference has a major impact on the ways in which reconciliation is and can be articulated.

The relation of transitional justice to contemporary reconciliation studies is an issue that requires much more attention. Some of the most recent examples of reconciliation (Australia and Canada) have not taken place inside of a transitional justice
paradigm, but are the consequence of previously democratic states coming to terms with past crimes. Inasmuch as reconciliation in places such as South Africa and Yugoslavia has targeted transgressions that took place outside of democracy—for instance after apartheid or following a coup d’état—the performance of “settler reconciliation” has a much different set of effects and consequences than its counterparts in transitional nations. These differences must be parsed both with and against the TRC genealogy.

The way in which political performances of reconciliation can distract from the lived conditions of victims is more evident if analysis is shifted from South Africa to the world’s longest running official reconciliation initiative, found in Australia. In 1991, the Australian government unanimously voted to establish the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (CAR) in order to promote the “process of reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider Australian community” (Reconciliation Australia.org). This initiated a ten-year period of “official reconciliation,” leading to the establishment of Reconciliation Australia, which continues to “monitor Australia’s progress towards reconciliation so that government, business and the community can take on the responsibility to back up words with real commitment” (Reconciliation Australia.org). Conceived as a way to “address progressively” (Short 491) Australia’s Aboriginal/Settler relations, Australian reconciliation has been passed to four Prime Ministers and continues to be an unavoidable fact of Australian politics. As of this writing, it is a twenty-year process.

From a bird’s eye view, “reconciliation” is an integral part of Australia’s political infrastructure. Aside from CAR and Reconciliation Australia, the country also hosts Australians for Reconciliation (AFR), the National Sorry Day Committee (NSDC), and, most recently, the Reconciliation Action Plan, initiated by Prime Minister Julia Gillard in June 2011. Australia also boasts the Division of Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation (similar to British Columbia’s department: the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation). On February 13, 2008, four months before Stephen Harper, Australian

24 See also the Ukraine Foundation for Understanding and Reconciliation.
Prime Minister Paul Rudd issued a formal apology to the survivors of the Stolen Generations, adding another layer to this extended process. However, the largest, most moving performance of reconciliation came in May 2000, when some 500,000 people walked across Sydney Harbour Bridge for the reconciliation walk. The walk was organized so that both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians could show their support for the reconciliation process (which was by this time almost a decade old).

This particular event is best remembered for a giant sky-written “Sorry” etched in the horizon over the Sydney Opera House. The “Sorry” contrail is perhaps the best metaphor for Australian reconciliation. While the word captured the imagination of the country and the world for a brief moment in time, it quickly faded away. The explicitly ephemeral nature of this apology can be connected to the meager impact Australian reconciliation has had on the larger world of conflict resolution. As Damien Short argues, “Australian reconciliation does not warrant a mention in any of the major texts on reconciliation despite the fact that it has been the longest running official process” (17). This is due to the fact that while it is constantly being written out for all to see, reconciliation in Australia is nothing more than a series of vaporous politics, which, like mist in the sky, have no material impact on the victims they claim to address; rather, they simply affirm Australia’s contribution to the maintenance of Nuremberg ideology and guarantee that state a position in the “new international morality” (Barkan ix). What audiences see here, in its “heavenly” representation, is thus a governmental commitment to reiterating Human Rights principles as an idealist order, while simultaneously disavowing the material consequences of this performance on the subjects it claims to address.

On the ground, however, one sees a very different idea of reconciliation in Australia. By the time John Howard and his conservative Coalition Party came into power in 1996, prominent land claims such as Mabo and Wiki had once again propelled Aboriginal rights into the international spotlight. Thus, for his scene in Australia’s theatre

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25 The Stolen Generations are the children of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent who were removed from their families by the Australian government.
of regret, Howard and his government made yet another performative shift in Australian Aboriginal policy in order to protect political interests and national resources. This time, the state put emphasis on a “practical reconciliation” agenda that focused on ‘individuals’” (qtd. in Short 502). Practical Reconciliation was a neo-liberal tactic designed to undermine Aboriginal rights by focusing on ideas of formal equality and citizenship, ideas which borrowed heavily from the liberal rhetoric of “equality” and “tolerance.” Under this policy, rights were only determined by one’s relation to the state. This form of recognition homogenized the public and precluded any special claims to land or history (including the trauma suffered by the Stolen Generations).

As Aboriginal scholar Larissa Behrendt writes, practical reconciliation was little more than yet another assimilationist policy designed to eliminate the perceived “threat” of Aboriginal rights:

The clear agenda [of practical reconciliation] is one of assimilation and integration. This, of course, is not a new ideology, but a throwback to the paternalistic days when Welfare Boards and Aboriginal Protection Boards dictated the lives of Aboriginal people and their children. It is an ideology that has been used in the past, did not work then, and has not only been rejected by indigenous people, but has left a lasting legacy of disadvantage, trauma and family breakdown that is still plaguing indigenous families and communities today. (qtd in Short, 172)

What Australia helps to illustrate is precisely the grand scale on which the theatre of regret can operate in settler states. “Practical reconciliation” evokes regressive colonialisist tropes designed to control Aboriginal people and flatten difference. Yet in spinning out its politics in the theatre of regret, the Australian government is able to couch neo-conservative objectives in the scene of forgiveness demanded by Nuremberg. As such, politics produce a veil of tears used to distort government intentions.

Again, the giant “Sorry” in the sky provides an excellent means to think about performance and the reiteration of Nuremberg principles in settler nations. By contributing to the discourse of Human Rights, Australia makes material the abstract notions of morality that contemporary nation states must participate in. State politics operate beneath this word, which becomes the structuring element of the national
symbolic. However, just like skywriting itself, “sorry” gradually fades and is forgotten while conditions remain the same. The scale of the performance demonstrates the commitment to perpetuating Nuremberg ideologies and the new international order, which demands this gesture as a sign of belonging to a larger notion of international morality. The walk for reconciliation and the skywriting itself demonstrate how grand and ostentatious this performance has become. Paradoxically, however, it is precisely the size of the performance that distracts from how reconciliation is actually operating on the ground, in the lives of the people the ideal claims to address. At the level of lived experience, reconciliation is being levied against the people it claims to represent despite the fact that it also helps to shape the lives and experiences of a community in positive ways. Permutations of reconciliation, such as “practical reconciliation,” help to make explicit the ways in which governments attempt to conform to the theatre of regret while eliding deeper ethical concerns.

2.4. Canada and the Performance of Transitional Justice

In tracing the legacy of reconciliation across Nuremberg, Yugoslavia, South Africa, Australia and Canada, there is at least one major difference in the latter two examples that demands explicit attention. Specifically, Nuremberg principles have traditionally been used to enforce measures of transitional justice for states beset by violence—the primary examples being El Salvador, Argentina, Chile and South Africa. In transitional settings, the most immediate and material response to historical injustice is the removal of the government which perpetrated the crimes and the installation of a new, usually democratic, administration. The succeeding Truth Commission or TRC is both a means to redress the past and facilitate a smooth changeover to new leadership. Transitional Justice is a means of addressing “how emerging democracies reckon with former regimes” (Arthur 331, my emphasis).

The first Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which took place in Chile under Patricio Aylwin Azócar, is cited as one of the seminal cases of transitional justice and the first successful instance of political reconciliation. Aylwin was the first president to be democratically elected following the military dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet. Under Pinochet, it is estimated that 3,000 people were killed, 80,000 were interned and at least 30,000 were tortured. Aylwin’s election campaign thus centered on truth, justice, and addressing political prisoners and reparations for these crimes, a platform which, in the spirit of the Cold War and détente, won him the election, much to the surprise of Pinochet and his supporters.

Before Aylwin, the international model for conflict resolution, constructed and reformulated in El Salvador and Argentina, had been the Truth Commission (Comisión de la Verdad), which namely focused on discovering the truth about the disappearances of citizens during military rule. Breaking from the precedent set by his neighbours, however, the new Chilean President established the Comisión Nacional de Verdad y Reconciliación (National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation) in March of 1990. By making peaceful relations a necessary compliment to finding truth, Aylwin significantly altered the shape of conflict resolution for all those who would follow and instantiated the TRC as a political means to smooth the transition into democracy. Indeed, Tutu takes up this model in his own commission as a means to facilitate Mandela’s own installation into power. As such, political reconciliation came into favour in the international community as a handmaiden to the implementation of a democratic system. After the Commission’s report was completed, Aylwin announced its main findings on public television and offered a formal apology on behalf of the government for the acts of its agents. In this initial TRC, then, political transition and apology were mutually constitutive, each one allowing the other to exist.

28 Following the Cold War, citizens and academics in both the East and the West began to recognize that an alternative to power politics was necessary to avoid global destruction. Détente (the easing of tensions) signified the new international political climate.
29 See No Future pp. 28-29.
However, there has been a major shift in the politics of reconciliation since Aylwin. Despite the slippage between reconciliation and transitional justice in recent studies, quite obviously neither Australia nor Canada has experienced any substantial government transition as a result of the crimes against humanity that they seek to address. Liberal-democracy is both the wound and the salve in these nation states, an agent that is at once capable of harm and healing. In this sense, the stakes of material change are quite different between settler and transitional-justice reconciliations. Insofar as the agent of healing is often self-same to the agent of harm, liberal-democracies are at greater risk of falling into empty displays of contrition on a much deeper level than their transitional counterparts.

Any further study of reconciliation in Canada or other settler states needs to take into account the fundamental differences between transitional and settler reconciliation. Whether political transition is (or is not) occurring, or has (or has not) occurred, plays a major role in shaping what the subsequent reconciliation will look like. On the one hand, transitional reconciliation is developed out of governmental transformation (or even revolution). On the other hand, settler reconciliation is founded in the promise of change and performances that convince the audience that while the government remains the same, it will now act differently. To put this another way, without explicit political change to support it, settler reconciliation is performance only for the sake of performing; it differentiates itself from its former iterations, not by conceding the stage to new political actors, but by promising to take on a different role. As Australia helps to demonstrate, the anxiety around the distinction between liberal-democracies can result in a performative over-compensation, which elides the lived conditions of reconciliation as many Aboriginal people experience it.

Following this line of thought, I argue that Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s apology for Canadian Residential Schools represents a particular performative choice for Canada:

It has taken extraordinary courage for the thousands of survivors that have come forward to speak publicly about the abuse they suffered. It is a testament to their resilience as individuals and to the strength of their cultures. Regrettably, many former students are not with us today and died never having received a Full Apology from the Government of Canada. The government recognizes that the absence of an apology has been an impediment to healing and reconciliation. Therefore, on behalf of the Government of Canada and all Canadians, I stand before you, in this Chamber so central to our life as a country, to apologize to Aboriginal peoples for Canada’s role in the Indian Residential Schools system.

There is little that I or anyone else can do here to demonstrate the degree of Harper’s sincerity in this speech (although I try to open up this question in more detail in chapter three). However, sincerity is not necessary to illustrate the performance implicit to this apology. First, as Harper himself acknowledges here, the “Full Apology” is being offered on Canada’s biggest political stage, the House of Commons. The convention of parliamentary performance carries with it the gravitas of a sanctioned action, providing a deeper opportunity for the audience to suspend their disbelief and buy into the scene as materializing real change in Canada’s symbolic order.

Second, as per my argument above, Harper makes sure to clearly distinguish his government from those that committed the crimes against Aboriginal people; in doing so he performs the transition that in other states founds the apology. Whereas transition and reconciliation are mutually constitutive in Chile and South Africa, in Canada, Harper uses the latter to validate the performance of the former, thus re-establishing the “simulacra of legalization” that Derrida identifies. In the passage quoted above, he clearly delineates his party from those who refused to apologize: “the government recognizes that the absence of an apology has been an impediment to healing and reconciliation.” Further, in earlier passages he also demonstrates a change in attitude from those who perpetrated the original offending legislation: “today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country.” What Harper is essentially doing here is reiterating the political transition that El Salvador, Chile and South Africa all based their reconciliation initiatives on as a nearly immaterial performance: since there is no actual political transition, he performs one, differentiating himself from, or disavowing, the political power that he has, in actuality, directly inherited. Beginning with a performance founds the subsequent reconciliation
project in a much different, and potentially unstable, political ground. Canadian reconciliation relies on a language and a history that cannot readily be transported to a colonial system and thus radically alters the trajectory of reconciliation politics at a global level. The “simulacra of legalization” in settler justice is thus a reconciliation that is always already distinct from political change, but nonetheless relies on the history of reconciliation qua transition as a way to validate its existence.

2.5. Reconciliation: Building Bridges

In closing, it needs to be made clear that while reconciliation can, indeed, be used as a rhetorical tool to distort “the moral and financial accountability” (Chrisjohn and Young 3) of perpetrating cultures on their victims, insisting that reconciliation as such is only a tool of oppression elides the subtlety of what is at stake. Neither victim nor perpetrator is one-dimensional and thus cannot be discounted in a single gesture towards self-interest. As I argue above, “Reconciliation” can be both an agent of harm and healing simultaneously. To return to Where the Blood Mixes, Loring’s reflections show how the reparations carry the potential for harm within them. The image of the bridge that Loring uses in Blood is also helpful for thinking through the bifurcated signification of reconciliation. Aside from the pub, in which compensation is first introduced in the play, a bridge and the beach surrounding it form one of the central settings. Indeed, it is at the foot of the bridge that Loring ends the play: “The wind increases and the low mournful song of the singing bridge strengthens. Mooch exits, leaving June standing alone looking down at the salmon…” (90).

It is not surprising that Loring uses a bridge as a setting in what is ostensibly a reconciliation play. The bridge is a perennial metaphor in reconciliation theory. It captures the notion of connection that reconciliation founds itself on: the idea that society can construct a means to unite two previously isolated masses. As Barkan puts it, “reconciliation, [is] meant to bridge ... disparities” (234). The image of the bridge permeates reconciliation literature: Worthington uses the bridge on the cover of his text Reconciliation and Forgiveness, Donald Shriver identifies forgiveness as “A Bridge Across Abysses of Revenge” (essay title) and John Hatch, in his essay “Reconciliation: Building a Bridge From Complicity to Coherence in the Rhetoric of Race Relations,”
argues that “reconciliation is potentially the construction of a bridge” (738). To borrow from Anne Anlin Cheng, reconciliation can be defined philosophically as “the attempt to walk (and live) on the rickety bridge between the self and other” (189).

Representing the connection between two detached spaces, the bridge is the primary image used to evoke reconciliation as a social construct that facilitates the passage of culture, commerce and capital. For the most part, this metaphor is used unproblematically by critics and without reference to the word’s history or use in specific linguistic spaces. What an untroubled use of “bridge” can lead to, however, is a distorted sense of exactly what reconciliation means and how it is viewed by the communities involved. Detached from language and history, a bridge may indeed represent the best means of expressing new connections built between disparate communities. Yet, when articulated as part of a specific history, “bridge” reveals a deeper violence implicit to the notion of reconciliation. In literature, bridges often serve as a dangerous liminal point between disparate locations. Occupying the space of the bridge for too long can result in violence and death. Arguably, by using the bridge in Blood, Loring is drawing on a history of reconciliation that expresses the fear and anxiety that accompanies spaces of connection between Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian communities.

In Canadian literature, the figure of the bridge is an extremely problematic site. John Richardson’s Wacousta: or, The Prophecy; A Tale of the Canadas, often considered to be Canada’s first novel,31 established the space of connection between European and Aboriginal people as deeply fraught and connected to violence and death. Wacousta is set in the mid-eighteenth century in an English fort, built deep within the Canadian wilderness. Early on in the lengthy novel, the settlers are trapped inside the walls of the fort following an outbreak of violence between the English and the Natives. Wacousta is very concerned with binaries: interior/exterior, civilized/savage, nature/city,

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31 See Dictionary of Canadian Biography. Richardson is also believed to be Ottawa on his mother’s side, which also makes Canada’s first novel an Aboriginal text. See also, Catherine Sheldrick Ross Recovering Canada’s First Novelist: Proceedings from the John Richardson Conference.
all of which are primarily represented in the figure of the fort and the wilderness beyond its walls. As Michael Hurley argues, “everything on the European or British side of the river is a right-angled monument to rationality” (90). Inversely, everything outside is savage chaos. As such, a palpable anxiety surrounds any potential deconstruction of these borders: any breach in the fort is of the utmost cause for alarm and crossing too far “outside” results in “civilized” characters turning “savage.”

However, the anxiety over borders and binaries is most directly confronted in the figure of the “bloody bridge” (22), on which the major plot points of Wacousta take place. When the fort is seized by the Native population early on in the novel, the majority of the attack takes place “across the drawbridge that communicated with the fort” (98). Further, when one of the European soldiers is arraigned for treason—the climactic event at the end of the first volume—his execution takes place on the centre of the bridge. As Hurley argues, in reference to the execution scene, “the historical failure of the two worlds to ‘only connect’ is symbolized in Wacousta by the casket in the exact centre of that fatal ‘Bloody Bridge,’ at once historic and mythic. Here civilization and its structures intersect with nature and its forms” (90). As Hurley helps to point out, in Wacousta, at the intersection between “civil” and “savage” one finds only death, confusion and violence. In Wacousta, the point of reconciliation is thus conceived as a potentially deadly space which connects European and Native communities but also invites violence and ideological confusion.

Drawing on Wacousta and the fraught image of the bridge, Thomas King’s novel Truth & Bright Water also revolves around a “bloody bridge.”32 Truth is a story about two towns separated by a river, “the railway town on the American side, the reserve in Canada” (1). The only way to move between these towns is across a decrepit bridge, which was abandoned by the state workers when it was only halfway constructed, and “the toilet,” a large bucket connected to a cable stretching across the water, which one

32 For more on the connections between Wacousta and Truth & Brightwater see Bruce, Barbara S. “Figures of Collection and (Post)Colonial Processes in Major John Richardson’s Wacousta and Thomas King’s Truth and Bright Water.”
pulls oneself along. While the metal girders of the bridge stretch across the water, the decking is incomplete, making passage possible only for those who are willing to traverse the girders over the river. As such, the majority of the characters use the toilet to travel between communities, preferring not to risk the danger of the incomplete government structure. Indeed, from the beginning of the text the bridge is represented as a dangerous, and unfinished, point of transition: “The bridge was halfway completed when construction came to a halt. One day, the crews were working on the concrete forms for the decking. The next day, they stretched chain-link fencing across both ends of the bridge, packed up all their equipment, and disappeared” (39).

Only half-finished, the bridge in *Truth* is a troubled point of connection between communities. It allows for passage, but also creates the potential for injury for those who try to cross it. Indeed, at the beginning of the text the narrator, Tecumseh (named after Richardson’s hero, the great Shawnee chief), and his friend Lum move “gracefully, effortlessly along the girders” (16). For the boys, who use the spot as a place to talk and play, the bridge represents a way to escape family life and to find independence: “below, the fog hangs low and velvet on the river, but on the bridge, everything is star bright and clear” (16). At the level of the bridge, which rises above their day-to-day existence on the reserve, Tecumseh is able to see past the cloistered environment of his home town towards a different future.

However, by the end of the text, King makes it clear that in attempting to “bridge” the gap between communities, the boys are putting their lives at risk. The final image of the bridge in *Truth* is that of a corpse, rotting from neglect and indifference: “The decking only goes so far before construction stops and the planks and plywood come to an abrupt halt. From here, as far as you can see, the bridge is nothing more than a skeleton, the carcass of an enormous animal, picked to the bone” (270). Confronted with the figure up close, now depicted as the rotting skeleton of an unfinished project, the
bridge is no longer a symbol of hope, but a reminder of the state’s failed attempt to connect communities.  

The structure itself reeks of death and decomposition: “‘You smell it?’ says Lum. “The whole thing’s rotting” (270). For King, if the bridge is a symbol of reconciliation, it is stagnant and putrefying, a topographical reminder of the government’s disinterest in Native affairs. Indeed, Lum’s final crossing, which directly follows the above depiction of the bridge qua corpse, echoes the death and violence that Richardson inscribes onto the figure in *Wacousta*. Mirroring the bridge scene at the beginning of the novel, Lum once again “glides along the naked girders” (272)—although at this point he is bloody and battered after a vicious beating from his father. Tecumseh watches his friend move along “the curve of the bridge until it begins its descent” (272) into the opposite town. This is the last that Tecumseh sees of Lum. The crossing signals a suicidal disappearance from the novel and from the town of Truth: “the bridge is empty, and all I see in the distance is the lights of Bright Water and all I see below me is the fog” (273).

As a metaphor for reconciliation, the bridge, as represented in texts such as *Wacousta* and *Truth & Brightwater*, is never just a symbol of confluence and easy passage. In these texts bridges represent a deep anxiety over the material realities of connection and the colonial connotations of the bridge itself. Loring picks up on the fraught image of the bridge developed by his predecessors and translates it directly into the discourse of reconciliation. As mentioned above, the bridge, as a setting, is one of the few locales outside of the bar that the playwright places his characters. As in *Wacousta* and *Truth*, the bridge is fraught with notions of violence and death that is in excess to any notion of “reconciliation.” Reflecting the suicide scene from *Truth*, in the final moments of *Blood* the audience learns that Floyd’s wife, Anna, killed herself by jumping off the structure. Mooch remembers the scene for his wife, June: “All I could do

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33 Lee Maracle’s well-known essay “Ramparts Hanging in the Air” also develops the figure the unfinished bridge—the ramparts hanging on either side—to draw attention to the fractures in feminist communities. Further, similarly to *Truth*, Maracle’s novel *Ravensong* is also set in two twin towns with a bridge between them. All the important events of the novel occur there—including a suicide.
was watch. Anna looked at me, she wasn’t even scared. I watched her fall, all the way. All the way down. When she hit she never came up” (89). As the scene of suicide the bridge in Blood, as in Truth, remains as a permanent symbol of loss and regret for the characters that must cross it. Indeed, Mooch’s pain extends from the fact that the bridge is an unavoidable structure in his life. When he laments, “I cross this bridge every day” (89) he speaks of both the physical act of crossing and the mental act of reconciling himself with the painful memory of Anna’s death. In fact, these words are the last spoken in the play. The audience is left with a symbol of reconciliation that does not only connote connection, transition and union, but also suffering, trauma and death.

As the final set of the play, the bridge is also positioned as a capstone for the narrative and the discussion on compensation. Indeed, following Mooch’s final statement, Loring leaves his audiences with the concluding image cited above. The bridge in Blood is yet another image provided by Loring to think through the implications of political reconciliation and its impacts on Aboriginal communities. Further, as the final image in the play, the bridge resonates not because of its ability to generate confluence—indeed, the audience is never told where it leads—but as a site of memorial and mourning for the dead. Much as the bridge in Truth is a structure that eventually divides Tecumseh and Lum, in Blood it acts to divide Mooch and June. The play ends with June alone on the beach while Mooch, overcome by the act of crossing he must participate in again and again, walks away.

What Richardson, King and Loring help to establish is that embedded into the metaphor of the bridge—which is so closely aligned with the idea of reconciliation—are deeper anxieties over border crossings and interconnection. For all three of these authors, at the centre of the bridge metaphor is danger, death and loss, which the bridge does not overcome, but facilitates. It is because of this literal construction of reconciliation that violence is realized in all three texts. The bridge acts as the platform on which this violence is acted out. What the image of the bridge helps to illustrate—once one more closely addresses its implications as a metaphor—is that it is a useful tool to demonstrate that the politics of reconciliation can be designed and constructed to facilitate confluence and peaceful coexistence between disparate communities. However, reconciliation, like the bridge itself, is always already loaded with more significations than those who employ it can account for. Many of these significations can
cause further pain and alienation. Thus, attempts to construct a model definition of "reconciliation" risk establishing an infrastructure that, like the bridge in *Truth and Brightwater*, is incomplete and dangerous: a potential hazard to the community it is ostensibly constructed to serve.

This is not to say that reconciliation is beyond definition, but rather that one must be aware of the potential risks that occur in its construction. In other words, to borrow from Raymond Williams, what is at stake in the definition of reconciliation, and the other "r" words that circulate in the discourse of conflict resolution, is only not the identification of how a word can be retroactively ascribed to define the past, but also how new definitions inflect present and future actions. As Williams puts it, with reconciliation "we are concerned meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt" (*Marxism* 132), not only in how it describes ideology and current world-views. The bridge is only one figure—a trope rendered into a "structure of feeling" in the Canadian canon—that allows for reflection on the material implications of idealist semiotics. Canada’s own TRC can be located in a history of conflict resolution that extends into the Nuremburg trials and thus necessitates careful examination of a number of such tropes, all of which I cannot cover here. Looking back at Uganda, South Africa, Australia, Yugoslavia and the other countries that developed Commissions and Tribunals out of Nuremburg, one can see the ways in which politics have been built into the maintenance of Human Rights and the development of a modern discourse of conflict resolution grounded in idealist tropes. Governments utilize reconciliation not only as a means to redress historical injustice and to facilitate peaceful coexistence; they also employ reconciliation as a way to bolster political authority (as in Chile) and to protect financial interests (as in Uganda). More often than not, these two, approaches (peaceful coexistence and political authority) are caught up in the same discourse. Like the bridge, reconciliation connotes the idea of confluence and exchange, but this does not mean that another series of significations are not also repressed within it.

Canadian reconciliation may very well be intended to create a more viable, compassionate way for Aboriginal and settler communities to live together. However, without careful consideration, reconciliation will sit like the bridge in *Blood*: as nothing more than a painful reminder of historical injustice, which does not heal, but further alienates victims from their communities. Material reconciliation insists on research that
further investigates the relationship between transitional and settler reconciliation and explores different applications of Human Rights discourse across the new international morality. In the following chapter I continue my investigation by unpacking Tavuchis’ notion of “the call” in relation to the work of the Cree poet and activist, Louise Bernice Halfe.
3. **Chapter Two: “Listen to the bones”: Hearing the Call for Reconciliation**

I never said I was sane. / I share this story as I witnessed it. Listen for Chrissake.


Louise Bernice Halfe’s long poem *Blue Marrow* is an exploration of voice and the problematic notion of hearing stories of colonial violence against Aboriginal people within the “whiteout” (Halfe 15) of European-Canadian culture. The text is distinctive for its use of Cree words and phrases. *Acimowinis*, The Keeper of the Stories, is the guide through the text and along the way the reader also encounters *Nohkom atayohkan* (The Keeper of Sacred Legends), *ohkomipanak* (Eternal Grandmothers who speak) and *moniyaw-kiseyiniw* (Old white man), among a number of other figures. Readers are also confronted with entire passages in Cree:

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waniska
pe-wapan oma
asyay piyesiak
nikamowak
miyohtakwan
kitaskinaw. (87)
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34 As I discuss at the end of this chapter, there are two editions of *Blue Marrow* available. The first was published by McClelland and Stewart in 1998, the second by Coteau in 2004. The second edition is significantly revised and includes a gloss of many of the Cree words/phrases that go untranslated in the McClelland and Stewart edition. Until my discussion of the differences between the texts in the conclusion of this chapter, all of my references are to the Coteau edition.

35 “Arise / dawn has come / already the birds / sing / the beautiful song / our land” (87)
Blue Marrow has been labelled a “quest for voice” (qtd. in Cook 168) by Laura Ann Cramner, and Warren Cariou identifies the long poem as a type of ritual, a call to justice and redress with emphasis “on the necessity of present action” (730).

But while Halfe makes a concerted effort to raise the voices of her ancestors and thus represent the pain and trauma of colonial policy on Aboriginal people, the poet also recognizes the difficulty implicit in making these stories heard; she is openly cognizant of the strength and resilience necessary to register such voices in Canada’s official symbolic order. Pace Gayatri Spivak’s claim that “the subaltern as female cannot be heard or read” (“Subaltern,” 35), so many of the female voices in Blue Marrow text lay “tongueless in the earth” (87), and Halfe’s narrator has difficulty testifying to the stories that have been imparted to her. At many points, the words “hardly get passed [her] throat” (15) and towards the middle of the poem, silence invades the text itself as a blank page, a representation of the “blizzard whiteout” (15) that Halfe evokes elsewhere. The single white page materializes silence and interrupts the narrator’s story (66).

The problem of voice and being heard is also something that Halfe explores formally. Blue Marrow (1998), initially praised for its use of untranslated Cree, was republished in 2005 with a seven-page glossary and multiple in-text clarifications in order that a wider audience might “listen to the bones” (19) and respond to Canada’s violent colonial history. The addition of the glossary provides for new layers of understanding in the text and challenges readers’ tendencies to be passive participants in the construction of meaning. As with reconciliation itself, Halfe’s text calls out for the reader to actively participate in how the narrative is shaped. As is apparent in her poetic themes and publishing practices, translating these voices into an appreciable “call” is something that Halfe’s work is intimately concerned with.

Using Halfe as an interlocutor, this chapter focuses on the problematic nature of voice and making the call for reconciliation heard. This initial call, if we follow from Nicholas Tavuchis, sets in motion the process of reconciliation. For Tavuchis, whose progressivist method I both work with and trouble in this dissertation, reconciliation moves along in a series of steps, the most important of these, for him, being apology and forgiveness. However, this entire progress is based on a third term, “the call,” which this chapter seeks to elaborate:
the proper and successful apology is the middle term in a moral syllogism that commences with a *call* and ends with *forgiveness*. The social processes that generate the sequence *cannot be activated until there is a call*: the attribution of nomination of an offense that can be negotiated not by an account or appeal to reason(s), but only through the faculty of forgiving. In other words, until the action in question is semantically and symbolically transformed into ‘apologizable’ discourse, it remains subject to other formulations and interpretations. (20, my emphasis)

As should be evident here, for Tavuchis apology and forgiveness, and thus reconciliation, are all founded on voice and its association with agency. The logic is elegantly simple: if the wrongdoing is not or cannot be heard, those acting towards reconciliation cannot proceed responsibly (insofar as they are not responding to the event in question). The wrong needs to be heard before any further discourse--be it apology, forgiveness or redress--can be ethically pursued. Tavuchis goes on to argue that “when we respond to the call *after* the offense by apologizing, we are seeking reconfirmation of our credentials as members by publically recalling their unstated grounds, that is, what we apparently forgot when we transgressed” (original emphasis; 22). 36 As Tavuchis demonstrates, calls for reconciliation, which have unfortunately been overlooked or understated in analytic reviews of redress, have an essential role in how the process of apology, forgiveness and reconciliation will play out in any given situation.

Both Trudy Govier and Joanna R. Quinn make compelling arguments for the necessity of “acknowledgment” in the reconciliation process (see *Taking Wrongs Seriously: Acknowledgement, Reconciliation, and the Politics of Sustainable Peace* and *The Politics of Acknowledgement: Truth Commissions in Uganda and Haiti*, respectively). Miki also uses “call” in the subtitle of *Redress*. I have chosen to use the rhetoric of “the call” here as it speaks more directly to Halfe’s work specifically. “Reconciliation,” then, at least in this formulation, is much less a state or a goal than it is a relationship between parties who have opened up a series of conversations. Further,

36 It is necessary to point out that Tavuchis identifies himself as the perpetrator in his use of “we” here. However, the “us” vs. “them” dialectic is obviously still at play in his work, exposing how othering is always already built into the discourse of reconciliation.
Tavuchis’ notion of “the call” has strong resonances with Indigenous sovereigntist arguments, which help us to connect it more directly to Halfe’s work and the search for reconciliation in Indigenous-Canadian contexts. Sean Teuton’s notion of “the callout” is similarly a “demand for justice” (107) that honours Aboriginal relations in need of advocacy and redress. As Daniel Heath Justice puts it, “there can be no higher ethical purpose than to answer ‘the callout’ and tend to those kin-fires; it’s a sacred trust. It’s what we do for family” (166-67). Indeed, the callout is an important element of Halfe’s project in *Blue Marrow*. The poet mobilizes the notion of the “call” in the opening section of *Blue Marrow* in the form of a memorial of names, names of women who in other archives remain anonymous, or are identified only as wives of European men. This plethora of voices, “all my relations” (100) as she identifies them elsewhere, adds a complexity that further nuances Tavuchis’ perspective.

Further, by demanding that her readers “listen to the bones” and “see the blood” (3), Halfe is evoking a demand for justice in much the same way Teuton is calling for. As Cariou puts it, the “Cree-ing” (Halfe 15) of both the poet and her narrators is “a call for some kind of redress or change in the present” (730), meant to incite action in its readers:

>The wounds described by Halfe’s spirits have not been avenged, or given the remedy of justice, or given the means for healing. They are simply presented as problems that have never been adequately addressed. So instead of wondering nervously when the repressed terrors of colonialism might be visited upon them, readers are left with a more active imperative, to do something to acknowledge and redress the wrongs of the past. (Cariou 732)

The ways in which Halfe’s text incites action via the callout are of primary interest in this chapter. I will be considering the action provoked by the text in closer detail towards the end of this analysis by examining the differences between the two editions of *Blue Marrow* and the ways in which the addition of a glossary allows for further insight into how the call is generated. First, however, it is necessary to address the magnitude of the silence Halfe is struggling against and the ways in which Aboriginal voices have been absorbed into the colonial framework.
3.1.  A History of Silence

In 1920 Duncan Campbell Scott, largely believed to be the official figure behind the initiation of Residential Schools, declared that: “Our [the Canadian Government’s] object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian department” (qtd. in Haig-Brown 31-32). Absorbed into the body politic, which at the time meant white and male, the “Indian” voice was to be stripped of all its resonance and heard only as part of the homogeneous (white) citizenry.

In order to accomplish this assimilation or cultural genocide, the “otherness” of Aboriginal language was quite literally cut off from the symbolic order. As in Japanese-Canadian internment camps, letter censoring was a common way to strip residents of their voice. According to J.R. Miller, “a deterrent to frequent correspondence was the knowledge that students’ letters were always read by staff” (311). One student recalls, “[l]etters written home were always censored ... They censored all our letters. If you made a complaint ... they would make a big speech--if we complained about food in a letter. There wasn’t very many that complained ... cause we knew we wouldn’t get out anyway” (qtd. in Haig-Brown 85). In quite a literal sense, censorship cut Aboriginal people off from the circulation of language. What the students were able to communicate was carefully processed and then issued by the institution, providing a striking example of what Spivak calls “the ventriloquism of the speaking subaltern” (“Subaltern,” 28) -- insofar as the Aboriginal voice was first be absorbed and then parroted out of the European establishment. Letter censoring adds yet another troubling layer to the ways in which silence was inflicted on Residential School inmates, forcing researchers to take even more seriously statements that insist that Residential School “children [should be] in silence practically all the time” (Oblate principle. Qtd. in Miller 202).

37 Koichiro Miyazaki has some particularly disturbing stories about censorship in his account of internment, “The Story of a Diehard” in Stone Voices: Wartime Writings of Japanese Canadian Issei.
Of course, silencing Residential School inmates is also intimately connected to the repression of Native languages. Although some schools did incorporate Aboriginal languages into their curricula (particularly in the early days of the schools), for the most part, Native tongues were strictly banned within the walls of the institution, most often under the threat of punishment. As Miller demonstrates, “student records and student recollections agree that vigorous disciplinary action was taken to discourage the use of Aboriginal languages” (204). Rosa Bell, who attended Port Alberni Residential School, also gives a stirring account about the loss of language:

The government wanted to turn us into white people. Our cultural family units were broken apart. Also, part of becoming “white” was to speak English. Because my parents also attended Residential School they didn’t see the value in teaching us our language. The Indian Agent told them not to speak to their children in Haida because it would not help them in school. My parents spoke Haida with other adults but didn’t make much effort to teach me. My grandma always spoke Haida to me and I tried to understand but it was foreign. (qtd. In Miller 10)

Bell’s description of the loss of her language illustrates the way in which these schools encoded families with the idea that Native tongues were worthless. Not only were children cut off from their heritage at school, but also home became a place where English became the norm and Haida, in this case, became other. By censorship, mandatory use of English, and the threat of violence for speaking Native tongues, Residential Schools across Canada generated and enforced a cowl of silence that survivors are now confronting in order to follow the proscribed progress of Canadian reconciliation. Analyzing this silence has become an important endeavour for many scholars.

Indeed, for the Creek academic Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, the study of Aboriginal voice and the general public’s inability or unwillingness to hear the violence against

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38 For example, as Diane Iona Persson discovered, Blue Quills Residential School doubled as a “Cree University” (130) in the 1950s. At least six Oblates attended the school to learn Cree and teach “Indian ethnology” to other missionaries.
Indigenous people is already connected to a larger picture of reconciliation: “Indian studies scholars who have been studying Indian histories and lifeways in the past two or three decades have been doing so for the purpose of petitioning for redress of grievances in this democracy” (39, my emphasis). However, the progress of this study comes up against some very serious silences, which Cook-Lynn links to what Benedict Anderson refers to as the imaginary community.²⁹ In Cook-Lynn’s argument, the ways in which European identities are mapped over top of Aboriginal communities create a constant struggle for the latter to make their history heard. According to Cook-Lynn, “the invasion of North America by European peoples has been portrayed in history and literature as a benign movement directed by God, a movement of moral courage and physical endurance, a victory for all humanity” (29), and this has largely contributed to “the death and burial of [Indigenous] presence” (33) in both the American and Canadian national identities.

The repression of Aboriginal voice is not simply an unconscious side-effect of ideology, but rather an implicit part of the machinery of “civilization” and the nation-state as such. In ethnically diverse nations, where communities were imagined in a number of different ways, it became necessary for the state to evoke an “official nationalism,” to create a sense of unity and cohesion: “‘official nationalisms’ can be best understood as a means for combining naturalization with retention of dynastic power, in particular over the huge polyglot domains accumulated since the Middle Ages, or, to put it another way, for stretching the short, tight, skin of the nation over the gigantic body of the empire” (Anderson 86). The imagined communities sanctioned by the State and perpetuated not only by Indian agents, police officers, and governmental administrators, but also by journalists, poets and novelists result in the general public’s inability to hear violence

²⁹ According to Anderson, “an American will never meet, or even know the names of more than a handful of his 240,000,000—odd fellow-Americans. He has no idea of what they are up to at any odd time.” However, because of the notion of a shared identity and landscape perpetuated primarily through print media he or she “has complete confidence in their steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity” (26). As Anderson puts it, “the most important thing about language is its capacity for generating imagined communities, building in effect particular solidarities” (133) and with the invention of the printing press, news dailies and pocketbook novels, very particular solidarities can be disseminated across the nation state.
against Aboriginal people. According to Cook-Lynn, “new nations are born from the spilling of blood of other nations—a fact that must be denied if a nation is to see itself as ethical” (39), and this disavowal realizes itself in very surprising, material ways. Cook-Lynn points out that “the largest daily newspaper [in South Dakota] refuses to call the killing of innocent women and children at Wounded Knee, all of them under a white flag of truce, a ‘massacre.’ In South Dakota it is publically called, one hundred years after the fact, an ‘event,’ an ‘incident,’ or an ‘affair’” (144). The “conversionary use of imagined realities” (Cook-Lynn 30) has made it impossible for citizens of a colony to hear the subjective real of colonization, by which I mean the physical, emotional and cultural abuse inflicted on Aboriginal people in Residential Schools and through other colonial practices. I take up the role which newspapers play in imaging national realities in further detail via Brown Girl in the Ring in chapter four.

An example from Canada’s recent academic history helps to illustrate more precisely the extent to which the Aboriginal “call” has been repressed in Canadian discourse. In 1988 Celia Haig-Brown wrote and published Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School, one of the first academic texts to address the Residential School issue by using direct testimony from Aboriginal survivors. Although Haig-Brown’s text was well-written and well-researched, publishers were concerned that the public wasn’t ready for such a stark analysis of Canada’s past. While searching for a publisher, Haig-Brown turned to Randy Fred, founder of Theytus books and Pemmican publishing, and asked him to write an introduction. After reading the manuscript, Fred was astonished at the way in which the general public refused to hear the reality of Residential Schools, even when these stories were sanctioned by the academy and a reputable researcher: “I was appalled, when first meeting with Celia to discuss publishing this book, to learn that some people who had read the manuscript believed some of it not to be true; the nuns couldn’t have been that mean to those children” (Resistance and Renewal, 21). What Fred is pointing to here is a problem of reception, in which, while the call is being offered, the settler community refuses to hear it. Obviously, without first addressing the issue of reception that Fred points to here, Tavuchis’ progression stops before it can begin.

Any model that approaches Blue Marrow or any other text as a work of reconciliation without attempting to include the breadth of injustice and racism levied
against minority groups in Canada risks rendering that history forgotten, and, as such beyond the reach of any healing or forgiveness. As Guy Beauregard puts it, following Lisa Yoneyama, “we must question why and how we remember--for what purpose, for whom, and from what position we remember” (“After Obasan,” 15). Those studying the current reconciliation movement in Canada must follow the same imperative: Canadian reconciliation is under constant threat of becoming yet another government tool of assimilation. Without bearing this important mandate in mind, critics risk interpreting important texts such as Blue Marrow as fiction and ignoring its call for real-life action and change. 

Those who would take up “the call” as the initial step towards reconciliation need to resist the impulse to believe that the imagined realities Cook-Lynn was struggling against in the early nineties have now been rendered asunder, that there are no more ideological impediments to minority voice, and all that now remains is simply to heed “the call” and to follow Tavuchis’ progression. In the context of the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which is taking place at the time of this writing, the need to hear the stories of Aboriginal people, to allow them to hear others hearing them, is of pressing importance. Although the State has put a premium on “the call”—for the call is intimately connected to the “Truth” portion of Truth and Reconciliation—this does not mean that these stories can simply be heard because we have opened up a space in which they can be voiced. Indeed, as I argue in the previous chapter, testifying to trauma can result in further pain for the victim. The call for reconciliation has the potential to be recuperated into a government program that ultimately works to quell marginal voices under a facade of compassion, good will and disbelief. These are precisely the troubling questions that Halfe’s text poses in its complex representation of “voice” and its impediments (or silences).

3.2. ‘This Chosen Walk is a Blizzard Whiteout’

For Halfe, making Aboriginal voices available to ears that are unwilling or (more problematically) unable to hear them has always been a key component of her work. As the narrator of Blue Marrow states, the witnesses/testifiers’ responsibility is to “listen to the bones” (19), to record and disseminate the experiences of Aboriginal people who
have been silenced by colonial violence: “The prairie is full of bones. / The bones stand and sing and I feel the / weight of them as they guide my fingers on the page” (2). Much like the Aboriginal sovereigntists that follow Teuton, Halfe’s work insists on making the voices of her past heard via “historically engaged writing” that “politicize[s] our colonial present” (Suzack 176). Halfe’s first published poetry, released eight years before *Blue Marrow*, was already developing and practicing this mandate in dialogue with a larger Aboriginal writing community. *Writing the Circle: Native Women of Western Canada* (1990), which can be read as anticipating current debates about reconciliation, establishes itself as a forum for Aboriginal writers, affirming the importance of hearing these voices in Canada’s social development:

We knew that we needed to hear the words of Aboriginal women in order to understand this country, its history, and its present. As well, hearing them would be an important part of the social changes that Canada clearly needs to undergo ... anything we could do to lift the blanket of silence would be of value. (xii)

Six of Halfe’s poems, at least two of which would be revised and re-published in her first collection, *Bear Bones & Feathers*, found their way into this collection, helping to disassemble the silence that was obfuscating Aboriginal history: “Journal Entries,” “Pakak,” “Spirits,” “Sun-dog Mate,” and “Grandmother” relate stories of family, love, religion, and the prairies; and “Valentine Dialogue” uses the patois English Halfe would perfect in *Blue Marrow* in order to Indigenize a story of sexual abuse and its fallout. In “Valentine,” a young woman explains to a friend how she lost her virginity, oscillating between the guilt she feels now and the pleasure she felt then:

Dired of dis crucifixion  
Dew ya dink confession will help?  
Dew ya dink penance will clean me?  
Maybe I’ll be born again.  
Guild, guild.  
Da pain in my heart  
hurts hurts. (84)

By emulating rez-english on the page (substituting “d”s for “t”s), Halfe is able to play with the notion of racial marking via the written word. Further, in playing with language at the level of the signifier she also draws attention to the ways in which guilt and voice have
been linked under colonialism. In order to perceive herself as “clean,” she must transform her sexual experience into a sin. However, this poem is not simply a treatise on repressive colonial practices. It also demonstrates how Native voice itself resists the pressures of colonization. It is not simply a coincidence that “guilt” comes out as “guild” in the narrator’s patois. Rather than being a report on feelings of regret, the repetition of “guild” is a call for the aid of those with mutual interests. Heard as “guild,” the second half of this passage cannot be read purely as an admission of guilt; it is also a callout to a group or band to help her deal with the pain she is experiencing. The potential for resistance and renewal thus comes down to a matter of interpretation: reading the multifarious and shifting layers of voice.

Following this first experiment with voice, realized most successfully in “Valentine Dialogue,” Halfe published another four poems in one of the first collections of Aboriginal writing to directly contend with the legacy of Residential Schools. This collection, entitled Residential Schools: The Stolen Years, features essays, poetry and creative non-fiction by authors such as Phil Fontaine, Harold Cardinal, Maria Campbell and Janice Acoose, along with four new poems from Halfe, including “The Residential School Bus,” which depicts life inside the institution:

At night the little ones
press their bodies
between cold starched sheets.
Somewhere
someone
in the huge dorm
sobs quietly. (101)

In simple, sparse diction which reflects the enforced order and sobriety of the schools themselves, Halfe is able to convey the alienation, loneliness and isolation that Residential School students were made to endure in their compulsory time away from home. The huge dorm room and the touch of cold sheets only add to the feeling of solitude, where the cries of a neighbour, possibly even a brother or sister, go unrecognized.

As Janice Acoose points out in the same collection, entering stories such as Halfe’s into the Canadian symbolic is not only necessary to educate citizens about
repressed history, but it also plays an important role in affirming the reality of survivor experience for survivors themselves. According to Acoose:

As a child, I tried to tell anyone who would listen about those night visits to our dorm, the cruel punishments, and the deadly threats, but my voice was silenced by my family’s fears, the community’s pressure, and the church’s power. As a result I grew up believing that what I felt, heard, and saw was not real. (6, my emphasis)

Acoose’s testimony speaks to the way in which voice and reality are intertwined. Being silenced as a child, unable to make her experiences heard, Acoose is no longer certain if the abuse actually happened. This admission speaks measures to the way in which a discourse of reconciliation must be in conversation with the past. Indeed, according to Tavuchis, in order for the processes of apology and forgiveness to even begin, the action in question must first be rendered into an “apologizable discourse” (20). Or, to put it differently, the community, perpetrator and the victim herself must be able to hear the events as real—that is, as a physically and psychologically damaging event—before any rigorous form of reconciliation can be initiated.

Following Writing the Circle and Residential Schools, in which Halfe began to formulate a unique and evocative voice to speak to the survivor experience, the poet continued to develop her ideas on voice and hearing in order to challenge what Roland Chrisjohn and Sherri Young call the “Standard Account” (19) of colonization in Canada. The Standard Account asserts that although Residential Schools caused some harm, they provided Aboriginal students with the skills necessary to challenge these schools: “we are asked to believe that these schools did good by doing bad. We are asked to forget they did what they did. We are asked to agree that the ends justify the means” (Chrisjohn & Young, Circle, 15). Most importantly, however, “what the Standard Account is designed to do is manage how all of us interpret the abuse” (Chrisjohn & Young,
The paradox generated here is that the actions taken by survivors of Residential Schools for redress and apology are always already framed as something that could only be achieved with the skills taught at the schools: therefore one privileges this system while simultaneously dismantling it. There is no real end point in sight in this model.

Fully aware of the ways in which Aboriginal voices have been attenuated by the Standard Account, Halfe’s primary project has been identifying and sharing what Laura Ann Cranmer has identified as “Halfe’s recipe for voice” (127). One of the first poems in her inaugural book of poetry, Bear Bones & Feathers, is entitled “Crying for Voice,” which begins,

I must pull frog
pry its webbed feet
from snails in
my throat. (6)

Beginning with the image of a “frog in the throat,” an idiomatic expression for hoarseness, the narrator of “Crying for Voice” acknowledges how she must find a way to clear the obstruction to voice that has lodged itself in her body. After “invit[ing] weasel to untangle / my braids” (6), she then begins to outline her recipe, a concoction of duck, rabbit, fish and fresh blood, as well as some other surprising ingredients:

Boil bible and tripe
clean of grass,
boil and boil

A good example of how deeply the Standard Account still runs in Canadian culture can be found in the reception of an art project that was part of Awareness for Diversity Week at UBC Okanagan, held March 2008. Students made and painted window shutters around campus which could be opened up to display information on various issues such as Residential Schools: “the point being made was that many of these issues are hidden or covered up” (Tanaka 264). There were a number of complaints about the Residential School instalment: “The complaints included: the statistics were made up, no one died, the Church had good intentions, it paints Christians in a bad light, only a small percentage of the students who ever attended were ever abused, and the racist attitudes and policies of the time do not exist anymore, so therefore we should not bother with it now” (Tanaka 264).
After finally completing and consuming the recipe, there is a notable change in the narrator’s tone and the direction of the poem itself. As Cranmer notes,

The effectiveness of Halfe’s recipe for voice is found in the abrupt shift in time that occurs between the last and previous stanzas. The tone in the first five stanzas conveys complete absorption in the task at hand. The sixth stanza describes the actions and sensations of the speaker as she ingests the infusion ... There is a palpable feeling of being unburdened, indicating the success of the antidote. (132)

Indeed, from the first to final stanzas the narrator moves from having a frog in the throat to finding “mosquitoes up my nostrils,” which, while probably equally uncomfortable on a literal level, not only clears the throat and draws attention to memory, but also disturbs the distinctly American idiom that initially impedes the narrator’s speech. Freeing herself from this westernized cliché and using her own imagery to describe her condition, the narrator does indeed seem to have located, if not an antidote, then at least a salve for voice.

The recipe for voice evoked here, which clears the narrator’s throat and allows her to continue with the remainder of poems in the collection is evoked once again in Halfe’s next publication, Blue Marrow. At the midpoint of this book, the narrator calls on her grandmothers to “climb down” (54) and share their healing stories with her. The grandmothers agree, but with a condition: “We do not talk until we are fed. / You’ve wanted us yet you ignore us. Dream us. Feed us” (54). Upon this demand, acimowinis, keeper of the stories, offers the grandmothers a strikingly similar recipe for voice to what is found in Bear Bones:

Saskatoon moose nose sturgeon soup
Indian popcorn bannock lard
laced bowels bible tripe duck
neck bones deer steak goose roast
cottage cheese cream tea
corn rice raisin strawberry-pudding. (54)
While the two recipes are not exact replicas of one another, there are at least two important similarities. Amidst what Meira Cook identifies as a “nostalgically inflected list of traditional food” (98), the word “bible” appears. Both recipes also lead to the same outcome, voice and speech. How then are we to interpret the interruption of traditional food items with this strikingly blatant image of colonization, the symbol so often associated with the trauma of Residential Schools? Cranmer does not address this issue, leaving Western religion as a conspicuous element of the antidote to voicelessness, but Cook has an insightful interpretation: “[p]ositioned as a rude interruption to the flow of memory and appetite that the list initiates, the “bible” is buried in the inner organs (between ‘bowels’ and ‘tripe’), a fitting reminder that the missionary enterprise colonized the bodies as well as the minds and souls of the converts” (98). If “bible” is to be a necessary part of the speech antidote (and, as it stretches out across the two texts, it cannot be ignored), it must be interpreted in Halfe’s own vernacular as a “med-sin” (Blue Marrow 90), an agent of harm as well as a method of healing. Embedded in Halfe’s work, then, if we are to read it as a reconciliation text, is the anxious insistence that there is no ideal prescription for healing. No matter how careful the recipe, an agent of harm always threatens the “purity” of its effect insofar as voice (and reconciliation) only exists in conversation and in the relation between ideas. In this sense, “reconciliation” is a perpetually shifting and transitory idea developed in relation to the speakers that engage with it.41

The linguistic analogue to the med-sin neologism is, of course, the written word and the English language in which Halfe communicates her callout. While, on the one hand, English clears the throat and gives voice to Aboriginal people in broader political and cultural spectrums, on the other hand, it forces the speakers to mobilize the very language that oppresses them. Halfe makes the double bind of language more apparent in Blue Marrow, as the narrator, and perhaps Halfe herself, is confronted with the inevitable problem of disseminating her stories:

41 Indeed, Catholicism itself is also being reappropriated and transformed in Blue Marrow so that something like the Lord’s Prayer is more than just being a thorn in the side, but a means of disrupting colonial discourse. See Blue Marrow, pp. 3-7.
My words get in your way.
I feel your sting.
My printer refuses to feed my leaves.
A squirrel stakes out
the sink.
I feed him my apple.
My printer sins. (33)

It could be that the “you” in this passage identifies the non-Cree reader of the text, the individual who is unable to “hear” the Cree words Halfe inserts into the poem, thus interfering with his or her ability to correctly interpret the text and act in accordance to the call it is offering. To put it differently, the “med-sin” of the poem, its Cree phrases and passages, cultivates a Cree audience, promoting solidarity and community; but the Cree simultaneously reinforces an us/them dichotomy and risks alienating non-Cree readers that could support the cause.

The issue of “words getting in the way” is obviously something that the author considers when she publishes her own work. The ostensible purpose of the Cree-to-English glossary in the second edition of Blue Marrow is the cultivation of a wider audience who could grasp the larger intent of the poem. In a personal email Halfe informed me that the glossary allowed her to expand her audience (and potential allies) simply by overcoming reader apathy:

To re-publish one must add and it also gave me the opportunity to respond to the people who are too lazy to research who claimed the original Blue Marrow was inaccessible, it is the same reason for the glossary. Most people do not bother to think that there are Cree dictionaries available. (Halfe email)

As I will discuss further in the final section of this chapter, the glossary adds new avenues for thinking through Blue Marrow’s articulation of voice and how audiences receive it. By appending a gloss to the original text, Halfe allows for a more critical engagement with the words that “get in the way,” giving the reader the chance to move around and with them, thus developing their meaning in relation to the text and Halfe’s callout project as a whole.

Still, as Halfe is well aware, a glossary does not guarantee unimpeded access to the signifier. One of the most illuminating and entertaining examples of the problem of
hearing the callout can be found in some recent YouTube postings of Halfe’s reading at the Words Aloud Spoken Word Festival (2007). Halfe begins with a series of poems from Bear Bones & Feathers that, notably (considering the Federal government had just finished litigating the IRSSA), deal with Canada’s Residential Schools and recent apologies from the Catholic Church. Before beginning the reading, Halfe provides the audience with a very strong personal opinion on the state of redress in Canada:

This is a story about Residential School and as many of you know there is a settlement going in Indian country, which to me isn’t sufficient, because it will never heal the wounds of my community. This country doesn’t know what happened there. What I’d like to do is to show you and leave you to think about it. (Words Spoken Aloud)

Turning directly to a copy of Bear Bones, Halfe then goes on to read “Returning,” a powerful piece about going back to a Residential School as a young woman, and then “Der Poop,” a shorter poem that, via the patois she first developed in “Valentine Dialogue,” mocks the Pope’s apology to Residential Schools: “sorry mean dat i don’t need yous church / and yous priest telling me what to do / sorry mean dat i free to dalk to Manitou” (102).

As Halfe admits at the end of her performance of the poem, “I was quite ticked when the Pope said ‘I’m sorry,’” and this anger, albeit couched in humour, is quite apparent in the poem itself. What is most interesting about the video of this reading— not to take away from the wonderful performance Halfe gives—is a small error made by the videographer. In the title card he or she makes for “Der Poop” the poem is listed as “Dear Pope.” This “translation” not only strips the poem of some of its vitriol, rendering it a more polite, anglicised version of the original verse (an unwitting recapitulation of Residential School ideology), but it also testifies to Halfe’s anxiety of “words getting in the way.” In this reading the signifier itself interferes with how the audience receives “the call.” What the videographer’s error demonstrates is the way in which even when a call for justice is made, it does not guarantee that it will be heard by its audience as such. “The words get in the way” and the first step towards reconciliation—the call for justice—is suddenly not as sturdy as theorists such as Tavuchis and Teuton, as well as the proponents of the Canadian TRC itself, may like it to be.
3.3. Residential Schools and the Repression of Voice

Although it is certainly not the only subject that needs to be redressed by the Canadian government, the physical, emotional and cultural abuse of Aboriginal children in Residential Schools is the primary call for justice being voiced during Canada’s TRC. The Assembly of First Nations has been concerned with silence surrounding survivors of Residential Schools and the abuse they suffered for a number of years. In 1994, they released a study called *Breaking the Silence: An Interpretive Study of Residential School Impact and Healing as Illustrated by the Stories of First Nations Individuals*, which investigated sexual abuse against women in schools in the north and western Ontario.

However, the “callout” that allowed the issue of abuse to be heard as such, thus allowing Canada’s TRC to develop into what it is now, occurred when Phil Fontaine, then Chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, spoke out against the sexual abuse committed against him at Fort Alexander school in Manitoba. As J.R. Miller states, it was at this moment that “light was thrown on a dark corner of the history of these schools” (329). Of course, it would be ridiculous to assert that before October 30, 1990, no Aboriginal person had ever spoken of the abuse they had endured during their time at any one of these schools, but the fact that these stories were told but not “heard” is precisely the problem I am addressing in this chapter.

As Rupert Ross illustrates, “there is an urgent need for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to help communities develop healing processes in sexual abuse cases” (153); however, finding a means to open up conversation on abuse is a difficult and sensitive matter, due to the shame, fear and trauma that remains with the victim. Indeed, the schools themselves indoctrinated their students to treat sexuality with fear and silence. As Anishinabe Elder and Residential School survivor Fred Kelly describes,

*[S]ex was a taboo subject in school. In fact, there was no such thing as a healthy sex education. Sex was dirty, and even thoughts about sex were sins--matters, indeed, for the confessional. Touching a girl in any way would lead ultimately to “one dirty act,” said the nuns invariably. Once planted in the mind during the formative years of an adolescent boy, this notion was insidiously inescapable, even sounding implausible. The psychological damage was done. Many fathers to this day are unable to express their love to their children, especially their daughters. Personally,*
I was not able to hug or kiss my mother until she was seventy-three, the final year of her life. (24-25)

Of course, this shame is coupled with the fact that at the same time that sexuality was being ignored, some students were also being sexually abused by the very teachers and administrators who were enforcing this dictum. Boys were forced to remain silent (on fear of punishment or their own sexual abuse) when their friends and classmates were molested in the night by priests and supervisors in neighbouring bunks (Miller 331). For many, sexuality and the body became entangled with repression and violence, shame and quietude.

Fontaine was not the first to speak of abuse, but he was the first to make himself heard through the din of the Standard Account, which perpetuated the notion that sexual abuse was an aberration in an otherwise benign and even beneficent school system. A number of factors came together to make him heard, which allows for some diachronic insight into the foundations of this important call. First, in the fall of 1989 the Christian Brothers of Mount Cashel Orphanage was forced to close their doors after numerous charges of sexual and physical abuse against non-Native children were laid against them. As Miller suggests, the very public castigation of this institute influenced many people to turn their attention towards the Residential Schools, now more willing to hear the possibility of abuse against Aboriginal students.

Second, as Sophie McCall points out, the debates over the representation of voice and voice appropriation that were taking place in the late 1980s and 1990s opened up the space to make voices such as Fontaine’s heard. Indeed, for thinkers such as bell

42 In order to further biological control over their inmates, missionaries used their concern over young Aboriginal women (and their potential to be sexually assaulted or impregnated at an early age) as a means to extend their power and isolate children further: “Bad moral conditions on reserves” (Miller 231) gave Residential Schools the opportunity to keep women two years longer than previously agreed upon with the federal government. Instead of being released at 16, many young women were kept until 18, for their own protection (according to school officials).
hooks (1989), “coming to voice” was a ‘revolutionary gesture’ that many minority groups now had the power to take up: ‘speaking [is] both a way to engage in active self-transformation and a rite of passage where one moves from being object to being subject” (qtd. in McCall 28). Following Civil Rights movements in the U.S. and Canada, more and more individuals were identifying and being identified as subjects, thus registering their voices on larger political and cultural levels.

Finally, Fontaine’s interview with Frum almost directly succeeded the Oka crisis, which “ignited intense debates over the politics of representation” (McCall 10) and forced the general public to pay greater attention to Aboriginal people’s longstanding grievances. In many ways, the events in Oka and the media attention they received provided a relatively new political space for Aboriginal people such as Fontaine to have their stories and experiences disseminated. Indeed, an Angus Reid poll taken at the end of the media frenzy surrounding Oka (September 19-27) showed that “more English Canadians were favourable to the recognition of aboriginals as a distinct society than to the recognition of Quebec as a distinct society” (Meisel et al 7). The door to a new conversation had been opened.

Arguably, it is from Fontaine’s testimony, his seminal call for justice, that the history of Canadian Residential Schools began to be shaped into what Tavuchis calls an “apologizable” discourse, which eventually became the Canadian TRC. Indeed, Fontaine’s “call” is directly connected to the string of apologies from Canadian Churches issued over the course of the 1990s. Archbishop Michael Peers delivered the first in a string of four (including Jane Stewart’s “Statement of Reconciliation”) between 1993 and 1998, making it an excellent example of how Tavuchis’ progression actually functions in the political world of reconciliation. Indeed, what makes Fontaine’s testimony so remarkable, along with those given by authors such as Halfe and Acoose and all the survivors who are willing to share their stories during the ongoing Truth and Reconciliation Commission, is the resilience and strength they demonstrate against a system which worked at all cost to generate silence and to repress “Indian” expression.

However, without discounting the importance of Fontaine’s work, the ideological repercussions of what could arguably be called the call in Canada’s current reconciliation movement need to be examined. Indeed, Blue Marrow illustrates the
labour and pain involved in the endeavour of voicing sexual abuse. Residential Schools are the stain in this text, a blemish which makes itself more and more apparent as the narrative draws to a close and the reader bears witness to the narrator herself being “scooped” by Indian agents. As I discuss via Loring in chapter one, testimony, often portrayed as a “revolutionized order of consciousness” (Felman 114), when addressing historical injustice, can be inhumane. For instance, in order for the narrator of Blue Marrow to hear her father’s account of Residential Schools, which took first him and then his children, she is forced to unceremoniously “drag out his tongue” (80) and force him to speak. While therapy appears to be what she is reaching for, it is difficult to say that this forced testimony is curative. Her father tells her:

Now you tell me
as you hold my cigarette-tarred hand
I’ve been killing myself since you were a child.
These hands. I cannot lift them to your face.
I am snowbound in my stone smoked walls,
my belly leaks into this waltzing woman,
your mother’s an Elder’s bride
And you ask me,
Papa, what was it like for you? (83)

Once again, this passage helps to illustrate Halfe’s fixation on her narrators’ inability to voice their experience, or mark their trauma in any “rational” manner beyond emotionally charged fragments of memory. The narrator’s experience in this passage is confined to the limits of his subjectivity, the “stone smoked walls” that prevent him from reaching out to his daughter and inscribing his history into the symbolic. Indeed, the question that ends Nameless Father’s speech here is accusatory; the reader can sense his anger at even being asked to break his silence.

Tracing the brief amount of history Halfe provides us with, however, the reader can connect Nameless Father to Christian priests and God the Father and their complicity in maintaining silence about Residential Schools:

Forgive me, father, I’ve pierced my flesh, Danced with the Sun. Bathed my face in blood.
I didn’t mean to.
Forgive me, father. I ask for absolution.
I promise to say my rosary and serve my time.
I promise to keep my hands to myself and swallow my tongue. Amen. (Halfe 18)

Here Halfe provides a more comprehensive look at the Christian ideologies that Residential School survivors, such as Nameless Father, were forced to contend with. The narrator here ends the speech by promising to *swallow* the tongue. Dragging it out, then, as the narrator will attempt to do to her own father later in the narrative, is a betrayal of an agreement, which albeit unjust, may still feel like treachery if it is forced. Indeed, in this passage the reader is also offered a glimpse into the ways in which victim/perpetrator dynamics were turned on their head in these schools, resulting in distorted perspectives of justice for both the inmates and teachers. As Chrisjohn and Wasacase point out, the Canadian TRC “looks and sounds like some bizarre confessional where one confesses what was done to him or her, instead of what he or she did, and, in a further perversion, confesses to representatives of those who committed the original offenses” (226). In the passage from *Blue Marrow* quoted above, the abused student admits his/her “sins” and begs forgiveness. When one sees how the fundamental dichotomies of reconciliation have been so skewed, it is easier to understand how and why some victims are unwilling or unable to make their experiences heard, especially when TRCs are set up as an emulation of the Christian confessional.

Taken from Halfe’s perspective, it becomes evident why some survivors would be unwilling to speak to a Truth Commission. Holding the two above passages from *Blue Marrow* together, it becomes clearer why Nameless Father is so unwilling to share his history or find succour in “letting it all out”: “Breaking the Silence” is not just about clearing a space for Aboriginal voices to speak against Residential Schools; it is also about identifying the deeply rooted ideologies and fears that these very schools encoded in their students. We need to ask, as Chrisjohn and Young do, “What if someone doesn’t want to stand up in a room full of strangers and recall, and talk about, and dispute, the most horrible moments of her or his life, but still wants justice?” (*Circle* 60).

The difficulty is, however, that while Halfe allows the space to contemplate the violence of testimony and the ideologies of silence, victims working under a reconciliation initiative are often forced to work within a specific timeframe in order to have the abuse put on record. As George Erasmus declared after collecting submissions
to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, which would lead to the IRSSA, “everywhere we have gone, we have been told about the impact of Residential Schools ... Most of the stories we are hearing are negative; 99% of them” (qtd. in Waldram 232).

Rightly, in the face of the Standard Account, the emphasis of the IRSSA was placed on “the collection of individual statements” (“Schedule ’N’” 423). The enormity of this undertaking alone overshadows the ideological implications of giving testimony and the ways in which a “data collection” model influences who will speak and what they will say. In this sense, the government still retains influence on its victims’ vocal chords, and thus the voice of reconciliation itself. The Canadian TRC, for instance, has just a five-year mandate. In various publications, the commission has expressed a high level of concern about recording the stories of older survivors before they pass on. As much as such a concern may reflect an appropriate acknowledgment of the survivors’ aging, timeframes put a sense of undue urgency on the victims, making philosophical reflection appear superfluous in the face of direct action.

Further, the Canadian government has no real intent of making these stories “heard” in any salient political manner, by which I mean opening up the possibility of persecution. The TRC mandate makes it clear that allegations of sexual abuse will have no permanence in the Canadian symbolic. As it states in “Schedule ‘N’”: “The Commissioners shall not record the names of persons so identified [as abusers, sexual or otherwise] unless the person named or identified has been convicted for the alleged wrong doing.” While this point is buried in the bureaucracy of Canada’s TRC and the very language of “Schedule ‘N,’” it speaks volumes about the capacity for voice allowed for in this system, especially when read against other TRCs. In South Africa’s commission, for instance, naming perpetrators and their actions was a key element of bearing witness to apartheid. Victim stories were corroborated with the stories of the perpetrators in order to create as complete a picture as possible.

43 See Boer, Tristan Anne “Reconciling South Africa or South Africans? Cautionary Notes from the TRC.”
In pre-emptively suggesting that perpetrator names will be treated as empty signifiers, and therefore giving blanket amnesty to the wrongdoers, the Canadian government tacitly reinforces its position as the mechanism for guaranteeing voice. It will decide what call does or does not have salience. As Chrisjohn and Young point out, the government’s unwillingness to officially recognize the voices of Residential School survivors as legal testimony against criminals only evidences the greed and colonialist politics that still sit behind reconciliation in Canada. This government cannot own up politically to its victims “because to do so would have legal and financial ramifications it does not care to address; however, worrying about this identifies the worrier as a greedy, grasping, homicidal thief, and not as a Prime Minister, a judge, or a priest” (Chrisjohn & Young 35).

While Fontaine’s callout offers an important and vital response to the urgency of Residential School redress, Halfe compels us to remember that survivors who wish to remain silent have a right to do so; but this does not mean that they have any less right to redress and justice. Or, to put this differently, truth is not necessary on the road to reconciliation. A system that privileges sharing trauma and speaking truth above all else risks ignoring many of the most vulnerable and wounded: those who may be in most need of the healing a TRC or similar commission pretends to offer.

3.4. **Hear the Bones**

As I have already suggested, *Blue Marrow* contributes to the conversation on voice and the role of the call in reconciliation in the fact that it is itself a callout. According to Cariou, “*Blue Marrow* is not only a poem but also an elaborate ceremony, designed to call the spirits of the Grandmothers to come forth and tell their stories in order to heal the present generation” (731). The ceremony that Cariou mentions here is also a call to action. In her insistence that we “see the blood” (*Blue* 3) and “listen to the bones” (*Blue*, 19), Halfe compels the reader to look beyond the Standard Account and respond to the material conditions of reconciliation. What makes Halfe’s callout particularly relevant to a discourse of reconciliation, however, is that this callout is never reified or embodied in one character or text. *Acimowinis*, for instance, while being the
primary narrator in *Blue Marrow*, is only “the keeper of the stories”. Multiple perspectives move with and through her, thus rendering her “Cree-ing” varied and recondite.

Much like her “recipe for voice,” which alters between *Bear Bones* and *Blue Marrow*, Halfe’s callout itself is in a constant state of fluctuation. When Coteau approached Halfe about republishing *Blue Marrow* (five years after it was first published by McClelland & Stewart), she immediately saw it as a way to re-vision the poem: “I was given an opportunity to revisit the text in new ways, and I am deeply appreciative of the vision that resulted from this” (Halfe acknowledgements). While both texts were released under the same title, and contain roughly the same content—a history of colonialism and the violence perpetrated against Cree women and “country wives” who married European men—the two versions of *Blue Marrow* have a number of editorial changes that force the reader to question his or her immediate reactions to the text and the validity of the tools one might use to unpack it. Most importantly, the differences between these two texts ask us to consider how we as readers contribute to the formation of voice and how this, in turn, inflects the validity of the callout.

There are a number of production changes between the first and second editions of this long poem and the poet’s use of language. The Coteau edition includes a new cover, added sections, in-text glosses, and a seven page Cree-to-English glossary at the end of the text. For my purposes, the latter two changes, particularly the glossary, are of special importance, as the glossary necessitates a different interaction with the long poem. To borrow from Halfe, in a phrase used at the beginning of *Blue Marrow*, the glossary presents the reader with a new way to “ride English” (8), as it necessitates a continuous movement across the landscape of the poem. Rather than simply receiving meaning, the reader is asked to help produce it through a particular bodily interaction with Cree language and the materiality of the text. The words are made alive by compelling the reader to trace them through the poem, creating a linguistic dynamism that is not as readily available in the first edition. By tracing the word to the glossary and back, readers revitalize the Cree word and the passage itself by connecting it to larger webs of meaning that are in the poem, becoming more aware of their own interaction with the text and their role in the construction of meaning.
The first edition, however, provides little or no gloss for the Cree sections and this has served as a major point of analysis for literary critics, who draw attention to the ideological importance of Halfe’s choice not to include a glossary. According to Meira Cook, the absence of a glossary in the McClelland and Stewart edition “is an editorial choice that signals [Halfe’s] acknowledgment that she is not writing predominantly for a white, English-speaking audience” (Cook 93). For Cook, a Cree readership is interpellated by the narrative voice, both implying and creating a Cree literary community while simultaneously estranging the non-Cree reader. Similarly, Shelley Stigter argues that “since no glossary is included, Halfe leaves the reader to rely on context to gain understanding, or he/she must do outside research” (57). For Stigter, the lack of a glossary has very real effects on how the text is read and the additional work the non-Cree reader must do in order to understand the richness and subtly of the narrative.

In sum, both Cook and Stigter argue that the alienation effects generated by the Cree in Blue Marrow are a productive element of the text’s poetics. For these critics, by estranging the non-Cree reader, leaving him or her disoriented and perhaps even uncomfortable, Halfe incites a more radical interaction with Aboriginal culture and the history of colonization. In order to make this point more succinct, both critics appeal to an inside/outside binary in order to define the geography of the text. According to Cook, “the untranslated word ... situates a trope of incomprehensibility that functions to mark the non-Cree outside, as opposed to his/her habitual mode of fluent language use in the North American context where the linguistic currency is English” (93). In other words, the form of Blue Marrow, in its first edition, plays a primary role in conveying the callout. Through the lack of a glossary, the colonizer/colonized dichotomy is inverted. It is the non-Cree reader that is pushed outside a familiar space (i.e. the book itself) and forced

44 It is important to note that Stigter’s article was published after the release of the 2nd edition. Stigter is either ignoring the Coteau pressing or choosing to see these books as two distinct entities (of course, it could also be that it took an extended amount of time for Stigter to publish the article, not an uncommon occurrence in the world of academic publishing). Cook also released another version of her essay, first published in Canadian Literature and then re-published (with editorial changes) in her book Writing Lovers (2008). Although Cook did make changes to the new version, she chose to contain her analysis to the first edition and does not mention the Coteau version.
to be uncomfortably aware of his or her difference in what is now an uncanny landscape. Much as Cariou suggests, there is a call to action implicit in these readings: the reader is compelled to move outside of the text and learn more about Cree language and culture as opposed to passively receiving information.

By turning to Stigter's reading of a passage from *Blue Marrow* readers can flesh out the notion of the callout that Cook and Stigter are identifying. The following is from the first edition of *Blue Marrow*:

> The medicines they've thrown to thorn my path I've gathered, the Bundles given to *amisk, iskotwêw* and the swan. (qtd. in Stigter 57)

According to Stigter’s reading of this passage, the reader is left to guess through context the meanings of “amisk” and “iskotwêw:”

> This passage shows not only dialectic separation of Cree and English, it also carries cultural meaning regarding the medicine bundles that is not made explicit ... Since cultural meaning is not clarified for the non-Aboriginal reader, the connection of the medicine bundles to the animals is lost upon them. The dialectic [between culture and knowledge] then becomes more apparent. (57)

In other words, the use of Cree displaces its non-Cree readers and actually compels them away from the text: towards the “outside research” she mentions earlier, which is
here clarified more specifically as being cultural and historical investigation. The “callout,” then, in this sense, is quite literally a call-out, a demand to the reader to move out of the text.

As both Cook and Stigter agree, as long as the reader is willing to do his or her cultural homework, the lack of a glossary revitalizes the Cree voice and challenges the non-Cree reader’s propensity to view the text as something they can control or know in its entirety. Blue Marrow thus becomes a way to disrupt the smooth flow of discourse that maintains the colonial status quo, generating the space for Cree voices to be heard and studied in context. In this sense, the text itself becomes a form of medicine: a dose of Cree culture to soothe colonial wounds, which the reader can gather into his or her own medicine bundles.

However, with the addition of a glossary, the newer edition does not necessarily force its readers to go outside the text to find meaning, which provides me with a new opportunity to explore how Halfe engages the callout. Clarification is readily available in

45 My own experience with Blue Marrow led me towards “The Sacred Story of the Rolling Head” (Cihcipisikwan-Atayohkewin), which Halfe alludes to at a number of points throughout poem and serves as inspiration for much of the poet’s own work. Halfe’s poetic homage to the story, albeit unreferenced, is presented, fittingly, through the character The Keeper of the Sacred Legends: “I swim the caves in lakes / where my head sinks / and I drink to roll again” (23). Cihcipisikwan-Atayohkewin tells the story of a mother who is beheaded by her husband after she is discovered committing adultery with a snake. The woman’s body was thrown into the sky, becoming the evening star. After committing the murder, the father also gave himself to the heavens, becoming the morning star (it is only through the reference to stars that I was able to make the connection between the Rolling Head story and Halfe’s poem. In the passage directly preceding the one quoted above, the narrator refers to a man who “swims in stars” [23]). However, the head of the woman continued on earth, rolling over mountains and through lakes trying to find her sons. Using the tools left by their father the boys begin a protracted escape from their now terrifying mother until they finally lure her into a deep lake, where she remains. When Halfe writes, “I drink to roll again,” then, she draws attention to the ways in which this story continues to roll through Cree culture and her own work as a writer. There are a number of interpretations that could be layered onto this story (Halfe provides many of her own in her keynote address “The Rolling Head’s ‘Grave’ yard,” published in Studies in Canadian Literature), but most important to note is how in turning outside the text, this time towards Sacred Cree legends, the reader is inclined towards alternative readings and Aboriginal worldvies. For more on the Rolling Head Legend see Stevens, James R. Sacred Legends of the Sandy Lake Cree.
the text itself and the “guessing,” which Stigter identifies as a critical aspect of the poem, is no longer such an explicit issue. As such, the call to action, the demand to move outside of the text and do something, is no longer an imperative. For better or for worse, the glossary makes Blue Marrow a more contained entity, insofar as the reader does not have to move “outside the text” for clarification. In reading the same passage I just cited above, we can almost instantly learn the Cree meaning of “amisk” and “iskotwew” without putting the poem down and turning to a secondary source. (“Amisk” means beaver, “iskotwew” fire.)

As Halfe herself identified in our email conversation (quoted above), while the first edition of Blue Marrow holds the potential to invite its readers into a deeper understanding of Cree culture and language, critics who want to use this “callout” as a starting point perhaps underestimate the apathy of the reader or their unwillingness to hear Cree as a vital part of the text. Indeed, as Halfe points out, one of the major criticisms of her work was that “the original Blue Marrow was inaccessible” (Halfe email). Instead of inciting its readers to find a Cree dictionary, Cree speaker, or even an online resource, and thus engage with the language and culture in a more profound way, the Cree word without a gloss actually (re)established itself as archaic and unknowable, rendering it cultural tokenism. For the reader without the tools to understand the Cree, or the desire to acquire those tools, the “meaningless” word is something to skim over or ignore, rather than a call to action, as Cariou suggests.

For Halfe, words need movement to be brought to life. Like brackish water, a stagnant word hints at sickness and contamination, becoming more an agent of harm than an envoy of healing. In Halfe’s poetry, a word is brought to life in the readers’ movement through the text. Not only are later ideas informed by earlier contexts, but also readers are compelled to move backwards to see how new understanding inflects earlier representations. I would argue that by adding a glossary to the second edition of Blue Marrow, Halfe amplifies this process by asking the reader to move back and forth through the text, encouraging the reader to “grow” the Cree word in relation to the English context in which it is planted. The readers’ development of language is important because the call is transformed into a conversation with the reader, as opposed to a reified, essentialist thing. To put it differently, the reader must take up the call Halfe is demanding and become an active producer in the meaning of the text. This dynamism
clearly speaks better to a reconciliation based on process and continuing interaction. As John Ralston Saul argues, “[t]here is an urgent need to bring [Aboriginal] words and concepts into a broad public place. If we do so and talk among ourselves about their full meaning, I believe that we will discover both the roots of our shared civilization and the fundamental language of reconciliation” (318). The second edition of *Blue Marrow* facilitates this sort of movement towards reconciliation by drawing Cree into the conversation, compelling the reader to engage in the production of meaning across cultures.

To push this idea a little further, the glossary in *Blue Marrow* also makes the reader very aware of his or her bodily interaction with a text as a material object that requires a specific performative interaction with its content. Suddenly, pages and spelling themselves become a vital aspect of one’s ability to negotiate the poem, and the “dead letter” becomes a living form that is (re)activated as the reader maps out meaning through the pages. In emphasizing its materiality, forcing the reader to interact with it on a personal level, the second edition of *Blue Marrow* encourages readers to experience their own subjectivity in the reading of the poem. To borrow from the Elder Mary Lou Fox, this edition of Halfe’s poem compels us to recognize that “[w]e do not create a language, but we are created within it” (253). Indeed, with the aid of the glossary, the Cree voice can be considered in more active terms; it is something that is always changing in relation to other voices. Suddenly, Halfe’s insistence in both editions that “I do not recognize who speaks” (18) resonates more clearly: the speaker’s voice is strictly unknowable independent from its conversation with the recipient.

Indeed, it is important to note that in how it calls for a bodily interaction from its readers, this glossary also challenges the idea that meaning in Cree language is something that necessarily exists outside of the subject him/herself, or outside of culture and history. By emphasizing the importance of the lack of a glossary, Cook and Stigter tacitly make a case that presupposes “outside research” as the primary hermeneutic tool for investigating the Aboriginal text. The alienation effect of language forces the reader out of the poem in order to discover the meaning Halfe is working with, rather than asking them to bring their own experience to the meaning of the text. This is not to disparage historically contextualized analysis. While the second edition surely can stake a similar claim to a cultural hermeneutic, the Coteau version of *Blue Marrow* is not only
about how culture and history shapes language; it is also about how audience interaction shapes language itself.

As such, internal, close-readings of the text can become just as applicable as the cultural or historical analysis Stigter and Cook emphasize in their interpretations of the first edition. For example, using the glossary, the reader learns that *wepinasowin* can mean five different things: something thrown in the wind, a flower print, material that flows in the wind, an offering, or a flag. It is up to the reader to use the text itself to understand how and why each definition fits into the passage in question. But the glossary also asks the reader to enact a kind of performance of *wepinasowin*, adding another layer of meaning to the word. As we fan through the pages looking for meaning, *Blue Marrow* itself becomes a material that flows in the wind, a poem caught in the breeze of our own interpretive process. Indeed, the "play" of language Halfe evokes with words such as *wepinasowin* again adds a new vitality to the word, not as set or stagnant meaning, but as a process that can be continually (re)animated and (re)developed by considering the page and our interactions with it in relation to its structure, not only its cultural or even textual implications. Imbibed with multiple meanings from the glossary and one’s bodily interaction with the text, *wepinasowin* is no longer a dead letter, impenetrable and stagnant, but a vital and volatile element of the book itself which individual bodies set into motion. I would suggest that this intimate engagement with the word is a very provocative and compelling way to think about reconciliation as well, insofar as reconciliation demands a fluidity of movement between self and other and an embodiment of "foreign" ideas and concepts. However, it also helps to demonstrate how the onus of responsibility for reconciliation must be shared across parties and thus cannot be interpreted from a single perspective. As such, non-Aboriginal communities have a responsibility to maintain Aboriginal viewpoints in their own readings. In order for reconciliation to be possible as a viable means of healing for Aboriginal communities, activists and critics need to take up “the call” as active producers of its meaning while maintaining its Aboriginals contexts and structures.

What Halfe’s poetry has always demonstrated, and continues to demonstrate, is not only the cultural and political challenges to hearing the Aboriginal voice, be it in poetry or in a TRC hearing, but also the many ways in which these challenges are being combated and overcome. If the call for justice is necessary in order to even *begin* the
reconciliation process--remembering that Tavuchis suggests that the first step on this road is necessarily the call--what I am suggesting in this chapter is that critics need to resist the temptation of reifying this important step. Making the call “knowable” so that society may then move on to apology and forgiveness, elides the complexity of voice(s) and the work of individuals like Halfe who work to make it (them) heard. As I noted in the beginning of this chapter, Halfe is certainly cautious of the colonial implications of the printed form, but her readiness to republish Blue Marrow, to revision and revitalize her callout, demonstrates her willingness to continue to challenge this formulation with ongoing resistance. In making hearing the call a continuous practice, Halfe not only provides an alter-native means to struggle against the “blizzard whiteout,” she also revitalizes the Cree language, allowing it to be heard in testimony against a system that worked so hard to silence it. Apology and forgiveness, to which I will be turning next, would not be possible without this essential step.
Chapter Three: To Acknowledge, But Not To Accept: Critical Reflections on Canadian State Apologies

There is always a strategical or political calculation in the generous gesture of one who offers reconciliation or amnesty, and it is necessary always to integrate this calculation in our analyses.

-Jacques Derrida (Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness 40)

Nearing the end of his novel, *Green Grass, Running Water*, Thomas King, via Coyote, offers an extended, and rather empty apology to anyone who may have been offended by the preceding chapters of the novel. After deconstructing, interrupting, and outright mocking some of the West’s most cherished cultural foundations, including both the story of Genesis and narratives of the settler nation, Coyote offers a half-hearted “sorry” to the *Green Grass* audience:

‘Wait a minute,’ said Ishmael. ‘Wait a minute. Before we begin, did anyone offer an apology?’
‘Wasn’t Coyote going to do that?’ said Robinson Crusoe.
‘Apologize for what?’ says Coyote.
‘In case we hurt anyone’s feelings,’ said Hawkeye.
‘Oh, okay,’ says Coyote. ‘I’m sorry.’
‘That didn’t sound very sorry, Coyote,’ said the Lone Ranger. ‘Remember what happened the last time you rushed through a story and didn’t apologize?’
‘Yes,’ said Ishmael. ‘Remember how far you had to run?’
‘Ooops!’ says Coyote. ‘I am very sorry.’
‘That’s better,’ said Hawkeye.
‘I am really very, very sorry,’ says Coyote.
“That’s fine,” said the Lone Ranger. ‘It sounds very sincere.’
‘Sorry, sorry, sorry, sorry,’ says Coyote.
‘Okay,’ said the Lone Ranger. ‘We believe you.’
‘Hee-hee,’ says Coyote. ‘Hee-hee.’ (430)

Written at the time that Canadian churches were offering their own apologies to the survivors of Residential Schools (1991-94 saw the issue or publication of four Church apologies), Coyote’s emphatic repetition of sorry here—“sorry, sorry, sorry, sorry”—not only reflects the social climate King was writing out of, what Roy L. Brooks has famously
dubbed “The Age of Apology,” but it also demonstrates King’s deep understanding of what other critics have called the “new global morality” (Barkan 26), and the way in which the language of regret and contrition have become embedded into political discourse. More importantly, however, insofar as Coyote is not apologizing in order “to heal, to minimize, the harm of humiliations” (Lazare 20) in this scene, but rather to protect himself from further persecution, King draws special attention to the ways in which apology can be deployed as a means of self-interest. Coyote’s desire to avoid being “run out” of the scene, which Ishmael draws attention to here, is a humorous, yet apt comparison to the ways in which politicians shape their discourse towards public opinion in order to stay in office.

Apology is, of course, the centrepiece of Tavuchis’ Mea Culpa. Once the call has been initiated and the perpetrator acknowledges his or her role in the crime, apology is the first step in securing a new relationship between parties. According to Tavuchis, “in its purest expression, an apology clearly announces that ‘I have no excuses for what I did or did not do or say. I am sorry and regretful. I care. Forgive me’” (19). A good apology exposes the vulnerability of the apologizer, allowing victims to overcome their reproach and begin to go through the process of forgiveness. For Tavuchis, apology is “the tension between sorrow and forgiveness that is transcended by reconciliation” (69). However, in this chapter I challenge the notion of a “pure expression” of apology (also known as a sincere apology) in order to expose the ways in which blind faith in sincerity can be deployed strategically against the subjects an apology claims to redress. King’s Coyote provides a fertile place to begin this conversation.

King’s comic critique of apology in the scene above is better understood if analyzed within the context in which it was conceived. Published in 1993, Green Grass was written during a time when “I’m sorry” was just beginning to make its political emergence. According to Aaron Lazare, author of the 2005 text, On Apology, the rise in public apologies began in the early 1990s, when a number of legal articles were published on “the role of apology in both civil and criminal law, analyzing how it functions during trial and pre-trial mediation” (7). Papers such as “Advising Clients to Apologize” (Cohen) and “Legal Consequences of Apologizing” (Rehm & Beatty) demonstrated how apology could actually facilitate the defendant’s position, leading to shorter legal battles, out-of-court settlements and even lower payouts for wrongs incurred. Following this legal
work, “the formerly forbidden idea that physicians should apologize” (Lazare 7) began to emerge in medical literature and was implemented in certain hospitals with positive effects. Indeed, as the New York Times reports, as health care providers began to sink under malpractice costs and consumer demand for redress, prominent medical centres, like John Hopkins and Stanford, began trying a “disarming approach,” namely offering “earnest apologies and fair compensation” (Sack, web).

In sum, elite communities were gradually establishing apology as something that could benefit the perpetrator, particularly financially. Thus, with law and medicine serving as a testing ground, apology was given clearance for political implementation. On August 29, 1993, South African President F.W. de Klerk apologized for apartheid; on September 20, 1993, Japanese Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa apologized for suffering caused by Japan in World War II, and on March 26, 1998, President Clinton apologized for American inaction during the 1994 Rwanda genocide in what became one of at least seven apologies from the United States President during his two terms (including his apology for the Monica Lewinski incident).

In Canada, where King was living and working at the time, apology was also being determined as an important part of political discourse. On August 17, 1986, the United Church of Canada officially apologized to Aboriginal peoples for past wrongs inflicted by the Church. Delivered by Reverend Robert Smith, this apology acknowledged the role the Church had played in the destruction of Aboriginal culture:

We tried to make you be like us and in so doing we helped to destroy the vision that made you what you were. As a result you, and we, are poorer and the image of the Creator in us is twisted, blurred, and we are not what we are meant by God to be. (Smith, The United Church of Canada website)

According to Karen Tjaden, Smith’s words marked the beginning of Canada “living out the words of ... apology” (web). Looking back now, the moment does seem to be

46 See Rachel Gotbaum, “Practice of Hospital Apologies Is Gaining Ground.”
seminal. As Scott Serson illustrates in a detailed timeline,\textsuperscript{47} this particular apology would form the basis of a long string of sorries that would eventually arrive at Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s 2008 apology to the Survivors of Residential Schools—delivered in the House of Commons. While Smith’s 1986 apology would serve as an important watermark for how and why large institutions apologized to Aboriginal peoples in Canada, it is also set a precedent for how Aboriginal communities could respond to these apologies. However, because apology analysis is so often focused on the apologist, as opposed to how the victim interacts with the statement, these types of responses are often overlooked or overshadowed.

Notably, it took two years and one day for the Native Circle Conference (NCC) to consider and respond to the United Church. At the 32\textsuperscript{nd} General Council of the United Church of Canada, Edith Memnook, an Elder and representative for the NCC, publically acknowledged but did not accept the apology. In her statement, she told the council that

\begin{quote}
The Native People of The All Native Circle Conference hope and pray that the Apology is not symbolic but that these are the words of action and sincerity. We appreciate the freedom for culture and religious expression. In the new spirit this Apology has created, let us unite our hearts and minds in the wholeness of life that the Great Spirit has given us. (Memnook; recorded by The United Church of Canada)
\end{quote}

The NCC’s protracted response and Memnook’s statement itself speak to a number of very important ideas on Aboriginal approaches to apology for colonial violence. First, by waiting just over two years to offer their response, the Council demonstrated that such an issue deserved close and careful consideration and that an extended amount of time may be necessary to reach a conclusion. Second, and more importantly, while the Council and Memnook \textit{acknowledged} the United Church apology, they refused to \textit{accept} it on the grounds that they needed more time and further proof in order to determine whether “these are the words of action and sincerity” (Memnook). In other words, while

the NCC recognized that the Church was taking a step towards healing and reconciliation, the apology itself, i.e. the words in the prepared statement, were not enough to guarantee its sincerity. This was not to say that Aboriginal people did not appreciate and respect the Church’s attempt. Nor did it mean that they would actively work against the apology. Indeed Memmook’s reply is careful, compassionate and patient. However, in order for the apology to be accepted as such, further evidence and action were needed in order to back up the claims that Smith made. The time, reflection and discussion put into deliberating Smith’s short statement demonstrated that responding to an apology is not something that should be rushed or forced. By privileging “acknowledgement” over “acceptance,” the NCC emphasized the need to continue to study, discuss and research the apology rather than just “moving on.”

King’s own brief apology scene at the end of Green Grass reflects and reinforces the approach determined by the NCC by turning the acceptance of Coyote’s own apology, which takes place over a matter of moments, into a matter of comedy. Indeed, in the space of a few lines, Coyote goes from not appearing very sorry, to his interlocutors guaranteeing that his apology “sounds very sincere,” to him giggling at their naïveté. Time for proper consideration is closed off immediately, not only in the need for apology, which Ishmael identifies at the beginning of the passage, but also in Coyote’s emphatic insistence that he is sincere, and thus should be taken at his word. The brevity of the scene resonates with what the apology industry in Canada was already becoming. Despite the precedent set by Memmok and the NCC, “sorries” were, with almost the same rapidity that Coyote offers them, soon being fast-tracked through the system by both Churches and government officials in Canada. The 1990s saw five more apologies to Aboriginal people: four from churches (including a re-apology from the United Church) and the first from the Canadian government (Jane Stewart’s “Statement of Reconciliation”), which would set the tone for the “string of apologies” (Akkad) that the

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48 This second apology, delivered by The Right Reverend Bill Phipps, Moderator of The United Church of Canada, came in response to the Canadian Government’s “Statement of Reconciliation”, discussed below, and was directed more specifically at survivors of Residential Schools.
Canadian government would offer to various groups (including Chinese Canadians, Aboriginal peoples and Indo-Canadians) the following decade. In the limited space between these “sorries” there was little time for the reflection and debate that are needed to initiate a genuinely transformative politics of reconciliation. And while many spoke out against their validity, no group stepped forward to “acknowledge but not accept” these apologies, or to stave off guaranteeing their sincerity in some public or formal fashion. Indeed, in this period of time, as Roland Chrisjohn and Tanya Wasacase point out, “so many people ... embraced the government’s own characterization of their words (‘truth,’ ‘reconciliation,’ ‘apology,’ and so on) and deeds (‘mistakes,’ ‘forging new partnerships,’ et cetera) at face value” (219). By the time Harper gave his 2008 apology, the space for debate and analysis seems to have been entirely cut off, insofar as this statement of regret is entitled a “Full Apology” by the government: a sorry that covers all ground, that leaves no wound unhealed, and thus needs no further thought, conversation or deliberation. And, as I suggest in the previous chapter, it is precisely discussion and exchange that are needed to initiate a genuinely transformative politics of reconciliation.

As King illustrates, without the proper space for reflection and careful consideration, “sorry” becomes a way of deflecting persecution and promoting self-interest. Seizing the moment to his own advantage, Coyote is able to escape the wrath of his would-be persecutors and play one last trick on his interlocutors (this is the final “hee-hee” of many that punctuate the novel). Thus, reflecting the current political climate of apology, “sorry” here is determined by King as a tool more useful to the perpetrator than to the victim(s) it addresses. Coyote can be defined as “perpetrator” in Green Grass, insofar as he acts as a spokesperson for the narrator, who is responsible for undermining and mocking Canada’s Christian/colonial narratives. In this sense the “victims” of the novel are its Western readership, or those who might be offended by someone deconstructing their foundational narratives. The victim/perpetrator inversion King is employing here, putting Western ideologues in the position of the injured party, draws further attention to the way in which the apologist adopts a certain discursive power when engaging with the language of regret.

King’s critique raises some important questions: How applicable is this model to the apologies we have recently seen from the Canadian government? Are state
apologists in some way benefiting from their own sorry? Has “sorry” become a “med-sin”? Following the idea that in-depth and critical consideration is necessary when interpreting an apology and that hasty consideration can actually contribute to the perpetrator’s self-interest, proponents of reconciliation should be stepping away from acceptance and moving closer to acknowledgement of apology, locating the spaces to critically examine “sorry,” rather than hastily guaranteeing it.

4.1. The “Statement of Reconciliation”

While popular discourse identifies Jane Stewart’s “Statement of Reconciliation” as “the first time the government will make a clear apology” (Anderssen) for Residential Schools, there is some disagreement over whether the statement is an apology at all. The morning before Stewart’s address, the Globe and Mail published an article entitled, “Natives Finally Get Ottawa’s Apology: ‘Deeply Sorry’ for Residential Schools.” After the Statement was delivered, ABC Newslink reported that “the Canadian Government has apologised to indigenous people for actions that have had a negative political, economic and social impact on its Aboriginal society.” However, while media opinion seemed ready to guarantee the apology as such, Aboriginal community members and their representatives were not so sure. John McKiggin, a lawyer for former Indian Residential School students in Nova Scotia openly challenged the media’s position: “The statement of reconciliation does not apologize for government actions. It recognizes the pain. It doesn’t admit responsibility for that pain” (qtd. in Cox, web). According to Paulette Regan, a former resolution manager for Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada, many Indigenous peoples consider Jane Stewart’s Statement of Reconciliation to be “a completely inadequate response, lacking the moral authority or political legitimacy of a public formal apology made in Parliament by the prime minister” (46). The tension between the two interpretations of the same speech compels critics to ask precisely what constitutes an apology for the colonial violence inflicted on Aboriginal peoples and whether it is indeed possible to apologize for colonial violence. Who has the power to guarantee this definition? And what are the performative elements that are required to make it sincere?
A direct comparison between Stewart’s and Stephen Harper’s statements allows for a clear understanding of what a “proper” apology looks like in Canada. First, however, it is necessary to examine Stewart’s statement on its own. To identify the most prominent trope in her piece, the “Statement of Reconciliation” is built out of the rhetoric of acknowledgement and recognition. Stewart begins by arguing that “it is essential that we deal with the legacies of the past affecting the Aboriginal peoples of Canada, including the First Nations, Inuit and Métis. Our purpose is not to rewrite history but rather, to learn from our past” (353). She then goes on to specifically identify how Aboriginal peoples were negatively affected by historic policy:

Sadly, our history with respect to the treatment of Aboriginal people is not something in which we can take pride. Attitudes of racial and cultural superiority led to a suppression of Aboriginal cultures and values. As a country, we are burdened by past actions that resulted in weakening the identity of Aboriginal peoples, suppressing their languages and cultures, and outlawing spiritual practices. We must recognize the impact of these actions on the once self-sustaining nations that were disaggregated, disrupted, limited or even destroyed by the dispossession of traditional territory, by the relocation of Aboriginal people, and by some provisions of the Indian Act. We must acknowledge that the result of these actions was the erosion of the political, economic and social systems of Aboriginal people and nations. (353, my emphasis)

The language of recognition and of acknowledgement that Stewart offers here is identified by critics as being “at the centre of apologies” (Marrus 35). Indeed, it is difficult to assert that an apology is possible without this fundamental element. If the call (as I define it in the previous chapter) has not first been received and heard, the apologizer’s sorry is considered empty. In “What is Acknowledgement” Trudy Govier helps to further clarify the importance of acknowledgement in apology. According to her, this rhetoric is effective “because acknowledging those wrongs will assist victims to heal, will mark a separation from the wrongdoing of the past and a commitment to reform, and may constitute a necessary step towards reconciliation” (84, original emphasis).

If McKiggin’s critique of the “Statement of Reconciliation” is to be taken seriously, however, and I believe it should, one must recognize that acknowledgement in and of itself is not enough to guarantee the sincerity of an apology. To reiterate, McKiggin argues that Stewart did not offer an apology because while she recognized historical
wrongdoing, she did not claim any responsibility for it.\textsuperscript{49} Indeed, in a close reading of the section from Stewart's statement quoted above, it is difficult to locate any particular perpetrating agent. The following sentence is particularly troubling in this regard: “We must recognize the impact of these actions on the once self-sustaining nations that were disaggregated, disrupted, limited or even destroyed by the dispossession of traditional territory, by the relocation of Aboriginal people, and by some provisions of the Indian Act.” While there is a subject in this portion of the speech (the royal “We”), it acts only as an observer to historical violence. The “We,” which so often stands in for the “I” in state apologies, simply looks over the disaggregation, disruption and dispossession of traditional Aboriginal territory, cautious not to implicate a direct subject in the bloodshed. Indeed, Stewart carefully detaches any subject from this violence, spuriously designating the “relocation of Aboriginal people” and “the Indian Act” as the actors. In doing so, Stewart elides the “We” (Euro-Canadian government) that was of course behind relocation and the Indian Act, dissimulating responsibility and allowing her to both embrace the all-important rhetoric of acknowledgement--while simultaneously distancing herself and her government from responsibility. As she herself stated in an interview following the address, “in our view, the statement of reconciliation is not an acknowledgment of guilt in a court of law” (qtd. in Cox, web).

The use of pronoun ambiguity in order to disavow agency is certainly not a new tactic in the history of apologies offered to Aboriginal people in Canada. In her analysis of formal apologies offered by Canadian churches to Aboriginal people, Janet Bavelas identifies passive voice as one of the primary grammatical fallacies in almost all of the statements. As the above passage from Stewart illustrates, passive voice is the most common way to apologize without apologizing--or to non-apologize--insofar as it

\textsuperscript{49} I recognize that by attributing the apology solely to Stewart here, namely by using the pronoun “she,” I am eliding the many government voices behind the “Statement of Reconciliation,” and thus the multiple “irresponsible” agents involved here. What should be noted, however, is the way in which government apology, which represents a legion of voices, both past and present, is almost always framed through a single agent. As such, the actor that delivers the apology, i.e. the Minister of Northern Development and Indian Affairs, versus the Prime Minister, becomes an essential element of how the Statement is received and interpreted.
acknowledges the past while tacitly disavowing responsibility for it. Passive voice puts the agent in the background by describing an action, using verbs and even identifying an agent. Yet, as Bavelas points out, “even if there is an agent present, there is a subtle shift of focus to receiving the action rather than doing it” (9). In four of the six apologies that Bavelas looks at in her study (Anglican 1993, Catholic 1991, Oblate 1991, and United, 1998), “not one of the 18 clauses describing an offense was in active voice”; rather “the church (or ‘we’) [acts] as agent” (12). As in Stewart’s statement, the active agent is always slightly removed from being directly involved in the violence. When an agent is included, it is carefully constructed so as to not directly implicate any specific individual or group. Thus, paradoxically, “the Church” or “the system” stands in as perpetrator while simultaneously denying the very existence of an executor.

More important than Stewart’s use of grammar in the Government of Canada Statement, however, is that her apology and the financial compensation that accompanied it ($350 million for community-based healing) was also a way to disguise the government’s attempt to control the cost of lawsuits. An internal document, published in 1996, stamped “Secret” and later uncovered by the Associated Press (AP), revealed that plying angry communities with a relatively small sum of money (which did not include individual reparation, as in the significantly larger Japanese Canadian Agreement), and mobilizing a rhetoric of regret, was, in the long run, the more financially sound option for the Canadian government. According to the twenty-page report, “[t]he number of individual claims as well as any negative implications for the federal government in defending such actions (lawsuits) would likely be minimized if a government policy, including some form of redress package, were adopted” (qtd. in Cox, web).

Reading the secret report rhetorically, as the latent drive behind the manifest Statement, the language of regret that Stewart employs publically should be interpreted as a way to cloak or disguise the market ideologies and political calculation behind the “apology.” Stating that the government is “deeply sorry” (Stewart 354), offering “profound regret” (Stewart 354) and reflecting on the “tragedy of sexual and physical abuse at Residential Schools” (Stewart 354) can be read as a way to distract Aboriginal people and non-Native citizens from the “unconscious” financial self-interest that drove the public apology.
Ultimately, when read within the larger context of the struggle for Aboriginal rights, Stewart’s “Statement of Reconciliation” is a failure. Insofar as the Canadian government initiated the Age of Apology for Aboriginal people in Canada, they also ushered in a new era of reconciliation as the guiding principle for the Indian Policy. Offered from the top down, without apology and forgiveness, and thus the bilateral communication necessary for actual resolution, reconciliation began its tenure in Canada as a means of attempting to bring closure and silence to colonial history.

Thus, while National Chief Phil Fontaine very quickly accepted the statement, the majority of the Aboriginal community, particularly after the AP story, saw it as a way to “whitewash the ways in which Canadians still benefit from the past, stripping the apologies of remorse. Rendering them meaningless. Forgettable” (Miyagawa 29). Indeed, the document uncovered by the AP provided an important supplementary reading for the statement itself: “sorry” was revealed as a means to reinforce colonial ideologies and maintain state control over resources. Stewart’s assertion that she and the Canadian government had “profound regret” and were “deeply sorry” for the tragedy of Residential Schools, is not only rendered meaningless by the state, as Miyagawa, a journalist who was implicated in some way in three of Canada’s major apologies, suggests above, but is actually re-inscribed in the terms of power and control.50 Thus “I’m sorry,” as it is defined by Stewart in relation to colonial violence, became a phrase characterized by duplicity and deceit: registered by Stewart and the Liberal government in Canadian public discourse not as a way to “heal wounds, restore dignity, and encourage forgiveness” (16) but as a means to maintain colonial ideologies.

It is no coincidence, then, that Stephen Harper’s “Full Apology,” offered almost a full decade after Stewart’s “Statement of Reconciliation,” would tactfully avoid employing “sorry” to the same degree in its own movement towards reconciliation. I will reflect more on Harper’s apology shortly, but it is necessary to pause here and reflect on this word “sorry” and how it was being used in Canada and the international community. As King

50 Miyagawa’s biological parents are Japanese and Scottish. They remarried Chinese and Aboriginal spouses, respectively.
had already begun to indicate in *Green Grass*, before Stewart’s infelicitous remarks, “sorry” was already being inscribed in Canadian discourse as a term of deception, a dodge employed by the tricksters of the apology industry to benefit themselves. Indeed, following from the critique laid out by King, the playwright Marie Clements, in her play *Burning Vision* (2002), would go on to further decree the inefficacy of this word in a world shaped by crisis:

Half the time we don’t even know what we are sorry about, it just squeaks out of our sorry gaps before we’re even clued into the conversation. Well, I’m sorry. YOU’RE all so sorry. You have to know when to be sorry. You can’t really be sorry for something you don’t want to remember can you ... But it’s alright ... everybody’s sorry these days. The politicians are sorry, the cops are sorry, the priests are sorry, mining companies, electric companies, water companies, wife beaters, serial rapists, child molesters, mommy and daddy. Everybody’s sorry. Everybody’s sorry they got caught sticking it to someone else ... that’s what they are sorry about ... getting caught. They could give a rat’s ass about you, or me, or the people they are saying sorry to. Think about it ... Don’t be a sorry ass, be sorry before you have to say you are sorry. Be sorry for even thinking about, bringing about something sorry-filled. (100)

As Clements points out here, via the character of Round Rose, a figure who is both tacitly and explicitly implicated in a number of Canadian and American apologies, the word “sorry” as it has been employed over and over again, has been stripped of any meaning it may once have had. For Clements, “sorry” is now simply a meaningless signifier, an empty gesture, which no longer facilitates healing and reconciliation, but simply allows the perpetrators to continue their harmful narratives under the pretence of regret and contrition.

What both King and Clements illustrate in their work, is the way in which “sorry” can no longer be fully trusted as a way to heal historical injury. In this “Age of Apology,” when apology has become discursively fashionable and even financially advantageous, Apology is part of this character’s very identity. Round Rose represents “an aged Iva Toguri … still waiting for an apology” (character descriptions). As a Japanese American and surrogate mother to Little Boy, “a beautiful Native Boy” (character descriptions), Round Rose sits at the centre of the “sorry crisis” she identifies in this soliloquy.

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“sorry” has become the domain of the trickster, a word that cannot and should not be taken at face value.\textsuperscript{52}

Moving away from Stewart’s “Statement of Reconciliation” to Stephen Harper’s “Full Apology,” offered to the survivors of Residential Schools on June 11, 2008, one can identify the ways in which the state has employed its own trickery to redefine “sorry” for its own purposes. Indeed, it can be argued that Stewart’s Statement marked the end of the efficacy of “sorry” in Canadian discourse and ushered in a new rhetoric of apology carefully reconstructed to protect certain financial interests and maintain the legitimacy of the state.

4.2. The “Full Apology”

What is most striking about Harper’s apology, if held against Stewart’s “Statement of Reconciliation,” is the way in which he subtly shifts the discourse away from “sorry” towards the more robust phrase “we apologize.” While “sorry” is still used in his address, “apology” is undoubtedly the focus, most obviously illustrated by the title the Conservative government gave the speech after the fact: “Prime Minister Harper offers Full Apology on behalf of Canadians for the Indian Residential Schools system” (Office of the Prime Minister, website). “Sorry” is used twice in this speech, but it is largely

While, as Deanna Reder and Linda Morra have illustrated in \textit{Troubling Tricksters}, there is no single definition of “trickster” that can be employed across Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal texts, for King, this figure, which most often takes the form of Coyote, is someone we should always be cautious of. Take for instance the opening lines of “The One About Coyote Going West”: “This one is about Coyote. She was going west. Visiting her relations. That’s what she said. You got to watch that one. Tricky one” (\textit{Relations} 95). As both the apology scene in \textit{Green Grass} and “The One About Coyote Going West” indicate, Coyote is not a figure that we should trust implicitly, despite how she shapes the story. While she might operate under the guise of friendliness and goodwill, she often has ulterior motives and we would be wise to keep at least one eye on her--just to be safe. I don’t want to collapse the distinction between Coyote and the Government here (indeed, doing so would be falling into Coyote’s trap: believing I know and can identify her intent or essence), but because of the political contexts with which he is engaging, King does leave some room for drawing comparisons. His poem “Coyote Sees the Prime Minister,” in which the Prime Minister makes Coyote a member of cabinet, evokes these connections in more explicit detail. See also Paul Yuxweluptun’s paintings of tricksters-as-sell-out-corporate-representative.

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overshadowed by the focused use of “we apologize,” which is uttered six times in the address, four of them in a condensed apology paragraph:

To the approximately 80,000 living former students, and all family members and communities, the Government of Canada now recognizes that it was wrong to forcibly remove children from their homes and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions, that it created a void in many lives and communities, and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that, in separating children from their families, we undermined the ability of many to adequately parent their own children and sowed the seeds for generations to follow, and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that, far too often, these institutions gave rise to abuse or neglect and were inadequately controlled, and we apologize for failing to protect you. Not only did you suffer these abuses as children, but as you became parents, you were powerless to protect your own children from suffering the same experience, and for this we are sorry. (my emphasis)

The four repetitions of “we apologize” here, held in contrast to the single utterance of “we are sorry,” indicates the shift away from the latter phrase towards a new type of apology. Whereas “sorry” was once the phrase to be repeated again and again in order to seek forgiveness, as indicated by King in his comic repetition of the word, “we apologize” seems to have now taken on that role. Arguably, the reason for this shift can be connected to the way in which “sorry” had been determined by Stewart and the Liberal government as a means of eliding financial self-interest, a definition that the community had by now included in their vernacular. To put it differently, pace Clements, in Canadian state apologies, “sorry,” as an expression of grief and sorrow, had been overdetermined by deceit and bad-faith politics. Thus, in order to make his Statement viable, Harper had to employ a new discursive approach, using language that would convince the audience of his sincerity and desire for reconciliation.

At first glance, Harper’s apology seems to be more intimately engaged with the politics of apology and the theory that sustains it. To begin with, he attempts to engage with Aboriginal language and culture by using Aboriginal languages to express his regret. Rather than simply saying “sorry” in English he also includes expressions of regret in Cree (“Nimitataynan”), Ojibway (“Niminchinowesamin”) and Inuktituk (“Mamiattugut”). According to Ojibway Elder Fred Kelly, “we must ... insist that the
Aboriginal peoples have meaningful participation in the design, administration, and evaluation of the reconciliation process so that it is based on their local culture and language” (22). By including Aboriginal language in his apology, Harper makes a small yet significant gesture towards clearing space for Aboriginal traditions within a primarily Western discourse, inviting alter-native interpretations and reading. While it is perhaps naive to simply accept Harper as sincere, in the real world of politics it can be advantageous to accept these statements as sincere and then hold leaders accountable to their words. However, sincere or not, by introducing Aboriginal languages into his speech, the Prime Minister risks destabilizing the state’s apologetic discourse, if only by introducing a tiny crack to be exploited by attentive readers with knowledge of these languages and the cultures they come out of. For instance, "Niminchinowesamin" can also mean to “have regret” or “to be disappointed” (Nichols 85), which can profoundly alter what Harper is attempting to convey here.

Further, like Stewart before him, Harper makes sure to acknowledge the damage colonial practices and Residential Schools had on Aboriginal people and communities:

The government now recognizes that the consequences of the Indian Residential Schools policy were profoundly negative and that this policy has had a lasting and damaging impact on Aboriginal culture, heritage and language. While some former students have spoken positively about their experiences at Residential Schools, these stories are far overshadowed by tragic accounts of the emotional, physical and sexual abuse and neglect of helpless children, and their separation from powerless families and communities.

This portion of the speech is particularly compelling not only because Harper demonstrates that the Canadian government, which is represented as the perpetrating agent here, acknowledges the damage it wrought on Aboriginal people, but also, more

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importantly, it recognizes and dissimulates the narrative that sustained these schools for so long (the last Residential School in Canada closed in 1996), i.e. the perverse fantasy that these schools actually *benefitted* Aboriginal children and that many of these children had positive experiences in them (also known as the Standard Account).\(^{54}\) Here, Harper makes clear that while this may be the case, the few positive accounts of Residential Schools are deeply overshadowed by the destruction of language, culture and family they created.

Finally, the Prime Minister evokes what is probably the single most important issue in contemporary apology debates, the issue of sincerity. Nearing the end of the speech, he claims that, “the Government of Canada *sincerely apologizes* and asks the forgiveness of the Aboriginal peoples of this country for failing them so profoundly” (359, my emphasis). While it seemingly acts in the same way as other modifiers (or “upgraders” as apology theorists in the social sciences call them),\(^ {55}\) the abundance of critical work done on “sincerity” necessitates that it be given due attention. As I have already illustrated via Coyote and Stewart, upgraders are an important part of a convincing apology: Coyote insists that he is “very sorry” while Stewart proclaims that “we are *deeply sorry.*” By upgrading the term through modifiers, “sorry” is given more import.

The logic of this is somewhat silly, of course, as King points out by over-exaggerating Coyote’s use of “very” through repetition and italic emphasis. There is no reason to accept that an individual is sorrier, or feels deeper regret, simply because he or she can modify the language of its expression. However, there is something to be said for how the *performance* of an apology makes it easier for the victim to accept it. Obviously, the bare signifier, standing on its own without any performative compliment, seems robotic and indifferent. If I were to apologize to my partner for forgetting her

\(^{54}\) See chapter one.

\(^{55}\) See Marc L. Bergman and Gabriele Kasper. “Perception and Performance in Native and Nonnative Apology.” Specifically p. 94.
birthday by just walking up and telling her “I'm sorry” in a straight monotone while staring at her blankly, it is most likely that my apology would be rejected. As Coyote helps to demonstrate, “I'm sorry” becomes meaningful when it is dressed up appropriately. Indeed, Coyote’s “sorry” does not “sound sincere” until he fancies it up with emphasis, upgraders and repetition, upon which it is accepted.

By employing “sincerely” as a modifier, however, as opposed to “very” or even “deeply,” Harper is not simply appealing to the logic of upgraders to emphasize his regret. “Sincerity” is one of the central terms utilized by apology theorists to determine the proper apology. It is also worth pointing out the etymology of “sincere” here, which is derived from the French, *sans cire*. The word originates from sculptors who would guarantee that their sculptures were “sans cire,” without wax--i.e., without prostheses that disguised a broken piece of the sculpture (made out of marble or bronze, etc). In other words, “sincere” does not mean Truthful but rather means lacking deceptive little tricks that would compromise the value of the object in question. According to James V. Scott, “what most people are looking for in an apology is sincerity. They want the apology to come from the heart. They want to know that the offender feels something, that they ‘give a damn’ about the damage they have done” (3). Indeed, most critics agree that in order for an apology to be successful, insofar as success is measured by the acceptance of the apologee, it must be free of deceit, hypocrisy, or duplicity and express a certain probity in intention. In other words, to use the liberal-humanist language that continues to be applied to apology discourse, a proper apology must “come [...] from the heart of the wrongdoer and not from the pen of a lawyer or an indifferent third party” (Alter 34). An apology that forgoes this crucial element of sincerity risks causing further injury and negating the possibility of reconciliation. As Dugland Christie puts it, “an insincere apology is a dangerous matter. It can result in the arousal and not the abatement of passions” (763).

Using “sincerely” as an upgrader, Harper evokes the central element of the proper apology, at least as it has been defined in the literature, and thus, in one sense, fulfils his promise to offer a “Full Apology.” By utilizing this specific word in conjunction with “apologize,” he explicitly connects his apology to a larger critical discourse, which helps to guarantee the legitimacy of his regret. What the logic of sincerity insists upon, however, is that the audience, or the victims, collapse the distinction between *saying* that
one is sincere and actually *being* sincere, which opens up the space for deceit. As Slavoj Žižek points out in his reflection on the South African TRC, this fundamental distinction is often ignored by those involved in public apologies for historical wrongdoings. In the South African amnesty trials, for instance, there was no way to determine whether the perpetrators actually felt regret for their actions, or if they were just saying that they did in order to escape prison time:

> The problem is that this procedure only works when we can count on a minimal ethical responsibility and dignity of the torturer. What if what happens is, what, according to my sources, did happen, at least a couple of times: that you got an apartheid murderer who came there, confronted his black victims and with a cynical smile said, “yes don’t you remember, I tortured you in this way and that way, I confess everything ok, ha ha, now I am over.” (Žižek, Lecture)

What Žižek rightly points out here is that theories of apology too often put all of their faith in the inherent goodness of the actors. In what can only be seen as a perverse commitment to the Pascalian inversion, in which language generates belief rather than the other way around, when forced to use the language of apology and confession the subject will somehow become innately apologetic, even if political and social circumstances offer no alternative. As Žižek points out, what critics need to be more aware of is how this same language, and indeed the very privilege they bestow upon it, creates the perfect setting for perpetrators to advance their own interests.

Indeed, one of the main difficulties with apology is that this sort of faith is always already built into its structure. As Tavuchis put it, apology itself is impossible: “an apology, no matter how sincere or effective, does not and cannot *undo* what has been done. And yet, in a mysterious way and according to its own logic, this is precisely what it manages to do” (5). In the sense that it is “impossible,” that it sets out to achieve the unachievable, apology demands a certain devotion to its healing potential and to its built-in sincerity. Both the perpetrator and the victim must believe in the possibility of a new and better world, of the healing of un-healable wounds.

There are some important similarities to be drawn here with Gayatri Spivak’s “impossible project of ethical singularity” (“What is it” 92). For Spivak, establishing relations of ethical singularity with the subaltern amounts to an impossible project, quite
simply because no discourse, subaltern or otherwise, can accommodate every other across every divide. Spivak also points out that a relationship of ethical singularity is impossible to establish with a subaltern because once those relations are established the subaltern ceases to be a subaltern—instead s/he becomes a subject with “voice” and agency. The impossible ethical project, then, for Spivak, is not to attempt to engage the other as such, as he or she exists in his/her political/cultural materiality, but to act in relation to the elusive spectre of impossible justice. As such, Spivak’s ethical project, under which I include apology, is translated into messianic faith, a belief in “spirit” or “ghost” that evades dialectical integration and thus material philosophy.

Where the potential for exploitation lies in establishing relations of ethical singularity, is in the fact that the apologist can put this faith in the impossible to work for him or herself. If, as in Canada, both parties have expressed a desire to move towards reconciliation, the one offering the apology is aware that at some point the victims must be willing to suspend their disbelief, abandon some amount of suspicion, and give themselves over to a certain confidence in the apology’s impossible possibility. What this faith or suspension of disbelief can lead to is an abandonment of critical thinking, which can be exploited by a motivated party.

Indeed, in English, the word “apology,” with its Spivakian implications of “impossible possibility,” can interfere with rational analysis and clear insight into an apologist’s motives. Apology is often presented in critical discourse as some sort of magic word, a speech act par excellence, which, if properly evoked, can actually heal wounds. As Howard Kushner puts it, exposing the weight critics assign to this phrase, “apology is but one word, but it is one word that can make all the difference for those who need to hear it” (15). As such, there is a type of mysticism ascribed to “apology,” which can account equally for both the healing potential it carries and for the ways it is abused by insincere apologists. While, on the one hand, the implicit belief that society has in the word “apology” can itself account for the healing potential of the word (what some might call the placebo effect), on the other hand, this same belief can cloud critical facilities, distracting from the real mechanisms behind it. Indeed, as Roland Chrisjohn and Sherri Young illustrate in The Circle Game, the explicit emphasis on healing and therapy in the Canadian discourse of reconciliation, is “another rhetorical manoeuvre designed to obscure ... the moral and financial accountability of Euro-Canadian society
in a continuing record of crimes against humanity” (3). To operate under the assumption that the rhetoric of healing and apology is not being applied strategically against the victims it claims to redress is to egregiously underestimate the depth and complexity of the imperialist system and the literal impossibility of apologizing for colonial violence.

Reading Harper’s apology closely, within the political and social discourse in which it was offered, it is difficult not to assert that this “mysticism” is precisely what is being deployed. To return to an earlier point, what is most important to reflect on here is the shift that the Prime Minister makes away from the use of “sorry” to the more robust phrase “we apologize.” This is an important semantic detail, insofar as “I’m sorry” had become over determined, a statement which the global community now associates with duplicity and the self-interest of the one offering it.

Obviously, on a purely semantic level, by using “apology” directly (and repeatedly) in his own statement, Harper made it more difficult for critics to assert that his statement was of the same order as Stewart’s. But the word apology has its own special qualities which need to be unpacked in order to demystify its supposed “magical” qualities. The linguist J.L. Austin is exceptionally helpful in these regards. In one of his final seminars in How to Do Things with Words, Austin distinguishes between the phrases “I’m sorry” and “I apologize” as a way to flesh out his ideas on the behabitive, a speech act by which an attitude is changed or adapted. Austin’s text is a study of the word qua performative, an examination of what words do once they are uttered--such as marrying a couple or naming a ship--rather than what they report. As the seminars progress, statements of regret, such as “I’m sorry” and “I apologize,” play an important role in helping Austin develop his theory and unpack the nuances of the performative.

According to Austin, there are three semantic orders of expressing regret: I apologize, I am sorry and I repent. For him, “I apologize” is a performative utterance, “I am sorry” is half report, insofar as it can describe an inner feeling and perform reconciliation, and “I repent” is merely a report (79). The distinction between “I apologize” and “I am sorry” is of key importance, not only because of the way these two phrases have been employed in Canadian discourse, but also because of the subtle, yet important nuances Austin identifies between them. Most importantly, then, is Austin’s notion of the behabitive, which he develops with the use of “I apologize.” According to
Austin, “behabitives include the notion of reaction to other people’s behaviour and fortunes and of attitudes and expressions of attitudes to someone else’s past conduct or imminent conduct” (160). In other words, “We apologize” is not simply an act of telling an audience something, but of altering their reception of that telling.

For Austin, the test that proves the distinction between these two similar statements of regret is the fact that the latter “could be literally false” (80). For instance I can say “I am sorry” for the damage caused by Residential Schools without actually being or feeling sorry. In the sense that it is a half report, “I am sorry” always already has the potential to be a lie. However, saying “I apologize” cannot be clearly distinguished as a falsehood. “I apologize” does not report or describe anything and it is not simply true or false. Rather, “the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action, which again would not normally be described as, as ‘just’, saying something” (original emphasis; Austin 5). In other words, the former statement of regret is a performative; it puts a particular kind of idea into motion rather than simply describing an inner state of being. Indeed, as Austin points out, the translation of “I apologize,” as opposed to “I am sorry,” into its present participle further demonstrates its active quality: “I am apologizing” is an accepted turn of phrase, while “I am sorrying” is just ungrammatical.

What the act of “I apologize” depends on, then, is not the truthfulness of the speaker, but the way in which it commits both the speaker and the audience to like conduct. In this sense, “I apologize” can be insincere (or infelicitous, as Austin puts it) insofar as it is rejected qua performance by the players involved. If “I apologize” does not enact a change in behaviour or attitude from the apologist it is insincere, not because the speaker is falsely reporting on their inner feelings (indeed, there is no descriptive variation of “I apologize”; I can be sorry, but I cannot be apology), but because it fails to set in motion what it portends. Austin’s analysis exposes the logic behind Harper’s shift to “we apologize” from Stewart’s “we are deeply sorry.” By deploying “apology” as opposed to “sorry,” Harper negates the possibility of critics, like McKibbin, from directly levying claims of falsehood against him and his government. The onus of the second official apology lies not in whether Harper and other government officials actually feel sorry for the damage inflicted on Aboriginal communities, but whether the statement can generate a positive change in behaviour and belief, resulting in improved conditions for the victim (rather than just an ambiguous feeling of sorrow).
The “mysticism” of Harper’s apology derives particularly from this essential point. By utilizing “We apologize” rather than “I am sorry,” he is not simply describing a feeling or reporting on an inner state of being, but inflecting a kind of change of attitude on the part of the government he is representing. Equally important is that the apology, if received as sincere, which he emphasizes it should be, is a speech act that potentially alters his audience’s perceptions of an event. For Austin, this is precisely what the behabitive accomplishes. In using “apology,” as opposed to “sorry,” Harper attempts to recast a national understanding of the mistreatment of Aboriginal peoples, not as something that may have been ultimately beneficial, the skewed colonial perspective that dominated well into the twentieth century, but as a tragic error, a violent and devastating procedure that “has no place in our country.” As such, the “Full Apology” is not just a report on the government’s inner feelings of regret for colonial practices, which can never be proven to exist anyway, but an attempt to inflect—or, more to the point, to create the appearance of inflecting—a certain measure of change in the Canadian imaginary.

Ultimately, what makes the behabitive successful, or felicitous, is the speaker’s ability to engage with certain performative rules. Indeed, it is perhaps easiest to conceptualize Austin’s approach to apology as behabitive with some help from the language of theatre itself. A “happy or “felicitous” speech act is one that allows the audience to adequately suspend their disbelief, to comprehend the performance as sincere. Like any good play or film, in order for this to happen, the persons and circumstances must be appropriate, suitable language must be used and it must be delivered at the apposite time, and the procedure must be enacted fully and completely. This is not to say that the audience enters into some hallucinogenic state in which they can no longer differentiate between reality and representation, but rather that the act itself does not offer any interruptions or glitches that might draw attention to its performative quality. As Marie Clements so aptly puts it in *Burning Vision*, “we want the unreal real thing” (29), an apology which is obviously scripted and connected to very specific political interests, but which conforms to the rules of performance which allow the audience to disavow its supporting context(s).

This is of particular importance in apology, when the audience enters into what I call “the theatre of regret” already suspicious of the performers’ motives. As Miyagawa
states (quoted above), apology, and its recent proliferation, is often seen by victims primarily as a way to “whitewash” apologies, making them empty gestures. In the “Age of Apology,” in which the audience is hyper-aware of the potential for affectation, for an apology to be effective, authentic or not, it must operate inside a convention that interferes with the recipients’ ability to maintain his or her scepticism. By breaking the fourth wall in her apology scene, having Round Rose directly address the audience and use the second person, Clements attempts to disrupt the smooth flow of apology which has rendered “sorry” so meaningless, just another element that has been recuperated into colonial discourse. For Clements, in order for “sorry” to be meaningful, it must be offered as an interruption to the dominant narrative, something which calls attention to the very complacency that the word itself embodies.

However, rather than “breaking the fourth wall,” Harper’s apology actually engages with the performative elements that allow “us” to suspend our disbelief, a suspension, which I argue, has some disturbing implications. Assuming Stewart’s Statement as a backdrop, or as a way not to apologize, Harper was able to suspend disbelief by evoking at least four important performative measures to guarantee the sincerity of his “Full Apology.” First, he offered the apology himself. Stewart was as important government official (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development), but not the top figure in the Canadian government. Given that she offered the “apology” rather than the Prime Minister of the time (John Chrétien), her words were not given the weight that a delivery from the nation’s top official would carry. Second, Harper chose the proper stage. While Stewart’s “Statement of Reconciliation” was offered on the grounds of Parliament Hill, Harper stood in the House of Commons, evoking the history and authority of that space, thus making the apology seem that much more important to the history of Canada and integrating it more firmly into the national imaginary. Third, he used the pronoun “you,” directly addressing Residential School survivors and Native people generally. And finally, as illustrated above, he included Aboriginal languages in his apology, which directly addressed the audience and the history he was attempting to redress.

As I have already identified, “the reception of an apology is largely dependent on the perceived sincerity of the speaker--something which can be quite subjective and difficult to measure” (Funk-Unrau 8). By evoking the above performative measures in his
“Full Apology,” Harper generated the sincerity necessary to guarantee his statement as a behabitive and thus allowed for what National Chief Phil Fontaine called “the accomplishment of the impossible” (CBC, web). However, insisting that Harper is truly sincere simply because his performance suggested so is also to forget the radical disconnect between being and saying implicit to the behabitive. Following from Austin, the utterance of “we apologize” is not a report on that speaker’s emotions or feelings of regret; rather it is an attempt to alter attitudes and behaviour. In this instance, the speaker’s “being” should not come into question—despite the temptation to make that link. It is equally as fruitless to levy arguments for or against the truth of Harper’s statement in order to defend or oppose it. In fact, such arguments have the potential to cloud precisely what is at stake here. In appealing to the behabitive rather than a constative report, Harper opens up potential for change in his apology, while Stewart forecloses it. Whether one believes he is being “true” or not is beside the point: it is in the performance itself, which can be either true or false, that the potential for change arises. By registering this “Full Apology” in the national symbolic, Harper invites his audience, and his government, to re-imagine Aboriginal people and forge new relationships inflected by this re-conceptualization. It is insofar as he opens up this potential for change by employing the performative, as opposed to the constative report of “I’m sorry” which was the standard for state apologies before his remarks, that there should be cause for excitement and hope for reconciliation.

However, as Austin points out, the gap opened up by the behabitive, between being and saying, also opens up an auspicious space for dishonesty: “in the field of behabitives, besides the usual liability to infelicities, there is a special scope for insincerity” (161). Insofar as the speech act is no longer connected to being, there can be a radical disconnect between what the speaker is uttering and what his or her intentions may be. Indeed, because we so often fall into the trap of collapsing the performative with the constative, therefore identifying a change in attitude as the truth of the statement, the behabitive operates as a veil behind which the insincere apologist can carry out his or her own interests. Or, to put it differently, to insist that the behabitive is actually an indicator of the speaker’s subjective opinion and intent is to radically disavow the fact that performance can be evoked by prevaricators with self-serving ends.
The most obvious place to begin this type of reading in Harper’s speech is with his use of the word “apology,” which, as I illustrate above, is the semantic lynchpin of his statement. The word “apology” itself, particularly in Canada, is caught up in a very intricate political/financial web, which deserves further attention. According to Tavuchis, the word “apology,” specifically, has become associated with guilt and fiduciary responsibility. As such, saying that you are sorry opens one up to justified financial attack and public shaming: “given these cultural and judicial facts of life, to apologize sincerely is a potentially stupid and costly gesture” (Tavuchis 95). In light of this, critics should be rightly suspicious of how and why Prime Minister Stephen Harper—who notably ran on a neoliberal platform based on small-government and free market principles—would put to use a word that would so directly implicate his cabinet in what appears to be a form of welfare state provisions. As Drew Hayden Taylor puts it, “you would think the Residential School system would be something the Conservatives would admire” (102).

One clear way to address these problems can be located in the way apology itself was reformulated in Canada in the time between Stewart’s and Harper’s individual statements. Indeed, if one looks at the literature that directly precedes Harper’s 2008 address, we can see how apology has been slowly adapted to fit neoliberal principles and fiscal conservatism. In 2007, Russell J. Getz, a prominent B.C. lawyer and legal councillor for the Ministry of the Attorney General, wrote a paper calling for a “Uniform Apology Act.” In this paper, Getz cites evidence from malpractice suits in which 73% of those surveyed said they would not have sued if they had been given an apology. Canada-wide apology legislation, he argues, will “encourage people to engage in the moral and humane act of apologizing after having injured another” (5). The primary evidence that Getz uses to back up his claim comes from within Canada itself. In 2006, British Columbia passed the Apology Act, which “provides that an apology is not admissible in civil proceedings for the purpose of proving liability and that an apology is not an admission of liability” (Getz 2). B.C.’s legislation was quickly followed by Saskatchewan’s Evidence Act, which operates under similar pretences. By 2008, just before Harper’s “Full Apology” to Survivors of the Residential School system, apology legislation was either in effect or being considered in more than half of Canada’s
provinces and territories, including B.C., Saskatchewan, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Yukon.\footnote{See Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. \textit{Report Of the Task Force on Adverse Health Events.} pp. 97-99; MacLeod, Leslie H. \textit{A Time for Apologies: the Legal and Ethical Implications of Apologies in Civil Cases.} April 12, 2008; Alberta Evidence Act, RSA 2000, c.A-18, s.26.1; Department of Justice. \textit{“Apology Legislation Effective Oct. 1.”}}

This is of no small consequence to the TRC. According to Getz, the legal uncertainty of apology can lead people to avoid it and influence lawyers to advise their clients against saying “I’m sorry.” Obviously, this can stymie healing and reconciliation. In essence, the legislation passed in Canada thus allows the perpetrator to apologize without fear that that apology will make them legally and financially responsible for their actions. Or, to put it differently, the Apology Acts strip apology of its material accountability, removing the financial blocks that interfere with the apologist’s ability to engage on a “moral” level with their victim(s). As Getz puts it, “in general, apologies are morally desirable” (9) and thus, in his logic, governments should be doing all they can to break down barriers to their release. However, by emphasizing morality one also distracts from fiduciary responsibility and the material impacts of historical injustice.

Idealist claims like the one Getz makes are purposefully hard to challenge because they put opponents in the awkward position of appearing brutish and uncompassionate. However, what Getz and his supporters wilfully disavow behind the guise of moral correctness is the stark reality behind this legislation, namely that by untethering the link between apology and fiscal responsibility victims can no longer use the former to recoup the finances, land and goods that they have lost due to the event the perpetrator is apologizing for. Indeed, for Getz, the apology takes on a false materiality of its own—“an apology is a form of compensation” (original emphasis; 9)—which surreptitiously stands in for financial accountability.

By taking up a nearly indomitable “moral” position, which strategically substitutes words for resources, this idealist argument tacitly severs the link between apology and
claims for land and resources, thus negating the possibility of Aboriginal people being properly redressed for colonial tactics, offering them instead an intangible form of healing that maintains the status quo. Indeed, as Dugald E. Christie argues, “the proposed Apology Act [and, I would argue all the apology legislation that is now in place in Canada] is primarily designed to save the government money, particularly with respect to Aboriginal claims” (761). As Christie argues, rightly I think, apology legislation benefits the cynical and hurts the empathetic: “the people who will not sue for an unremedied injury because there has been an apology are those who should receive the most compensation and not the least” (762). He goes on to support his argument by reflecting on the need for financial compensation for injured parties to heal properly:

A sixty year old woman, whose life has been devastated by childhood abuse from a person she trusted, likely will not recover with a mere apology. She may need years of painful counselling from a clinical psychologist so that she and her family can come to terms with what has happened. (763)

Christie is obviously referring here to the many Aboriginal survivors who went through severe psychological trauma in Residential Schools. Suggesting that an apology can enact the work of psychological treatment, which, at eighty to one hundred dollars per hour, necessitates a stable bank account, denies the complexity of this trauma and elevates “we apologize” to a level not even the most profound speech act can reach. Indeed, Christie does not push his argument far enough. It is not simply that these victims need financial redress in order to begin healing, something which the government has, to their credit, provided (in the form of $1.9 billion in restitution), but that they have also been denied access to the land and resources that sustain their way of life. By suggesting that an apology can somehow take the place of traditional land, not to mention the culture that stems from it, is not simply an egregious miscalculation. It is also a way to perpetuate colonial principles and maintain control of the resources that put Aboriginal people at a disadvantage in the first place. Indeed, critics must be willing to move even further past Christie’s final point, in which he asks for “compensation and meaningful apologies” (767), and start to think of compensation as a part of the definition of apology, as opposed to a separate and independent term.
It is no coincidence, then, that Harper’s slew of apologies to the victims of Canada’s racist and colonial policies, including his apology to Aboriginal people, Chinese Canadians and Indo Canadians, was offered at the very time when apology legislation was being considered in more than half of Canada’s provinces and territories (Nova Scotia and Ontario’s legislation passed just after Harper’s House of Commons address; the Yukon’s legislation was rejected shortly following). By offering his statement just when apology and compensation were being separated into distinct terms in the official Canadian vernacular, Harper was able to utilize the more semantically powerful terminology without fear of making his government financially liable. If one reads the Full Apology alongside the political literature of the time, such as Getz’s paper, it is clear that by utilizing apology, Harper was, in effect, employing the neo-colonial measures we might expect from a Conservative government. Apology, as defined by the current literature, further elides Aboriginal peoples’ claims to land and resources while simultaneously creating the appearance of morality and benevolence for the speaker.

Indeed, when read within a larger legal and political discourse, Harper’s apology should be viewed as a failed endeavour of the same order as Stewart’s “Statement of Reconciliation.” If it is studied alongside the legal discourse it is immersed in, it becomes clearer that the same financial conservatism--aimed at distributing as few resources as possible to Aboriginal peoples--is as much at play in Harper’s Statement as it was in Stewart’s. In both cases, a deeper reading reveals an “unconscious” self-interest behind the manifest display of contrition, which should be enough to compel researchers and critics to initiate deeper and more critical studies of all apologies offered at a state level, despite what might appear to be positive steps in semantic presentation and performance. In other words, Harper’s use of apology, despite its potential as a speech act, should be put under the same microscope that King calls for in his comic presentation of the word “sorry.” Indeed, such a comparison offers disturbingly similar results. Like Coyote’s, Harper’s apology is rooted in a deeper discourse of self-preservation/interest, which shields itself behind the rhetoric of regret and contrition.

Finally, there is another “text” that needs to be taken into account if one is to determine the sincerity of the 2008 address. On September 25, 2009, at a press conference during the G20 summit in Pittsburgh, the Prime Minister made a statement that retroactively inflected how his apology should be read. While trying to impress upon
members of the media and fellow world leaders exactly how, at least in his mind, irresistible Canada is, the Conservative leader made the following remarks: “We also have no history of colonialism … So we have all of the things that many people admire about the great powers but none of the things that threaten or bother them” (qtd. in Hui). This off-the-cuff statement rightly outraged both Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals alike and called into question the validity of the earlier apology, again exposing the impossibility of apologizing for colonial violence. Shawn Atleo, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, released the following statement to the Georgia Straight pointing out how Harper was contradicting himself:

I have spoken with the Minister of Indian Affairs and urged him and the Prime Minister to meet with First Nations in good faith to address this matter and, equally important, begin the work of reconciliation that lies ahead. The Prime Minister stated in his apology to students of Residential Schools that, ‘There is no place in Canada for the attitudes that inspired the Indian Residential Schools system to ever prevail again.’ The Prime Minister must ensure that such commitments inform every statement and action. (qtd. in Hui, web)

As Atleo is pointing out here by directly citing the apology, these two “texts” need to be read alongside one another. By insisting that Canada has “no history of colonialism” Harper effectively dismisses his earlier commitment to recognizing the horror of Residential Schools, by attempting to render this part of Canada’s history invisible to the global audience. There are at least two ways to unpack the contradiction Harper sets up here. The first is simply to insist that the apology and the comments offered at the G20 are entirely incommensurable, that the second deconstructs the first and exposes the duplicity of the Prime Minister. While this is an important and necessary reading, which critics like Atleo have taken up, it risks foreclosing a deeper analysis of how apology is now being defined in the Canadian political sphere. Rather than deconstructing the apology via this supplement, it is more challenging and informative to try to read the two texts together as complements, not contradictions. This is not to attempt to justify Harper’s racist and egregiously false remarks at the G20, but to attempt to understand how he could arrive at a place where such a comment would make sense, particularly in light of his recent string of apologies, which seemed to be an open acknowledgment of Canada’s colonialism.
Harper’s 2008 and 2009 remarks can be read together cogently if one reads his initial apology as a type of erasure. In this case, Canada has no history of colonialism because the Conservative government used apology to delete this history from collective memory, and, to borrow from Clements’s Round Rose, “You can’t really be sorry for something you don’t want to remember can you?” (100). In this reading, by offering a “Full Apology,” the government was essentially recasting the national perception of colonial violence. By redressing it in its entirety, or at least by saying that it was “fully” redressed, there were no longer any wounds to point to, no explicit markers that could confirm that Canada is a product of genocide and imperialist policies. Apology, in this sense, acts as a means of camouflaging the past, hiding the damage and bloodshed that might drive away potential investors. To borrow from Carl D. Schneider, “Apology is repair work” (268). However, if these repairs are instituted in order to disavow or forget an earlier trauma, critics need to be willing to challenge their validity and look towards the intentions of the repairer. To go back to my reading of Austin on the behabitive, this is precisely the change in attitude that Harper is hoping his apology will accomplish.

By reading Harper’s seemingly preposterous remarks at the G20 against his House of Commons Statement, one is forced to acknowledge the way apology is being defined at the political level in Canada. Offered as a closed space, a complete narrative, “we apologize” is another way to disavow, or dis-remember a violent colonial past and clear the space necessary to construct a new, more congenial history in which Canada fantastically has “all of the things that many people admire about the great powers but none of the things that threaten or bother them.” Following from Clements, if the act for which one is apologizing for is forgotten, or even rendered invisible by “sorry,” the apology itself is probably moot, an empty gesture designed to control public opinion.

Indeed, to bring Canada’s two apologies to Aboriginal people together again, where both Stewart’s and Harper’s statements ultimately fail is in their attempts at closing the debate. Stewart simply starts on the wrong foot, offering her “apology” under the rubric of reconciliation. Following Tavuchis, the process is backwards. Logically, reconciliation can only be defined as such if both parties agree to it and feel safe and comfortable. By placing reconciliation ahead of apology, Stewart tacitly implies that the latter has already been accepted, that the wrongs she outlines in her rather short statement are the only ones that need to be addressed and that that portion of the
conversation is now closed. Similarly, Harper attempts to end the dialogue by offering
what he called a “Full Apology,” a narrative, which, rightly or not, drew a full circle around
the boundaries of discussion and foreclose any new debate or appeals to the past.

4.3. Incomplete Apologies?

At this present moment it must be recognized that “apology” has been
reformulated in Canada’s political discourse as a means to control narrative and protect
the interests of the status quo. In my conclusion to this chapter, I would like to offer a
brief critique of what might be called the “deconstructive” or “postmodern” approach to
apology, which appears to be in vogue right now. According to Carl D. Schneider, the
statements of regret that have the most potential for reconciliation do not attempt to offer
a full account of the wrong in question. For him, the proper apology acknowledges its
own limitations: “I don’t know what I can say except I’m sorry for what I did. I’m sorry--
that’s all I can say” (265). Tavuchis makes a similar point in Mea Culpa: “to apologize is
to declare voluntarily that one has no excuse, defence, justification, or explanation for an
action (or inaction) that has ‘insulted, failed, injured, or wronged another’” (17). Perhaps,
if anything, this is what makes a truly sincere apology: the recognition of its impossibility.

The notion of an impossible apology resonates with a Derridean approach to the
discourse of reconciliation, which is sceptical of the idea that apology or forgiveness can
ever be rendered into a political program. For Derrida, apology and reconciliation
depend upon a sovereign to organize them; they require “the power necessary to
organize a trial, an applicable judgement or, eventually, acquittal, amnesty, or
forgiveness” (Cosmopolitanism 59). Derrida longs for a forgiveness that does not require
a sovereign power, but he also wonders how possible this is. Apology theorists working
out of the Derridean paradigm solve the problem of sovereignty by usurping the
government with the “figure” of the aporia. In this configuration, harkening back to
Spivak, a “healthier” apology is one that recognizes its own “impossibility” rather than
pretending to offer a full and complete account for a historical injustice or demanding
acceptance. To argue this differently, a Derridean apology “is” only insofar as it
deconstructs its own meaning in its utterance.
This difficult point is made more lucid with an example. A provocative illustration of a deconstructive apology comes from Tavuchis’ interpretation of the apology of Albert Speer, one of the only Nazi leaders to admit his guilt at the Nuremberg Trials. The following is from Speer’s memoir, *Inside the Third Reich*:

> Whether I knew or did not know, or how much or how little I knew, is totally unimportant when I consider what horrors would have been the natural ones to draw from the little I did know [...] *No apologies are possible.* (qtd. in Tavuchis 21, my emphasis)

Speer’s statement of regret deserves its own kind of definition. It cannot rightly be entitled an “apology” *per se*, at least in the sense outlined above, because it explicitly acknowledges the impossibility of that term. On the one hand, if an apology is something that can heal or make up for the past, Speer admits that his words are incapable of the task. On the other hand, to assert that Speer’s statement here is not an apology at all, and therefore is not fraught with the same difficulties I have thus far been unpacking, is also to miss the point. Paradoxically, although he says he cannot apologize, *it is in the very act of “not apologizing”* that Speer makes his apology viable. To make this point clearer, one need only think of Speer actually saying nothing (as many perpetrators did). If “no apologies are possible,” then nothing can be said, but by saying that he *can’t* apologize, Speer in fact offers a more possible apology simply because he attempts the unattainable, therefore allowing his audience to suspend their disbelief and trust in his sincerity. Indeed, “most critics praised his [Speer’s] candour in writing about the responsibility he bore for Nazi excess” (Tavuchis 21).

As such, Speer is a primary example of what can only be properly called the (non)apology--which must be differentiated from the disingenuous apology and the non-existent apology--a statement of regret that can be read as acknowledging its own impossibility and in doing so actually allowing it to be possible for its audience. There is an obvious theoretical advantage to sanctioning this type of statement. In making explicit its limitations, the (non)apology engages with Austin’s logic of the behabitive, allowing for radical changes in beliefs and attitudes towards the perpetrator, while still allowing for a healthy measure of uncertainty and scepticism from the recipient. However, while Speer’s “apology” offers a more robust theoretical approach to apology, one should still be wary of how this “deconstructive” approach might function in the world of politics. If
one is willing to admit that apologies can be read deconstructively, and thus represent a more politically viable and compassionate way to express regret, one must also be willing to admit that apologists can engage with deconstruction, in order to perform a “sincere” apology as part of a political strategy. Indeed, by privileging the deconstructive element of Speer’s “apology,” Tavuchis overlooks one of the most problematic elements of the officer’s remarks, namely that “how much or how little [he] knew, is totally unimportant” (ibid). In focusing on the “impossibility” of the apology, Tavuchis simultaneously allows Speer to distance himself from the realities of Nazi persecution. His knowledge of the events, and thus ethical responsibility for them, is maintained as secondary to his “sincere” statement of regret.

Despite my wariness of this type of analysis, I don’t want to suggest that deconstruction is entirely unproductive in apology analytics. Rather, I argue that we must remain as vigilant as possible when employing it. Indeed, the (non)apology, in the terms laid out by Schneider and Tavuchis, has its own roots in Canadian history, namely in response to Japanese Canadian internment and the official statements of regret that were offered to this community by the government. In his 1988 apology to Japanese Canadians, then Prime Minister Brian Mulroney appealed to the impotence of his words as a means to convey his sincere regret to that community: “We have all learned from personal experience that as inadequate as apologies are they are the only way we can cleanse the past so that we may, as best we can, in good conscience face the future” (qtd. in Marrus 40). The use of “cleanse” here should rightly cause us to pause, and by no means should Mulroney be held up as the example par excellence of Canadian apology, but there is still a lesson to be taken from this statement. I take up the issue of Japanese Canadian redress in detail in the following chapter.

Rather than suggesting that an apology can be “full” or complete, as Harper would later do, Mulroney leaves a small space open for unrest, discontent and the reality of the presence of the past. Aside from his reference to the inadequacy of apology, this all-important gap is also illustrated in the sentence’s only dependent clause, “as best we can,” which interrupts the smooth flow of the “cleansing” narrative. In this interruption, Mulroney affirms the potential of apology while recognizing that the pain and the trauma of internment can never entirely heal. The shift in discourse from Mulroney to Stewart and finally to Harper, which has taken place over thirty years, illustrates how this gap
has been closed in official apologies. Statements of regret are now labelled as “full,” complete circles of discourse that annex the past and strive to revise history through acceptance, while simultaneously maintaining colonial ideologies and an unequal distribution of resources. If Canada is to achieve reconciliation out of apology, and thus bring two narratives (Aboriginal and settler) together without one colonizing or absorbing the other, researchers and activists need to continue to search for these gaps, and this will require space and time that exceeds a five-year mandate. Without proper consideration, apology can be tactically deployed to serve state interests. Staving off acceptance for acknowledgement can help to open up this space and provide for more critical and compassionate insight on state apologies. In the following chapter I will be looking at the ways in which redress puts further pressure on victims to accept apologies and further develop an analysis of state-interested reconciliation.
Chapter Four: ‘Redress as a Gift’: Historical Reparations and the Logic of the Gift

In any society it is in the nature of the gift in the end to bring its own reward.
-Marcel Mauss (35)

In the final chapter of Redress: Inside the Japanese Canadian Call for Justice, Roy Miki makes a case for reparation\(^{57}\) that at first seems foreign to the concept itself. With only three pages of the text remaining, Miki “returns us to the question of redress as a gift” (322). The concept seems foreign simply because redress and reparation are so often conceptualized as “compensation for a wrong or consequent loss” (“redress;” OED) as opposed to something given out of benevolence or affection, which the gift implies. It is difficult to argue that any offering from the State is proffered “at the price of nothing” (“gift;” OED) when it seems evident that any “gift” from the government is rooted in precise political considerations. Yet here, Miki is not only asking us to conceive of redress as a gift, but also asking us to return to the notion, suggesting that the notion of the gift has a historical connection that the reader can draw on as a means to clarify how reparation functions.

What Miki is evoking in his use of the word “gift,” and in his insistence that his readers “return” to it, is, as the use of “return” itself suggests, a notion of reciprocity, and the exchange that occurs between victim and perpetrator. As he tells Guy Beauregard in a 2009 interview, redress is “both a loss and a gain” (“After Redress,” 73). In other words, redress is not a unidirectional endowment: “redress is both a philosophical and political way of addressing the issue of accountability through transformative processes” (Miki 77). In the 1988 Redress Agreement, internment survivors did not just receive

\(^{57}\) To reiterate, following Williams notion of “keywords” as applied to the proliferation of “r” words that entered the political vernacular after the Nuremberg Trials, I use redress and reparation interchangeably in this chapter.
$21,000 apiece, the detail most reported on by commentators and the media; survivors also gave the official state narrative a part of the history that defined them. The “return” Miki offers at the end of Redress is thus a different way of conceptualizing reparation, not simply as compensation, but as the circular movement of loss and gain which, as I detail in this chapter, is implicit to gift exchange.

Miki’s notion of redress as a gift contradicts the typical way in which successful reparation has been delineated by researchers and analysts. For instance, Aaron Lazare’s On Apology offers an historical example of reparation that garners its viability by negating return. Lazare emphasizes the heroics of Kurt Schaechter, an eighty-two year-old son of Auschwitz survivors, who sued the French Railway for deporting over 76,000 Jews to concentration camps. Schaechter’s success is attributed to his asking price in this lawsuit: one euro.

In Lazare’s analysis of the case, he asserts that, “by asking for only one euro [Schaechter] calls attention to the importance of [...] other needs by lessening the emphasis on reparations. Eliminating financial compensation as the motivating force behind the request effectively blocks the possibility for someone to say, ‘all he cared about was the money’” (71). In Lazare’s conception, reparation weakens the victim’s claim to morality and truth because it diverts attention away from history and injustice, and towards capital and calculation. By negating compensation instead, what Schaechter was “given” in this case, was a more comprehensive notion of morality that would benefit society as a whole. In other words, Schaechter is involved in a moral exchange, but in order to make his claim heard as such it first had to be divested of its monetary value. What Lazare’s example illustrates is the deeply problematic relationship between exchange and financial capital in reparation. In this framework “money” is strictly defined as antithetical to morality, and apology something that cannot respond to pecuniary demands.

58 See, for instance, http://archives.cbc.ca/war_conflict/second_world_war/clips/1621/
The fact that economics are elided in discourses of apology and redress should hardly be surprising when considering the fact that what governments are “giving” in reparation is essentially payment for the loss of life and culture. As Pierre Bourdieu suggests in his own reflections on the gift, not all social situations allow the space for mechanical financial transactions and the seemingly emotionless exchange of money. According to him, economic principles are simply incompatible with certain socio-political interactions because economics signify calculation and self-interest. In the case of reparation, the exchange of money, inasmuch as it traffics in exact figures, suggests that a loved one or a way of life can be assigned a value that one can somehow quantify relationships to loved ones, language, land and culture. Many victims are unwilling or unable to allocate this valuation. Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider make this point most eloquently in their analysis of compensation:

Honor and money, like fire and water, cannot exist together. They are the circulatory media of two very different systems of behaviour that are distinguished in both our historical memory and in social theory. Economic behaviour is supposed to be self-regarding, rational, and calculative. Honorable behaviour is supposed to be undertaken without thought of gain, to be based on intrinsic values, and to be other regarding. In common parlance, to act honourably is to override one’s personal interest and to act on principle. But restitution, by its very nature, must mix the two together. (92)

To say the least, suggesting any equivalency or calculation for the loss of the life of a loved one or way of life is most often in bad taste, and it can result in strenuous public outcry. As a result, money, while often a necessary aspect of reconciliation, is also something of a taboo subject in a discourse which founds its claims in honour.59

59 This repression of one half of the “mix” Levy and Sznaider describe above makes restitution as such an exceptionally difficult topic for research and analysis. For instance, in 1955, under Israel's Archival Law, military and cabinet records were closed to public research for thirty years, "resulting in an almost total absence of serious scholarship on the subject of restitution, reparations and the rehabilitation of the Jewish world" (Zweig 10) until the early 1980s. Limited access to data such as this has contributed significantly to our nascent understanding of modern reparation movements.
On the one hand, as the Schaechter example illustrates, asking for money risks rendering the call for apology false. Currency sets up a “block” to sincere appeals for moral recompense because it attempts to make quantifiable an unquantifiable notion. But on the other hand, it seems evident that some form of compensation is necessary in order for an apology to respond to the economic damage on which historical injustice is often based and which victimized communities are forced to live out. For example, by the end of 1951, twenty percent of Israel’s population lived in refugee camps. German reparations to Jewish people were thus necessary to provide food and basic infrastructure for victims.

Roy L. Brooks argues that it is true that “a price cannot and should not be placed on suffering ... But when rights are ripped away, the victim or his family is entitled to compensation and much more” (6). This is not to say that financial compensation is the only way to correct a wrong, but rather that redress is yet another means through which reconciliation is articulated. It needs to be recognized that some economic exchange may be necessary as acknowledgement that something of immense value was lost. Suggesting that money cannot contribute to a victim’s well-being is just another way of disavowing that it is precisely capital that allows the transgressor to maintain his or her privileged position, and, in the case of imperialism, resources are the very reason why that perpetrator transgressed in the first place.

Gift theory provides some insight into the ways in which economic systems play out in redress. The gift, insofar as it obscures economic principles, allows for “the legitimization of the use of calculation even in the most sacred areas” (Bourdieu 235). Gifts “disguise material exchange behind a smokescreen of gift exchange” (Collis 218). They disavow their financial component by emphasizing the benevolence and generosity of the act of giving. As such, the logic of the gift can help to make redress viable, for both
victim and perpetrator, by shifting the emphasis of reparation away from financial capital towards morality. In order to make restitution an act of good faith, the “price” of the settlement, while not entirely removed from the scene, must be concealed in the appearance of more beneficent motivations, such as recognition, morality or the call for apology. This negates the ethical impasse generated by financial capital and equivalency while still recognizing the value of the loss.

Rather than approaching reparation as diametrically opposed to economics, I suggest that researchers need to think more concretely about how financial and social capital have become inextricably intertwined in the reconciliation process. It is through the notion of “redress as a gift” that Miki provides researchers with the means to rethink redress and reparation from vantage points that contend more directly with the ways in which capital is exchanged for historical injustice. Thinking redress as a gift allows for more insight into how capital is mobilized by both governments and grass roots communities to promote reconciliation.

5.1. Gift Theory and Reconciliation

Gift theory began in 1923 with the French anthropologist Marcel Mauss, but it continues to make important contributions to contemporary studies in literature, continental philosophy, anthropology and, as I argue, reconciliation theory. Of special importance in Mauss’s work was his identification of “hau,” a “spiritual mechanism ... which obliges us to make a return gift for a gift received” (5). According to Mauss, while the gift appears to be “generously offered,” “the accompanying behaviour is formal pretence and social deception, while the transaction itself is based on obligation and economic self-interest” (1). Mauss’s use of hau was taken from a text on the gift by the Maori sage Tamati Ranapiri of the Ngati-Raukawa tribe. Ranapiri’s explanation demonstrates the surplus value that is attached to the gift, which demands return to the original giver:

you give me something and I, in turn, give it to someone else, if he decides to return my gift with one of his own, I must give it to you, because the hau of the gift belongs there, with the original giver: it would not be right for me to keep such goods for myself, whether they be
desirable or otherwise. I must hand them over to you, because they are a *hau* of the article you gave me. (qtd. in Sahlins 71).

*Hau* is thus a signification of the return value that a gift carries once it has been given: a value that must eventually return “to its birthplace” (Sahlins 104).

What is most intriguing about *hau* and gift theory is how it, like the Freudian unconscious, can only be viewed askance. As Bourdieu puts it, “gift exchange is one of the social games that cannot be played unless the players refuse to acknowledge the objective truth of the game” (198). As such, Mauss’s project is also an early study in fetishistic disavowal: people know that a gift is an economic transaction, but the parties involved are expected to act as if it is primarily beneficent. A gift that is openly received as an obligation is no longer a gift. This is not to say that the gift can be valueless: the successful gift is that which traffics in implicit exchange value and does not call for financial value to be directly observed.

As Jacques Derrida illustrates, however, the very act of giving always already implies an economic calculation that cannot be entirely stricken from the offering. For Derrida, the *performance* of giving always already implies return, but one that is never openly acknowledged by either giver or receiver:

the simple intention to give, insofar as it carries the intentional meaning of the gift, suffices to make a return payment to oneself. The simple consciousness of the gift right away sends itself back the gratifying image of goodness or generosity, of the giving-being who, knowing itself to be such, recognizes itself in a circular, specular fashion, in sort of auto-recognition, self-approval, and narcissistic gratitude. (*Time* 23)

The economy that Derrida is drawing attention to here always exists just below the surface of explicit acknowledgment. While the primary economy of the gift is an active system of exchange between giver and receiver, in which the latter becomes the former, the secondary economy does not require any direct discourse between the two parties. Any return that the giver receives comes from the act alone. This second economy remains obscure because it never has to be openly acknowledged: the giver receives his or her return in the very act of giving itself. The recipient does not have to actively engage in the discourse. What is at risk in the more tacit economy that Derrida draws
attention to is the recipient becoming secondary to the performance. The circular movement that Derrida identifies, which necessarily returns hau to its place of origin at the moment of giving, generates a system of exchange that can erase the recipient from the process entirely.

Importantly, the notion of the gift also has a firm basis in Indigenous culture. Mauss’s initial observations were based on the Kwakwaka’wakw of British Columbia, but gift theory is not relegated to anthropological study. Maggie Hodgson (Carrier) states, “[i]n my traditional ceremony of the Potlatch, when we wrong people, we have to gift them, along with all of our clan members who have to gift them as well. It is intended to teach about respect, and it also teaches that abuse not only hurts the person but also the collective” (375). Furthermore, according to Rauna Kuokkanen (Sami), who offers the most comprehensive analysis of French gift theory in relation to Aboriginal communities, the gift “binds collectives together” (1) and therefore, “it could be suggested that in indigenous societies, the gift is one of the most important organizing principles around which values and perceptions of the world are attached” (1). As opposed to Mauss and the French critics that took up gift theory after him—who maintain that the gift is an act of repressed violence—Kuokkanen is more concerned with “circular reciprocity,” in which “responsibility is commonly regarded as an integral part of being human and inseparable with one’s identity” (10).

Kuokkanen’s analysis is congruent with analysis of the gift that speaks more to issues of apology, forgiveness and reconciliation. Contemporary scholars have identified Mauss’s theory of peaceful coexistence as his greatest contribution to critical theory, asserting that “the gift ceremony promises the avoidance of the implicit alternative of violence and social disruption,” allowing for “peaceful coexistence” (Cowell 281). According to Mauss himself, “gifts ... have the potential for buying peace” (14) because they bind giver and receiver into a reciprocal relationship, which necessitates a deeper understanding of the other in the need to divine his or her che vuoi (what do you want?). Indeed, as anyone who has resorted to buying flowers or chocolates in order to facilitate an apology knows, the gift is firmly established in the tradition of peacemaking and, if used properly, it can be an invaluable tool for achieving reconciliation. To quote Bourdieu, gifts “set the seal on alliances or reconciliations” (191) and initiate new processes of intersubjective relations. As Mauss himself put it, “the purpose the gift
serves “[is] a moral one. The object of the exchange [is] to produce a friendly feeling between the two persons concerned” (18).

While analysis such as this certainly seems to speak to the issue of reconciliation, there is undoubtedly a conceptual leap between identifying the gift as a reconciliatory implement and asserting reparation *qua* gift. After all, redress is most often identified as (re)payment or assistance for a wrong, whereas the gift is something given “at the price of nothing” (*OED*). Particularly when combined with politics, it is difficult to argue that the state gives without any expectation of return. As Derrida puts it, “the link between morality and arithmetic, economy or calculation of pleasures imprints an equivocation on any praise of good intention” (*Time* 148). In other words, despite any good intentions that a government might have, the fact that redress is intimately connected to state economics opens it up to suspicions.

Speaking directly to this point as interpreted within Canadian redress, Bruce Granville Miller argues that, “it is hard to give gifts successfully, especially in those situations in which the problem between groups has been a wrongful, crude play of power. It is easy for the compensation to appear, yet again, as a manifestation of domination” (6, my emphasis). Miller’s argument gestures to the ways in which “compensation” can actually be a detriment to reconciliation. According to him, redress is often too abstracted from the lived experience of the recipients, which only serves to alienate victims further. The focus for both the giver and the receiver thus needs to be on the act of giving, as opposed to the gift. What needs further study is the ethics of giving: how does one give in a way that communicates a compassionate understanding of a fragile relationship, or how does one give giving?

The act of proper giving is thus intimately caught up in the larger discourse I am addressing in this dissertation. When Derrida is driven to ask, can we “forgive whoever *does not know how to give?*” (31), he is suggesting that forgiving is necessarily implicated in giving. However, it is difficult to move away from a conception of redress that is not founded in the notion of compensation without voiding reparation of all of its financial value. As the above example from Lazare helps to illustrate, all too often reparation is either financial or moral; one cancels out the other. The argument has been equally well-considered on either side of the debate. For instance, Michael Ignatieff is
one of the primary advocates for a culture of reconciliation that is mediated through reward. According to Ignatieff, “people don’t need lectures on tolerance. They need institutions that guarantee the security bargain between ethnic groups that will allow tolerant behaviour to be rewarded” (331). By suggesting that people should expect a “reward” for “tolerant behaviour,” Ignatieff ignores “unprofitable” debates on hospitality and friendship and his readers are instead asked to direct their attention towards the financial gain of “getting along.” His argument privileges the economic over the social—eliding lived experience in the process—and takes for granted the fact that morality and compassion must be mediated through reward.

To be clear, Ignatieff is evoking a type of materialist argument here. In much the same way as I am arguing in this dissertation, he is suggesting that impassioned speeches about “loving thy neighbour” rely too heavily on naïve idealism, which elides the need for basic infrastructure and economic stability for communities ravaged by historical violence. In general, it is in this direction that materialist reconciliation should be headed. However, critics should be wary of the way in which Ignatieff neglects to indicate who offers the reward. In suggesting that victims are to be compensated for displaying forgiveness and tolerance, but failing to point out that it is governments that supply this compensation, he ignores the relationships that are generated through the act of giving. The idealist ethic here, of course, is the inherent idea that reward solves contradictions rather than opening up new problems and questions. Indeed, the chief imperative is not to promote conversation (Ignatieff suggests that that debate is superfluous) but simply to protect the freedom of its citizens and remove things that might obstruct exchange in the free market. Ignatieff’s argument is based on Adam Smith’s notion of free-market economics, which finds its validity in the idea that the market is ultimately a benevolent social instrument. In this model, the market has the answer to society’s ills; it need only be given its lead.

Because it is based in a notion of redress as a gift but does not develop reciprocity beyond a vague notion of tolerance, Ignatieff’s argument risks putting the recipient in a position of lasting obligation in which he or she will continually have to “be good” in order to fulfill his or her debt. Indeed, until he or she has returned the hau, the recipient is “‘obliged,’ expected to show his gratitude towards his benefactor or at least to show regard for him, go easy on him, pull his punches, lest he be accused of ingratitude”
If the terms of return are not adequately outlined beyond tolerance, the balance owed on redress will always lay just beyond the means of the recipient. In this situation, one can never be “good” enough to live outside of the edicts prescribed by one’s creditors; one must continually subscribe to, or at least be tolerant of, a set of laws that are not one’s own in order to repay the benevolence of the social contract.

It is in the sense of determining reciprocity and exposing the return that redress demands that gift theory allows for deeper insight into the interpersonal relationships caught up in reparation. In order to avoid the ideological trap that accompanies redress, one must be willing to identify it not as a “reward,” but as something that must be reciprocated, paid back and even paid back with interest. As Mauss so famously puts it, “in the distinctive sphere of our social life we can never remain at rest. We must always return more than we receive; the return is always bigger and more costly” (63). What Ignatieff’s model suggests, however, is that compensation represents a peaceful end to the conversation. By this, I do not mean that in reparation a victim can no longer maintain the visceral link he or she rightfully has to the past, but rather that the dialogue between perpetrator and victim has come to a close: the giver of the pure gift wants nothing in return from the recipient.

With this qualified distrust in mind, what I am suggesting in this chapter is that researchers turn away from theory that conceptualizes reparations as a “reward” from the State. This way of thinking is too closely aligned with closure. Rather, I argue that reconciliation theory utilize the logic of giving, as developed by such diverse thinkers as Miki, Mauss, Derrida, Kuokkanen and Bourdieu, as a means to further interrogate the processes behind reparation movements by more clearly outlining the stakes of redress for both victim and perpetrator.

5.2. Luxembourg and Modern Reparations

Of key importance in this chapter is how “the logic of the gift,” as Alan D. Schrift calls it in his anthology of the same name, operates in localized communities seeking redress. As the Jewish Claims Conference and the Japanese Canadian Redress Agreement (the two main historical examples I work with here) have demonstrated,
distributed properly, material compensation for historical wrongs can provide the resources necessary to help rebuild culture, reunite community and rekindle life for survivors of historical injustice. At the same time, however, accepting recompense for the death of a loved one suggests that one can calculate the value of a lover or a son, as if love, family and culture were somehow quantifiable. The act of calculation often makes it difficult, if not impossible, for many victims to accept restitution without severe guilt or psychic trauma.

Part of defining redress is thus about finding the means to overcome the fundamental aporia that arises between material reparation and affective responses to the quantification of human life. In my reading of Miki, which serves as the theoretical focal point for this chapter, “redress as a gift” can be the basis for a successful redress movement insofar as the gift elides the economic basis of compensation while simultaneously allowing for an economic transaction to take place. In identifying redress as a gift, Miki also identifies the *hau* of reparation.

By locating redress as a gift, and thus exposing its *hau*, the National Association for Japanese Canadians (NAJC), provided the tools necessary in order for Japanese Canadian redress to be defined as one of the most successful reparations movements in world history. In this sense, the import of Miki’s text is not to be found in what the Canadian government gave to Japanese Canadians, but more importantly, what Japanese Canadians gave back, namely “a healing of the democratic system--and, by implication, of the nation” (Miki 234). I will return to this point momentarily. As Eun Kyung Min suggests, “since the gift is an expression of human solidarity and involves the imagined oneness of a community, the failure to honour the tie is ‘to reject the bond of alliance and commonality’” (137). Thus by identifying and implicating themselves in the cycle of reciprocity implied by redress, the NAJC firmly positioned themselves in the Canadian national symbolic, literally allowing them “to read themselves into that nation as ‘citizens’” (Miki 32), and thus making redress a watershed moment in the history of Canadian reconciliation.

In order to begin any discussion of reparation as gift the grounds on which such an argument can be made need to be established. As I demonstrate in chapter one, the legislation that followed World War II is informative here, albeit it with reparations one
needs to move from Nuremberg to Luxembourg. As Nicholas Balabkins argues, the German-Jewish reparation agreements, ratified in the Luxembourg Agreement of 1952, are “probably the innovation of this century, a res nova, a sui generis” (150). Not only do they embody the largest payout for human injustice in world history (roughly 3.5 billion DM), but, more importantly, they also represent the first time a “nation had ever made payments to another for material damages on a collective basis” (Balabkins 190). On a global stage, the Luxembourg talks established compensation for historic wrongs as a new means of facilitating interstate relations between perpetrator and victim and between perpetrator and the international community. As such they became the primary means for an offending nation to establish their commitment to the new moral order that was generated out of Nuremberg. The sui generis character of the Luxembourg agreement, identified in the way it instituted compensation as an essential element of the new global morality, altered the face of reparative practices and generated a new ideological space through which modern redress movements must be read.

Balabkins has good reason for pointing out the sui generis qualities of modern reparations. Indeed, “reparation,” as it is known today, has a complicated genealogy which elides the word’s violent genesis. Reparations, redress and restitution all originate out of the concept of military indemnity, “the victor’s way of recovering the costs of a successful military operation” (Balabkins 21). “Indemnity” can be traced back to Oliver Cromwell and the resources he extracted from the Dutch in the Treaty of Westminster (1654). These resources were taken as a means to cover the cost of war thus far--resources that otherwise would have been extracted through further violence. Before Westminster, armies were compensated for their losses with the spoils of battle, which, for the most part, entailed looting defenceless cities and stripping the dead of anything of

60 However, it should be noted that reparations do not appear to affect a country’s economic position in the world economy. As Manfred Berg and Bernd Schaeffer argue, Germans have paid massive restitution for WWII and the Japanese have not. According to Berg and Schaeffer, “[t]he fact that both countries are highly integrated into the global economy makes their markedly different attitudes towards coping with the past … conspicuous” (4).

61 The Oxford English Dictionary provides a quick reference for “indemnity” and its relation to Cromwell. The “The vigour of Cromwell” is listed as a source for “indemnity” as a “sum paid by way of compensation.”
value. Cromwell’s measures, however, formalized pillaging with legislation, substituting a “civilized” legal act for random plundering and desecration.62 By legislating indemnity, or “compensation for loss or damage incurred” (OED), the English military shifted the onus of responsibility for recompense to the defeated nation, determining what was claimed by the victor as an atonement for a war rather than reward reaped from contest.

According to Balabkins, indemnity, as the process for recouping losses incurred by war, remained the dominant peace-making politic until the occurrence of the modern state.63 With the Treaty of Versailles (1919), however, an important semantic shift in war compensation occurs. The Treaty of Versailles made “reparations” the language of choice for conflict resolution by connecting compensation to ethical responsibility. Paragraph 231 of the Treaty is “generally interpreted to mean that Germany was morally responsible for the war and therefore had to pay for the damages” (Balabkins 26, my emphasis). To put this differently, the Allies established that Germany did not simply owe its victims material compensation for the damages it caused, but for the moral harm that it had inflicted on humanity. This is not to say that the Allies created an entirely new paradigm of interstate reparations, but rather, more simply, that they introduced a new level of morality to restitution at the level of the symbolic. According to Roy L. Brooks, “compensation refers to payments for damages or losses that have been determined through a legal process” (436), whereas “reparations ... is a much broader concept that suggests atonement” (436). “Reparations” was a means of re-establishing the meaning of compensation for the costs incurred during war while encrypting the violence of “indemnity” in language that reflected morality and good-will. The new word both repudiated interstate violence, yet simultaneously demanded crippling compensation (Versailles resulted in $31.5 billion in reparations, the largest reparations bill any “civilized nation has ever been forced to shoulder” [Lloyd George, qtd in Balabkins 25]).


63 Aside from Cromwell, the other significant contribution to “indemnity” as compensation for loss is the £240,000,000 paid to Germany by France in 1871. See Fawcett, Henry. Manual of Political Economy.
Importantly, then, for both perpetrator and victim, reparations, as a reconciliatory act, traversed the divide between moral and fiscal responsibility as well as vengeance and forgiveness. The financial value of “compensation” was obfuscated behind the moral value of the action, but both money and morality were coded into the gesture.

As Balabkins argues, in the light of the death and destruction caused by World War I, the Allies desperately wanted to separate themselves from the connotations of “victor’s vengeance and exploitation of the vanquished” (25) that “indemnity” carried with it. As Kendall W. Stiles argues, the commissions and trials that preceded World War II were about “establish[ing] a new standard for international behavior” (310). “Reparations” were thus a linguistic gesture towards a new “moral” era of conflict resolution. As such, the Allies coined a new phrase to reflect a more humanist position befitting a community that aimed to substitute justice for vengeance and establish the Allies as moral leaders. Reparation was a means for a government to demonstrate, in concrete terms, the extent to which a country was decent and honourable. Arguably the Luxembourg Treaty, ratified in 1952, marks the first instance of reparation within what Derrida calls “the theatrical space” (Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness 29) of the new morality that took shape out of World War II. Indeed, the Germans gave this compensation its own name, Wiedergutmachung (moral reparation).

Conceptualizing redress as a gift allows some insight into the way the modern state is compelled to act out its role as benefactor in the new moral theatre. As Bourdieu suggests in his own reflections on the gift, not all social situations allow the space for mechanical financial transactions and the seemingly emotionless exchange of money:

> in an economy which is defined by the refusal to recognize the ‘objective’ truth of ‘economic’ practices, that is, the law of ‘naked self-interest’ and egoistic calculation, even ‘economic’ capital cannot act unless it succeeds in being recognized through a conversion that can render unrecognizable the true principle of its efficacy. (210)

For Bourdieu, modern political interactions are grounded in the fantasy of a “good faith economy” (212), “in which good repute constitutes the best if not the only, economic guarantee” (212). As such, the gift—inssofar as it equivocates on economic principles—
allows for “the legitimization of the use of calculation even in the most sacred areas” (Bourdieu 235)––including compensation for the loss of life.

Financial interests need to be concealed in much the same way as one wraps a gift: the cold economics of the transaction thus being concealed beneath the more cheerful appearance of its system of delivery. As Bourdieu puts it, this concealment is necessary in an economy that must negate the truth of self-interest so that business does not grind to a halt:

in an economy which is defined by the refusal to recognize the ‘objective’ truth of ‘economic’ practices, that is, the law of ‘naked self-interest’ and egoistic calculation, even ‘economic’ capital cannot act unless it succeeds in being recognized through a conversion that can render unrecognizable the true principle of its efficacy. (210, my emphasis)

Arguably, the inflated global emphasis on morality that took place after Nuremberg, the stage on which the Bonn government and Chancellor Konrad Adenauer were made to play out reparations, necessitated the conversion that Bourdieu is referring to here. Any official proceeding that appeared to be based on a cost-benefit analysis would not be seen as a moral action at all, but as a counting of coins. As such, morality and compensation became deeply complicated terms in the period subsequent to WWII, being both inextricably intertwined and, at the same time, mutually exclusive.

As Ronald Zweig argues, “the settlement of the material claims was a precondition for any reconciliation between Germans and Jews” (21, my emphasis). Like apology and forgiveness for Tavuchis, redress provided the means through which a larger discourse of conflict resolution could be articulated. However, at the same time, survivors and witnesses around the world were appalled that the horrors perpetrated in Auschwitz and Dachau, for instance, could be quantified in any way—particularly monetarily. Massive demonstrations were organized in protest against the initial dialogue between German and Jewish officials. For example, in March, 1952 in Tel Aviv, 40,000 people protested the reparation talks with Germans by raising their right arms en masse and stating: ‘if I forget thee, O murdered Golah, let my right hand wither. I swear never to relent, never to rest until our six million murdered brethren have been avenged” (qtd. in Balabkins 127). Thus, while the international community necessitated a reparative act in
order to reconcile the offending party, the way in which the latter might extend these reparations represented a complex problem.

What was at issue for Adenauer and his government, then, inasmuch as they believed that “the soul of Germany depended on reconciliation” (Barkan 12), was not simply how to give reparations to Jewish people, but how to give them in a way that symbolically deemphasized economic exchange. In other words, furthering the logic that evolved out of the Treaty of Versailles, “reparations” needed to be endowed with another meaning aside from (but also including) “cash settlement.” Thus, as Zweig puts it, “progress towards a ‘spiritual settlement’ between the two peoples would derive not from the amount paid in reparations but from the fact of reparations themselves” (21, my emphasis). In other words, reparations, in order to be accepted by the Jewish people and the global community, needed to be divested of the value of their content (i.e. their monetary significance), and converted into an exchange that emphasized the significance of form, the “fact of reparations themselves.” Or, to borrow from Bourdieu and the logic of the gift, reparations had to be “misrecognized ... disguised, transfigured, in a word, euphemized” (217) in order to maintain any “value” whatsoever. As Bourdieu’s insight helps to illustrate, it is the conversion of German reparations, from content to form, that facilitated their acceptance. Just as one might scratch off a price tag and cover a gift in paper before presenting it, reparations had to be “wrapped up” in morality in order to be acceptable. The ways in which “compensation” was developed to euphemize the monetary value of reparation has important consequences on the development of redress in the Japanese Canadian redress movement, which I will turn to next.

5.3. Canadian Redress

On September 22, 1988, Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and NAJC president Arthur Miki sat down to sign the Redress Agreement, one of the world’s largest and most comprehensive restitution accords. Under the Agreement, survivors of Japanese Canadian Internment Camps were allotted $21,000 each in individual reparation along with $12 million for the Japanese Canadian community and another $12 million for the Creation of a Race Relations Foundation. The agreement also cleared the names of any Japanese Canadians convicted of violations under the War Measures
Act and returned Canadian citizenship to any Japanese Canadian who had had it revoked between 1941-1949. Now, over twenty years after the fact, Japanese Canadian Redress, along with the Japanese American Agreement that preceded it, is largely considered to be one of restitution’s greatest victories, not just in financial terms, but also “in Japanese Canadians’ renewed faith in the country they have worked so hard to be a part of” (Greenaway, web). According to Miki, “The NAJC had ... established a major human rights precedent in Canada as the first group of citizens to negotiate a substantial redress settlement for past injustices” (8). In many ways, redress is the beginning of Canada’s discourse of reconciliation.64

As I argue in chapter one, Nuremberg redefined the theatrical space in which national governments addressed violence. Canada was playing a major role in reflecting and reproducing Nuremberg standards from its instantiation. In 1947, after Prime Minister Mackenzie King had officially rescinded deportation orders against Japanese Canadians in a statement to the House of Commons, the issue of reparation inevitably came to the fore. While, for some Canadians--albeit erroneously--it seemed reasonable that, under the circumstances, Japanese Canadian property be liquidated for the safety of all Canadians, it was nearly impossible, even for the more conservative members of parliament, to legitimate selling everything to white veterans, farmers and fishermen at a fraction of market cost. King’s response to the criticism being levelled at his government

64 According to most critics, both Japanese American and Japanese Canadian redress agreements are the only ones of their kind to present “anything close to total vindication” (Brooks 157) in the history of reparation. Thus, they serve as an important point of reference for any community seeking compensation for historical injustices. Additionally, there has been a large amount of research committed to looking at how and why these agreements were so successful. Surprisingly, however, comparing and contrasting the Japanese American and Japanese Canadian movements presents researchers with very few commonalities to use as starting points for other groups seeking reparation. In fact differences may be more important than similarities here: while Japanese Americans could maintain legally that internment was based purely on racist ideologies, while in Canada, due to the War Measures Act, “apologists could maintain that all policies and regulations relating to Japanese Canadian internment, no matter how unfair, were legal” (Miki 88), thus justifying their overtly racist implications in shallow appeals to jurisprudence. In order to locate the success of Japanese Canadian reparation, then, in relation to its American counterpoint, I suggest that we need to further unpack the notion of “redress as a gift” that I have begun to address here.
was to establish a Royal Commission, headed by Justice Henry Bird, to recommend the first administrative policy for Japanese Canadian restitution.

Obviously, the task was not an easy one. The Commission’s main difficulty was found in a paradox set out by the King government. As I have already identified in the previous chapter on apology, one of the key components of successful reconciliation lies in the perpetrator’s ability/willingness to accept responsibility for their actions. As the Bird Commission illustrates, the same also applies to reparation.\textsuperscript{65} The aporia that Justice Bird and the King administration found themselves in was that by giving compensation to Japanese Canadians the State would be admitting that they had done something wrong. However, at this moment in time, and indeed, for years to come, the official party line remained that “dispersal was in the ‘best interests’ of Japanese Canadians” (Miki 116).

In order to surpass the Gordian knot that King had tied to foreclose the Japanese Canadian restitution issue, the Bird Commission passed legislation that required claimants to prove that the Custodian in charge of their property did not exercise “reasonable care” in providing sensible compensation for land and goods. This was a nearly impossible task because one of the key challenges that the Japanese Canadian community offered was precisely a critique of the very idea of “reason” as deployed by the Canadian government. However, as Miki argues, the “reasonable cause” caveat allowed the government to “project the appearance of conciliation and generosity” (116) while maintaining the correctness of their wartime position. Thus, by giving compensation to the Japanese Canadian community, but by doing so under their own, very restricted terms, the Canadian government effectively erased the traumatic history of internment while simultaneously (re)establishing Canada in the forefront of the global morality. They were partially successful. Japanese Canadian internment would remain a largely repressed topic until it was taken up by the NAJC.

\textsuperscript{65} This commission must be distinguished from The Royal Commission on the Status of Women, called by Prime Minister Pearson in February 1967 and also named the Bird Commission.
Unfortunately, this type of logic, which begins to illustrate the repressive violence of “generosity” and the gift, seems to have carried over into the consequent 1988 Agreement. Indeed, while Japanese Canadian/American redress is often considered to be the example par excellence of successful restitution in a modern age, critical inquiries too often focus on what the state gives for the crimes committed. The position is not unwarranted, seeing as, “never before had [a] government granted such redress” (Hatamiya 190) to a group of citizens for the deprivation of rights. However, as Miki illustrates, by placing the emphasis on the event of giving, as opposed to the years of careful economic and social planning behind it, commentators risk eliding the agency of the recipient, and thus perpetuate the perception of “pure gift,” that which does not require reciprocity.

I have already argued that gifts are caught up in their own reciprocal economies. The same logic can be applied to redress. For Derrida, the self-interested logic of the gift is built into the discourse of redress and reparation. In redress, the victim merely operates as an empty signifier through which “generosity” must pass in order for the perpetrator to appear moral. In order to combat this elision, Derrida argues that redress should not be judged on the benevolence of the giver, but rather that any conception of “successful” redress should be measured by the recipient’s ability and willingness to accept the offering because it is only in acceptance that the secondary economy is guaranteed. According to Derrida, the perpetrators are summoned to pay and to acquit themselves. They must restitute and enter again into the symbolic circle. They are on trial, they appear before the donee’s court as before the law. With the result that in the final accounting, at the end of this trial, it will be a question of their own gratitude with regard to whoever accepts their damage payments and acquits them of their initial guilt, the guilt of their situation, by permitting them to acquit themselves of their debt. (145)

Derrida points out a reversal here that calls attention to the function of giving reparation. As opposed to feeling satisfied with their benevolence and generosity, the state that offers redress is doing so in exchange for acquittal of their guilt in the world theatre. The reversal is found in the fact that it is then the giver that must show gratitude, not the recipient. Redress becomes a material symbol of forgiveness that is collected as a tacit surplus value by the giver. The giver is thus indebted to the recipient that consents to
receiving their offering, thus relieving them of their guilt. The role of the researcher, then, is to shift his or her attention away from the “generosity” of the state in offering substantial redress and to direct his or her attention towards the kindness of the victim in receiving it, especially when doing so can cause mental and cultural distress.

As Idi Amin’s commission helps to demonstrate, in giving reparations, the perpetrating State gives itself access to an international system of exchange that has become contingent on the appearance of morality. The emphasis is placed on the reward of auto-recognition for the perpetrator, rather than the political conditions of those being redressed. What Miki makes clear in Redress is that the gift always demands a return, and that repressing reciprocity only reproduces the status quo. Indeed, in order for the 1998 Redress movement to be successful—and here “success” must be gauged not only on the level of State participation but also in how the victimized community is able to conceptualize it—and not just a recapitulation of the Bird debacle, “it had to present a cogent argument for redress and it had to do so in a language, tone and mode of presentation that would both educate readers and draw them into the drama of redress as a current issue” (Miki 233). As I have already suggested, in my reading of Miki, this “cogent argument” hinges upon an articulation of “redress as a gift” for both the State and the Japanese Canadian community itself, and the return that accompanies any gift economy as surplus value. In fact, I argue that Miki’s entire text is almost entirely about exposing the reciprocity implicit to the Japanese Canadian redress movement and therefore overturning the projection of “generosity” that the Bird Commission sought to propagate. By addressing redress as something which can and should be reciprocated, Miki directly engages with the power dynamic of the gift, taking Japanese Canadians from the passive role of receiver to the more politically viable position of giver. In doing so, he demonstrates how the NAJC created a space for successful reparation and how reconciliation can be strategically deployed by grassroots groups against government definitions.

For Miki, part of the reciprocal success of reparation has to do with reconceiving the gift of redress as a more concrete conception of Canadian citizenship: the “call for redress could be of ‘use’ in giving value to Canadian citizenship” (324, my emphasis). What the War Measures Act, first enacted on 14 August 1914, essentially allowed for was the internment of the Canadian-born and naturalized, who believed that their
citizenship would protect them from persecution.66 These beliefs were not unfounded, as the Geneva Convention had expressly forbidden governments to intern their own citizens. Under the Fourth Geneva Convention, Article 79, internment is “a legal act applicable only to aliens” (Sunhara 66), meaning that lawfully the Nisei—children born to Japanese parents in Canada—could not be interned.

The easiest way around this problem for the Canadian government was simply to translate the language of the War Measures Act into a discourse that evaded the legality of its own actions. Thus, “internment” readily became “detention” to skirt the legality of the Geneva Convention; Japanese Canadians were renamed “Asiatics” or “Orientals” in order to construct them as being alien to the nation’s identity; and “evacuation,” which denoted safety and protection, was the term used to describe, and, simultaneously elide, the deportation, dispersal and disenfranchisement of Canadian citizens. As Miki puts it, the substitution of vague, indirect language for the terms legally prohibited by the Geneva council played a quintessential role in the government’s ability to carry out the measures taken against its own citizens. It was through translation that fear and racism became “the language of bureaucratic efficiency” (51). In essence, the War Measures Act is one of the modern world’s most egregious examples of autocratic power, in which the state, “having the legal power to suspend the validity of the law, legally places [it]self outside of the law” (Agamben 15), generating a nearly impenetrable aporia in which to shelter itself.

At the most basic level internment abdicated the rights of Canadians, “leaving Japanese Canadians nowhere to turn to for mediation and representation” (Miki 85). Citizens became refugees and exiles under government legislation. Thus, when the NAJC began organizing in the early 1980s, “the language of redress had cohered around the principle of citizenship and the violation of citizenship rights” (Miki 266). What the NAJC was banking on was that a clear definition of redress would allow all Canadians to consider the value of national belonging. Essentially, in Miki’s formulation,

66 Ukrainian Canadians were the first group to be interned under the War Measures Act. An apology for this “Crime against Humanity” is still withstanding.
in return for reparations, Japanese Canadian Redress gave the State back a more rigorous and ethical definition of citizenship, one based in nationality rather than race. This exchange gave Japanese Canadians a larger stake in reconciliation because it contributed to all Canadians’ sense of citizenship. To be clear, this is not to say that Japanese Canadian internment was somehow “for the best” in the end, but rather that the NAJC was able to interrupt the appearance of pure benevolence from the Canadian state. In other words, by identifying redress as a gift, and thus implicating themselves in the reciprocal cycle this economy necessitates, not only did the NAJC realize Japanese Canadians as active subjects in the Canadian symbolic, but they also introduced a definition of redress that worked to more ethically bind together victim and perpetrator.

In sum, Miki’s argument can be synthesized as follows: in order to firmly constitute oneself as a subject in the eyes of the State, one cannot accept the myth of the pure gift—that which need not be reciprocated—but rather must actively implicate oneself in the system of exchange. To do otherwise risks eliding oneself from the manifest content of the national narrative, relegating oneself to “the boundary line between presence and absence” (Miki 14). Indeed, as the Japanese Canadian example illustrates, researchers have only just begun to formulate a comprehensive definition of reparation that actively engages with the recipient/victim. Even after the initial 1988 talks had begun, for the general public the word redress “remained an abstract concept, distant from their everyday lives” (Miki 242), simply because, although they lived among the victims, people were unable to conceptualize the notion in relation to their own lived experience. Redress, as compensation, could only be viewed as that which was abstracted from the individual and thus as something not proper to Canadian society itself. In order for the Japanese Canadian movement to be successful, redress had to be dramatically reconceptualised in the Canadian imagination as something much bigger than monetary payment.

Miki’s research illustrates how the discourse of restitution can productively be articulated as gift—particularly in the Canadian narrative. Indeed, via the historical analysis I have thus far been employing, Miki’s version of “redress as a gift” offers the most pragmatic and productive ways of reconceptualising redress and reparation processes in the new global morality. “Redress as a gift” directly engages with the way the perceived beneficence of the giver can obfuscate hau and the necessity of return.
However, the rethinking of the economic processes implied by this line of thought does not suggest a radical overturning of the status quo or an interruption of contemporary politics and ideologies. Instead it promotes open acknowledgement of the mechanisms already in place and then advocates for participation in these mechanisms. While Miki’s approach to redress offers us, as proponents of successful reconciliation, a new and more equitable way to approach reparation, it is rooted in the psychological mechanics of exchange itself. Indeed, *Redress* arrives at the notion that “redress as a gift” is a power dynamic that cannot be overcome, but rather must simply be acknowledged and interacted with as such. For Miki, one contends with the ideological hazards of redress by actively participating in its game, not by restructuring the rules or altering the playing field.

Miki’s closing suggestion that his readers “return ... to the question of redress as a gift” (322) offers fundamental insight into the need for an acknowledgement of redress as a reciprocal exchange. In other words, Miki’s text illustrates the necessity of addressing reparation as something which both takes and gives, which both receives and offers and is thus a system of gain and loss--therefore opposing any notion of “wholeness.” It is thus somewhere in between apology (what the perpetrator offers) and forgiveness (what the victim returns). Its “in-between” status may partially explain the reason why scholars such as Tavuchis have not made redress its own category on the road to reconciliation. When approached carefully, as a category unto itself, redress illustrates the subtle shift that takes place in the movement between apology and forgiveness, in which agency becomes the domain of the victim. In order to realize this shift, however, the return of the gift then is what needs to be of primary importance when addressing modern redress movements. What is given back is what commentators need to turn their attention to. Simply enumerating the details and importance of what is received only affirms that the State is a benevolent entity, thus eliding the deeper consequences and exchanges that occur within the rubric of redress and reconciliation.

5.4. **Brown Girl in the Ring**

Because of how it projects a possible future for redress, I would like to finish this chapter by considering Nalo Hopkinson’s *Brown Girl in the Ring*, an award-winning work
that actually structures its narrative around a redress agreement. The conceit of the novel is that a land claims agreement with the Temagamai First Nations in Northern Ontario causes the collapse of Toronto’s economy, government, rule of law, and society. The narrative focuses on the fallout from that collapse--riots, police crackdowns, poverty--and it offers an important and trenchant social critique of the police state that quickly is established in a supposedly “tolerant,” multicultural, and cosmopolitan city like Toronto. In the last section of this chapter, I would like to tease out the implications of the novel’s suggestion that conservative rhetoric positions the Temagamai land agreement as the cause of Toronto’s collapse and consider how the optics of redress qua gift might be further fleshed out here.

Published in 1998, and likely written at the time of the Teme-Augama debates, *Brown Girl in the Ring* is a fictional extension of the negotiations over the n’Daki Menan, traditional Teme-Augama Anishnabai land located about four hours north of Toronto. Since 1877, this land has been extensively logged for red and white pine, becoming a major source of revenue for the Ontario government. Unfortunately, however, it was not until 1992, when less than 1% of original old growth remained, that Ontario’s Minister of Natural Resources agreed to start formal treaty negotiations with the people who had been seeking redress for the expropriation of this land for over a century.

By extending the political discourse of redress into fiction, Hopkinson allows for some insight into the issues that interfere with the public’s ability to recognize the larger social relevance of reparation. Arguably, as a piece of dystopic fiction, *Brown Girl in the Ring* is a realization of the anxiety surrounding Aboriginal sovereignty, a “threat” which Canadians can neither continue to ignore or suppress. In the first pages of the book, Hopkinson presents us with a list of newspaper headlines that trace the contingency of Toronto’s collapse through a number of specific events. From start to finish, the list reads:

TEMEAGAMI INDIANS TAKE ONTARIO TO COURT; AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL FUNDS TEME-AUGAMI ANISHNAKI LAND CLAIM

FEDERAL GOVT. CUTS TRANSFER PAYMENTS TO PROVINCE BY 30%, CITSES INTERNATIONAL TRADE EMBARGO OF TEMAGAMI PINE
Undoubtedly, Hopkinson’s list is a causal chain. Indeed, Gordon Collier (the only critic to refer to this aspect of Brown Girl) makes the connection explicit for us: “Hopkinson’s Brown Girl in the Ring is set in a Toronto of the future whose economic infrastructure, along with that of Ontario, has collapsed as a result of litigation by native peoples” (444, my emphasis). What Collier fails to acknowledge in his critique, however, is that economic collapse is not caused by native litigation; rather national discourse, as represented by the newspaper, positions this litigation as cause in order to justify the subsequent police action. As such, Aboriginal land redress must be read as the foundation of Hopkinson’s dystopia only insofar as the state attempts to locate it as such.

Indeed, in the novel itself, land claims are of little importance. Despite a few passing references by Ontario’s Premier to the exorbitant cost of the redress, this “fundamental” issue is never raised again. As Ti-Jeanne, the novel’s protagonist, points out after scanning the list of headlines offered above, “all of that was old-time story” (12) and, as such, it never again comes to the foreground of this text. If the past is recalled at all redress is readily elided as citizens insist instead that it was “the Riots [that] changed
everything” (14), not the call for reparations which is loudly asserted as the beginning in the nation’s official record. This is not to suggest that Hopkinson simply extradites Aboriginal people from her novel once they have fulfilled their role as a plot device (a move that would put her more in league with the colonialist history she so actively works against). Indeed, Aboriginal culture is re-introduced into the narrative in the final scenes of the text when the lone Aboriginal character “Frank Greyeyes [stands] up and present[s] his pipe to the four directions, redolent with burning tobacco” (245). This (re)appearance of the Aboriginal figure in the closing moments of the novel serves to remind the reader that, while it is an ephemeral force, the entirety of this novel must be read through the Indigenous politics that founds it. Undoubtedly, Aboriginal presence in Brown Girl is intrinsic to the entirety of its makeup, but it is not the source of its dystopic reality. Since settler society is based on privileges accrued through the denial of rights to Aboriginal society, when that social order is challenged the reaction is bound to be chaos and the imposition of a police state.

Rather than ignoring Indigeneity, what Hopkinson is illustrating in her critique is the way in which the official narrative, here represented as a Toronto newspaper, paradoxically works to absorb the problem of redress behind its own political agenda. Rather than fore-fronting the state’s (failed) responsibility to the Temagami as the founding problem behind Toronto’s collapse, the newspaper headlines trace a chain of causality that legitimizes the use of Martial Law and strips citizens of their fundamental rights. Inasmuch as the citizens themselves affirm that it was “the Riots [that] changed everything” the State is able to retroactively affirm its position as reactionary rather than causal, legitimizing its authority and (re)establishing its own necessity. Thus, the story that the newspaper headlines tell can be read as an uncanny echo of the narrative behind the War Measures Act, with one key difference: here redress is the beginning of the story rather than the end. To return to Miki, what Brown Girl indicates is the way in which redress, taken simply as a moment of giving, can be absorbed into the state narrative, not only rendering the recipients a voiceless presence in the established history, but also actually establishing a new nexus for state power.

In Brown Girl, the state’s ability to assimilate the other is most clearly signalled by the fact that Ontario’s Premier, an obvious metonym for the State itself, is literally looking for a human heart in order to stay alive. The eventual transplant of the heart (from the
body of one of Toronto’s aggrieved citizens) into the Premier’s, is clearly an allegory for the State’s ability to integrate the ardour of a disgruntled citizenry with its own agenda. In fact, as Brown Girl demonstrates, redress can serve as the means to rearticulate state authority and disenfranchise other at-risk communities. Narrated in the chain of newspaper headlines given above, reparation can be cast as a threat to the very politics that gave birth to it. Giving to those who have been historically wronged holds the potential to collapse the system that provided for that giving. As such, redress is presented as a deficiency of liberal-democracy and thus a vehicle for conservative politics and the maintenance of the status quo.

Read from this angle, Brown Girl should be interpreted as a fairly precise indication of the limits of redress in Canadian ideology and the settler anxiety that sits at the basis of reconciliation. Hopkinson’s text represents an important space for considering the political viability of redress and the state’s ability to absorb any radical implications it may have for the official narrative. Obviously, in order for Canada to establish itself as the authentic purveyor of Human Rights, it must contend with Aboriginal land claims and stewardship in meaningful ways that address the lived conditions of these people. As with Japanese Canadians, redress necessitates a radical re-conceptualization of Canadian socio-economic policy and a profoundly altered distribution of goods structured by reciprocation. However, this does not necessarily mean that redress signals the end of inner-state conflict and the beginning of more inclusive relations and a more equal distribution of power.

Yet, at the same time Hopkinson’s critique of reparation offers a new way to approach the arguments against redress offered by conservative critics like Jeffrey Simpson, who base their arguments on a certain anxiety about the dissimulating effects of reparation for the nation state, a sentiment which, in Canada, has most famously been traced to former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau:

Study the past, Mr. Trudeau argued, but in a country as diverse as Canada, with so many entrenched beliefs of particularistic grievances, no government should be apologizing, because the apologies would never stop. We can only be just in our time, Mr. Trudeau declared.

How right he was. Once started, the victim industry gained new adherents. Groups never stopped pressing governments for formal
recognition of past wrongs. Their demands varied. Some wanted just formal recognition; others an official apology. Some wanted money for individuals or their descendants; others preferred funds for institutes, plaques and educational programs.

What each sought was an official legitimacy for their historic grievance. None, of course, looked beyond their own group. None worried about precedent. They focused understandably and insistently only on their own cause.

While there are a number of offensive generalizations in this argument, what critiques such as Simpson’s disavow is the basic principle of gift economy behind all reparations movements. While, for him, it appears that reparations come at the expense of the taxpayer, in reality, as Miki illustrates, successful redress gives as much as, if not more than, it takes. The Canadian state is not going to collapse into an economic wasteland simply because it gave land or money to a historically wronged group. However, as Hopkinson illustrate, redress can retroactively be labelled as the cause for economic collapse in order to serve the purposes of the government.

However, by focusing solely on the immediate economic value of reparation, the gift of redress becomes yet another way to maintain the status quo and preserve control over resources. Indeed, as the end of Hopkinson’s novel demonstrates, in emphasizing financial growth (the Prime Minister’s “change of heart” is directed towards rejuvenating Toronto’s financial district) more important debates on hospitality, compassion and clemency, which would speak to the root of the problem, are never considered in detail because economics play such a large role in determining the direction of reconciliation. As such, any “revitalization” of culture, or the restoration of agency to previously ignored subjects, such as that which Brown Girl ends with, is contingent on the benevolence of the State.

To conclude, researchers and activists need to firmly establish the primacy of acknowledging reciprocity in successful redress movements. Or, to put it differently, one must take Miki’s advice to return to redress as a gift seriously. This is not the same as arguing, as many gift theorists do (mostly following from the French tradition), that the gift necessitates a return, that there is a “spiritual mechanism ... which obliges us to make a return gift for a gift received” (Mauss 5), but, more simply, and less cynically, that
the recipient is actually invested in generating a mutually beneficial relationship based in empathetic discourse between giver and recipient (or perpetrator and victim). However, in a society that is--now more than ever--perpetually on the lookout for the next cause of economic collapse, it could be possible that the space in which we might ask the public to see the return of redress is simply not available at this time. In fact, return is precisely what the optics of the newspaper headlines in Hopkinson’s text relegates to the unspeakable. Here, land redress is automatically interpreted as something taken from the State, rather than being seen as something caught up in a continuous chain of return, and thus arriving at a historical narrative that not only blames the victim, but also actually strips them of any capacity for compassion and cooperation.

As Redress demonstrates, offering a return on the gift solidifies community and locates the recipient firmly within the national narrative. The lynchpin of arguments like Simpson’s is a reflection of a contemporary political attitude (which some would name neo-liberalism) that cannot see beyond economics. As the continued work of the NAJC demonstrates, the communities that Simpson refers to are not isolated monads without any concern for precedent. They have real connections and investments with the communities, individuals and history around them. Suggesting that they cannot or will not offer a return on redress is not only economically short-sighted, it actually re-establishes the victim as an outsider and thus tacitly (re)qualifies them as deserving the very treatment the state is concurrently pretending to apologize for.

Without a discourse of reciprocity, as texts such as Brown Girl help to illustrate, even the most sincere offerings of redress risk not only demonizing the victims, but also radically excluding them from history itself. To put it differently, the recipient cannot be content to accept the myth of reparation as “pure gift,” or that which need not be reciprocated. Identifying “redress as a gift,” therefore simply means implicating oneself in an ongoing cycle of give and take (or take and give): a cycle which both affirms the identity of the subject and creates a tradition of responsibility between victim and

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67 For more on the many projects the NAJC is currently involved in visit http://www.najc.ca/.
perpetrator. Miki makes this clear by constantly referring to what the Canadian state was given back in exchange for the financial and legal compensation Japanese Canadian victims were allotted—namely a more rigorous definition of citizenship. From the recipient’s perspective, redress will be “successful” not when it gives “anything close to total vindication,” as Brooks suggests, but rather when it recognizes the reciprocity implicit to it and thus enters two parties into a mutual relationship that establishes a system of loss and gain.
6. **Chapter Five: “An Exercise in Forgiveness:” Confronting the Risk of Forgiveness and Empathy**

At the Frankfurt Auschwitz trial of the sixties it was the witnesses—that is the survivors—who wept, while the accused, the murderers and torturers, laughed and joked.

-Ruth Kluger (311)

For Tavuchis, forgiveness is the final step in the progression towards reconciliation. For him, the call and apology begin a process which culminates in the victim being able to let go of vengeance and heal that gap between parties that injustice opened: “finally, the discursive loop is closed by the forgiveness of the offender, which symbolizes reconciliation and allows for the resumption of normal social relations” (121). Forgiveness closes the dialectic between victim and perpetrator and initiates a state of peaceful coexistence. However, if forgiveness represents closure for Tavuchis, it also evokes some of the most fraught philosophical debates on mercy and intersubjective relations. Forgiveness is multivariate, volatile and deeply embedded in a long history of religion and politics. Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider argue that “Christianity [has] emphasized internal transformative capacities,” which have placed “suffering and redemption at the core” (86). The modern era is built out of a culture in which individuals are constantly, “without thinking about it, assuring each other of their non-hostile intentions” (Levy & Sznaider 93), but this does not mean that forgiveness, unto itself, is benign practice.

In “Forgiveness and Self-Respect,” David Novitz argues that while forgiveness is a vital human characteristic, one which has the potential to both quell resentment and repair the intersocial fabric, he makes it clear that without proper consideration, forgiveness is also quite dangerous: “[p]eople who forgive too easily ... do not manifest the right degree of self-respect; they underestimate their own worth and fail to take their projects and entitlements seriously enough” (299). For Novitz, proper forgiveness is a detailed and meticulous process that requires the forgiver to take the time and energy necessary to understand the perpetrator not only as an agent of harm, but as a fellow human-being with shared characteristics:
We can forgive people only if we establish some degree of sustained emotional contact with them. We need to feel with and for them, share some of their hopes, grasp their fears, their regrets, and uncertainties. And, as I have suggested, we cannot do this for so long as they remain wholly alien to us; locked out, as it were, by barriers of our unrelenting feelings. (313)

The key point in Novitz’s argument is that forgiveness needs to be a sustained process. Proper mercy requires that forgiver and perpetrator maintain enough emotional contact for the former to see the familiarity of the latter—a difficult practice if the perpetrator has committed an exceptionally painful or irreversible crime.

The deliberation explicit to Novitz’s model is most provocative in the way that it challenges the Abrahamic moral tradition, in which forgiveness is one of the central concepts. Forgiveness, as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary, is “the action of forgiving; pardon of a fault, remission of a debt” (OED). In the Abrahamic worldview, however, the “action of forgiving” requires clemency as a basic element of day-to-day life. Indeed, according to Archbishop Desmond Tutu, “the only way we can be whole, healthy, happy persons is to learn to forgive” (156). As Derrida puts it, the Abrahamic model of forgiveness is “based on the idea which is also a demand for the unconditional, gracious, infinite, an economic forgiveness granted to the guilty as guilty, without counterpart, even to those who do not repent or ask forgiveness” (Cosmopolitanism 34, original emphasis). At its foundation, Abrahamic forgiveness works because it is categorical. As such, it must be offered to the perpetrator who has not, and perhaps will not, repent or renounce his/her actions and thus one must be willing to forgive “not just once, not just seven times, but seventy times seven, without limit” (Tutu 273).

Novitz’s program, however, suggests that the Abrahamic demand to forgive is actually counter to a project of healing and social restoration. According to him, there can be no duty to forgive, “simply because it is not directly in one’s power to do so” (Novitz 313). As such, any system which petitions forgiveness also demands that its subjects undertake the impossible. The result is thus not always health and happiness, as suggested by Tutu, but rather frustration and even further suffering for the victim/forgiver. While it can promote reconciliation, forgiveness is also a potentially violent and painful process that can cause further harm for the victim and allow the perpetrator to
suspend his or her responsibility. Any categorical insistence that forgiveness must be
given overlooks the contradictions implicit to mercy by promising an idealist future on an
ever-receding horizon.

Joy Kogawa’s third novel,68 The Rain Ascends, is similarly concerned with the
dangers of the Abrahamic model of forgiveness. Rain’s protagonist is Millicent Shelby, a
Canadian of British descent and the daughter of Charles Barnabas Shelby, an Anglican
clergyman. Initially, Barnabas--the character around which the primary conflict of the
narrative revolves--is represented as a warm and caring man who has made a number
of important contributions to his community, including the establishment of “three new
centres of music and healing” (Rain 1). As the narrative unfolds, however, the reader
learns that Barnabas has used his position in the Church to sexually abuse hundreds of
young boys, many of them from his own community and at least one from his own
family. Still, nearing the end of his life, the pedophile’s acts have remained hidden from
his clergy and the general public, who still regard him as the “hero” (212) and healer that
he has made himself out to be publically.

Millicent herself remains unaware of her father’s transgressions until he returns
home unexpectedly from an Anglican mission. Initially the reasons for his early
homecoming are kept secret from the young girl, who is still in grade school at this point
in the narrative. She is told only that her father is “suffering from an enlarged heart” (47),
and that he has a “heart condition” (53), crude metaphors for his actual “condition,”
which is shortly after revealed to be an inability to control his “loving” impulses towards
children. However, just before Millicent is to return to school, a delegation of Church
representatives arrives at the Shelby home to speak with Barnabas. The meeting is held
behind closed doors, but Millicent, and the reader (who receives the entirety of the

68 It is necessary to point out that there are two versions of this novel available. The Rain
Ascends was originally published by Vintage in 1995 and was then republished by Penguin
Canada in 2003. The quotations in this essay have been taken from the latter edition. While
the two novels are almost entirely similar from chapters one to twenty-four, the new edition
includes six new chapters following the conclusion of the original novel.
narrative through her retrospective narration), is aware enough to understand that her father has been charged with some crime, albeit at this time vague and metaphorical.

It is here, when Barnabas is first indicated as a criminal or "sinner," that forgiveness is also introduced into the narrative. While the delegation is speaking to Barnabas, Charlie, Millicent's older brother, rushes into the den where the meeting is taking place in order to defend his father against charges of pedophilia. Moved by the young boy's love for his father, the rector warden is compelled to offer some form of consolation, so he informs Charlie and the rest of the family that, "your father has confessed. He has repented. And it's an exercise now in forgiveness that faces us all" (53). The "exercise in forgiveness" that the rector warden prescribes here comes at a foundational moment in Millicent's life and as such it becomes her métier, moral compass and personal mandate. Indeed, throughout the novel, the narrator clings to the idea that “Forgiveness is everything ... It’s what we’re here for” (74).

Coming at an early point in the text, this exercise is also one of the primary challenges offered in the novel itself. Two very dense and loaded discourses are put into conversation in Rain: on the one hand, Kogawa grounds her discourse in Abrahamic rhetoric and the notion that “forgiveness is everything” and, as such, it must be offered unconditionally. On the other hand, however, the author presents a figure that is beyond redemption or mercy, the child abuser: “[n]o one is more loathed today, inside or outside of prison, than the pedophile” (78). The "exercise in forgiveness" that both Millicent and the reader are thus confronted with is a problem of dialectics, holding two very disparate points of view in simultaneity with the task of finding some sort of synthesis (or wholeness). What is at stake in this discourse is a question of absolutes and whether the very idea of forgiveness, at least in the Abrahamic tradition, is a valid solution when applied to someone who is in fact beyond human mercy. Kogawa’s work provides key insights into the ways in which suffering and forgiveness intersect and how the process of offering mercy affects the individual on a subjective level. Ultimately, for her, if forgiveness is indeed possible, it is not always necessary and it is rarely desirable. Victims considering forgiveness need to consider the implications of their decision on a case-by-case basis and be willing to recognize that some perpetrators do not deserve to be forgiven.
6.1.  Joy Kogawa and the Canadian Discourse of Reconciliation

The connections between Kogawa’s writing and the political realities of reconciliation are undoubtedly the most direct of any of the texts I examine in this dissertation. Kogawa’s work represents the beginnings of a literary discourse of redress in Canada, which illustrates how the arts can both reflect and influence the political movement towards reconciliation. Kogawa’s first novel, *Obasan*, is largely considered to be one of the primary artistic influences behind the success of Japanese Canadian redress. According to Guy Beauregard, *Obasan* “played a key role in mobilizing support for the 1988 Redress Settlement” (“After Obasan,” 5) and is now regarded as “a canonical Japanese American [sic] text of internment” (“Asian American Studies,” xxi). Similarly, Beverley Curran argues that, “the novel had such an impact on the success of the actual outcome of the Redress movement that, on the day a comprehensive settlement was reached with the Japanese-Canadian community, excerpts were read aloud in the Canadian House of Commons” (134). Though, as I discuss below, Roy Miki and others have questioned this automatic association, *Obasan’s* relationship to reconciliation remains central in the criticism that must be addressed when looking at Canada’s history of redress.

For the majority of critics, *Obasan*, and to a lesser degree *Itsuka*, have been so influential in the Canadian canon because of their ability to map out a landscape of enquiry that emphasizes the human image of reconciliation, as opposed to “the reductionist urge often seen in the work of social sciences” (Skloot 9). *Obasan* was first published in 1981 by Lester and Orpen Dennys. Told from the perspective of Naomi Nakane, a Japanese Canadian school teacher, the novel chronicles the persecution and internment of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War. *Itsuka*, published in 1992, continues Naomi’s story in the aftermath of internment. *Itsuka* follows Naomi and her out-spoken Aunt Emily as they work towards Japanese Canadian redress. According to one of Kogawa biographers, Mason Harris, *Obasan* and *Itsuka*

enable us to become, in imagination, a member of a Japanese Canadian family, and to experience the internment and dispersal of Japanese Canadians, during and after the Second World War, through the narrator’s intense memory of a childhood troubled by the disruption of her community and family life. (139)
By allowing readers to locate themselves in the space of the Japanese Canadian community, Kogawa’s first two novels compel her readers to consider the relationship between literature and the topographies of the nation state. As such, her work provides an important avenue to explore the question that any literary scholar studying reconciliation eventually bumps up against: is it possible to trace a line between a novel or, for that matter, a painting, play or piece of music, and the political realities of reconciliation? *Obasan* seems to present a clear, decisive example of how to begin to approach this query, namely in its explicit connection to the Japanese Canadian redress movement and its eventual recitation in the House of Commons in 1988 “as evidence for the errors of previous governments” (Dobson 91). By calling them into the world of the victim, *Obasan* allowed many Euro-Canadians who had been cut off from the realities of internment to hear these errors as such and add their voices to the call for justice.

As Miki points out, however, the enormous amount of attention that *Obasan* has received from critics and politicians alike has very real consequences for critical race studies in Canada. For Miki, *Obasan* becomes “all too easily … a vehicle for disciplinary management, [which] ... stabiliz[es] existing structures by confining critiques of race discourses to curricular sites and protect[s] the institutional boundaries from the threat of transformation” (174). To put it differently, in the way it has been treated as a critical object, *Obasan* has come to serve as the camera obscura through which Canada’s racist history is both viewed and contained, thus obfuscating the events that do not fall within its purview. Inasmuch as it is limited to very specific proceedings that have been “dealt with” by Canadian history, Miki reads *Obasan* as catering to the dominant Western liberal ideology which demands a recognition of the past without any change to the current comfortable lifestyle.

I would add that Miki’s critique is also applicable to an understanding of the role of the arts in discourses of reconciliation. *Obasan* undoubtedly presents a way to re-think Canadian history and the possibility of redress. It is “a book that renders visible and recognizable a segment of Canadians who were marginalized” (Dobson 92), making
Japanese Canadians present in the national imaginary and in the Canadian literary canon. In many ways, it has been argued that with *Obasan* Kogawa is able to “reconcile” this important part of the past with a larger Canadian history.\(^{69}\) However, the potential of *Obasan* to transform and disrupt dominant political/social structures must also be seen, at least partially, as a potential that has been recuperated by the State. For Kogawa’s work, this recuperation is nowhere more evident than in the reading of *Obasan* in the House of Commons. In this moment, the “radical” discourse of *Obasan*, which opened up a previously disavowed chapter of Canadian history, was convalesced into the conservative discourse of parliament, becoming an integral part of a liberal agenda to acknowledge/manage dissent. As Miki puts it, “that’s where the loss occur[ed], because now Japanese Canadians were a manifestation of the official narrative and were no longer in a condition of lack. The history that got absorbed into the nation and got to be retold through the official history is both ours and no longer ours” (“After Redress” 73).

Similarly, Guy Beauregard looks at how the critical reception of *Obasan* identifies internment as an “aberration” in Canadian history, an anomaly that was, of course eventually addressed and rectified:

> critics configure the internment as an irrational aberration in Canadian history, one that can be explained as an ‘error,’ or a ‘misunderstanding,’ or a result of wartime pressures on the Canadian state ... an ‘aberration’ model of racism in Canada disregards the accumulated weight of this history and the critical task of understanding its persistence. (“After Obasan” 10)

There are at least two ways in which reconciliation scholars can extend Beauregard’s argument as a means to shed some light on current reconciliation talks in Canada. First of all, in his survey of the criticism on Kogawa’s text, Beauregard illustrates the proclivity of literary critics to focus on the event of internment itself, namely what took place in the 1940’s. His concern is that by drawing so much attention to this “singularity” in *Obasan*,

\(^{69}\) See Harris, “Joy Kogawa” in *Canadian Writers and Their Works* and Gary Willis, “Speaking the Silence: Joy Kogawa’s *Obasan*.”
the larger history of racism and violence towards Asian Canadians is under threat of being forgotten.

Where the “aberration” model has even larger implications, I would add, is in the way it contributes to the idea that Canada has a generally benign and peaceful history and that internment is but one blemish on an otherwise flawless historical record. Furthermore, as Miki points out, the focus on “internment” elides the arguably more violent acts of uprooting, dispossession, and dispersal of the West coast Japanese Community—more violent because uprooting and dispersal disband the potential for community and also have huge intergenerational effects. In this sense, the argument can be made that by (re)dressing this historical wound, the Conservative government generates the perception that Canada’s past has been neatly contained and therefore has no impact on the shape of current events. It is not so great a leap, then, to suggest that out of the aberration model of reading Obasan come statements such as Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s, who goes so far as to insist that “Canada has no history of colonialism” (see chapter four for further discussion on this). By declaring a historical injustice, such as internment or Residential Schools an aberration, as opposed an integral part of Canada’s history and development, it becomes easy enough to localize and extract it from the primary narrative, silencing alternative testimonial. In this sense, redress can be conflated with forgetting and a new era of silence.

Indeed, Pamela Sugiman has noted that the “collective narrative” (73) of Japanese Canadian internment, of which Obasan is the example par excellence, while obviously benefiting the Japanese Community in the Redress process, has also made many survivors hesitant about telling their stories. When Sugiman conducted private interviews with female survivors of the internment camps, she discovered that many of them were surprised at her interest and “worried about whether or not [their] memories would be consistent with the published history of the internment” (78). As such, Sugiman demonstrates the very real impact published stories can have on the genesis of new accounts. Official narratives, like Obasan, begin to speak for the victims, eventually eliding the possibility of individual stories, a point which Beauregard also makes clear in his essay:
the shape of Kogawa criticism needs to be understood as a symptom of the cultural politics of contemporary Canadian studies, in which literary critics attempt to discuss a 'racist past' in a 'multicultural present'... attempting to manage the implications of a particular moment in Canadian history by remembering it in a particular way. ("After Obasan" 14)

To be clear, Obasan itself, as one story among many, is not to be blamed for the phenomena that Sugiman and Beauregard describe. Rather, it is the critics who continually repurpose this text, constantly re-establishing it as the Japanese Canadian internment text, that need to be held accountable. If we, as critics, refuse to move outside of Obasan as a way to analyze the injustice of Canadian history and reconciliation--or insist on reading the text only as an internment novel--we are not only conforming to the narrow parameters of critique designated by the State, but also risk contributing to the erasure of “marginal” voices and stories that may play an important role in opening new avenues of thought and challenging existing government structures. In order to dislodge Kogawa’s earlier work from a colonial remembering of the past critics need to be willing to read some of the author’s key themes, such as forgiveness, across her texts in order to open up these themes to new meanings and contexts. What The Rain Ascends allows for, then, is a way to re-conceptualize Kogawa’s work on forgiveness outside of the internment discourse that still allows the reader to draw connections between it and the subjective processes behind redress and reconciliation.

6.2. The Rain Ascends

Following from the idea that Kogawa criticism must be extended away from Obasan in order to maintain and revitalize the potential of the author’s work, the focus of my analysis in this chapter is derived from Kogawa’s last and most overlooked novel, The Rain Ascends. Insofar as it moves away from the overdetermined narratives of internment presented in Obasan and Itsuka, Rain allows for a more nuanced critique of the discourse of forgiveness that founds Canadian approaches to reconciliation. Rain is a novel that asks its readers to contend directly with the limits of reconciliation, forgiveness and the Abrahamic demand to love thy enemy. As such, the reconciliation studies that critics such as Julie McGonegal and Kit Dobson have begun to elaborate in Obasan and Itsuka can be extended into Kogawa’s third, and final novel, creating a
redress trilogy that adds further complexity to Kogawa’s thoughts on forgiveness and, by extension, to Canada’s discourse on reconciliation.

However, as it stands, what little criticism exists on *Rain* takes aim at its aesthetics rather than the cultural problematic it takes on. For instance, in a review published in *Canadian Literature*, Arnold E. Davidson argues that *Rain* fails as a novel because it does not measure up artistically to *Obasan*: “To start with, *Obasan* remains a hard act to follow, and Kogawa’s third novel, like her second one, falls short of the artistic success she achieved with the first one” (148). Davidson is perhaps correct in pointing out that *Rain* does not have the poeticism or the subtlety of Kogawa’s early work, although this point is certainly open for debate. However, beginning a critique by measuring its artistic value against its predecessor (as Davidson does here by using the phrase “to start with”) is to occlude the philosophical/epistemological potential of the text in question. While *Obasan* is rightly known for “the density of its poetic language, the depth of its haunting symbols, the precision of its narrative structure” (“After *Obasan*” 7), aesthetics are certainly not the only element that make her work important. In fact, emphasizing the beauty of Kogawa’s writing has the potential to subtract from the measure of discomfort she attempts to depict and further elide the epistemological limitations of representing trauma that she works with. Indeed, part of the author’s conception of “forgiveness,” which resonates throughout the novel, is located in the distinction between divine representation and the messy reality of forgiving as a lived-experience.

In the world of *Rain*, forgiveness is constructed as part of a sublime convention, an ideal sense of mercy that recuperates compassion out of suffering and moral degeneracy. The sublime then elides the trauma that the *individual* must endure in order to enact forgiveness. For Millicent, this type of mercy is established as the moral baseline of her world by Charlie’s sister in-law, Stephannie, in a story about South America:

I do not recall the name of the merciful man. But I remember who told the story. It was Eleanor’s much-travelled sister, Stephannie, who had returned from a trip to South America. As she spoke, her lips trembled, her eyes filled with tears. She had brought blessed news from the south. Good news. Mercy was still in the world.
Once upon a time, so the story goes, a dying man looked upon his killers and said, ‘Father forgive them, they know not what they do.’ The man in South America was following a tradition. (Rain 65)

It should come as no surprise that TRC discourse is also founded on this sort of mythos. It is no coincidence that Stephannie’s story is attached to South America, as the continent has its own special place in the TRC genealogy (which I discuss in chapter one). In 2002 and 2003, both South and Central America became prime geography for anchoring Pope John Paul II’s famous dictum “no justice without forgiveness,” (message for the day of peace) to a people in desperate need of change. Interestingly enough, El Salvador is still trying to capitalize off of the political capital of forgiveness which the Pope helped to mint. In March, 2010, President Mauricio Funes asked for forgiveness for the Romero assassination. Kogawa’s reference to South America is thus linked to a very specific reconciliation history and the divine tradition it rests on.

The “tradition” Stephannie is referring to here is one that is inextricably intertwined with the mythos of the noble victim, which finds its culmination in the figure of Christ. In her description, forgiveness is defined as an uplifting act of grace that an injured party unquestioningly bestows upon those who have “trespassed against him.” Stories such as Stephannie’s recuperate forgiveness out of death and suffering by underscoring the transcendent qualities of mercy and the necessity of clemency. Further, as Millicent recounts it, the story Stephannie tells here is not attached to any specific person (“I do not recall the name of the merciful man”). As such, mercy is committed to an ephemeral religious ethos, giving it the appearance of objectivity and naturalness, making it a “truth” that extends far beyond subjectivity into the ether of the idealist imperative. In this abstraction of clemency, Stephannie herself erroneously becomes the suffering subject, as captured in the performance of trembling and tears, and the emotional subjectivity of the forgiving subject himself is forgotten. As such, the suffering inflicted by crimes against Human Rights and forgiveness itself is deflected away from the subject of that abuse and recuperated by white-liberal guilt.

One of the moral topographies in Rain is a narrative map of the adverse consequences that this type of narrative can have for the individual and for community. Insofar as forgiveness is abstracted from individuals and transformed into categorical
morality, the suffering and psychological stresses that an actual forger must endure are elided. For Kogawa, forgiveness can only be appreciated ethically when it is directly attached to an individual perspective and read within the particular circumstances of the forger’s own perspective. Millicent’s own story is thus a depiction of the operation of forgiveness from her point of view, and, as such, Rain is an illustration of how ethical forgiveness narratives must be constructed and disseminated replete with the pain of victim and perpetrator, as opposed to abstract representations of transcendental divinity or the mediation of a third-party narrator. For Kogawa, “suffering [is the] starting point in questions of good and evil” (154), not idealist stories of unconditional mercy and martyred victims. The first person perspective in Rain invites the reader to experience the struggle to forgive from the “I” of the subject herself, thus capturing the immediacy of forgiveness and the contradictory nature of the pain it evokes.

In the way that it contends with an idealist ideology in order to highlight the subjective struggle of forgiveness, Rain is arguably Kogawa’s most challenging reconciliation novel. Via the “exercise in forgiveness” discussed above (a phrase that captures the hard and active work of forgiveness), this text asks the reader to “see the contradictions” (Rain 197) of empathizing with the enemy; to “reconcile an irreconcilable experience” (Rain 197), not with the aim of finding resolution in mercy, but of finding new depth and complexity in the incongruity that forgiveness gives rise to. In many cases, this means deferring, if not negating, the possibility of wholeness or healing that Desmond Tutu and his followers advocate for and pausing to reflect on the pain that forgiveness can inflict on the victim. Indeed, for Kogawa, suffering is at the very foundation of the curative process and, as such, can never entirely be done away with.

That Kogawa is contending specifically with an Abrahamic model of forgiveness is made clear in the opening of the novel. Rain begins with a prologue that centres on a well-known passage from Genesis (22:7), in which Abraham himself makes one of his most significant appearances in the Old Testament. In the passage Kogawa draws from, Abraham is preparing to sacrifice his son Isaac to God. Of course, the sacrifice is a test of Abraham’s faith; God eventually stops the murder just before the father kills the son, but until this moment actually arrives, Abraham believes that he must follow through on the act of bloodshed. As such, the action leading up to the main event is tense with dramatic irony, the reader bearing witness to a young boy unknowingly preparing for his
own death. While Isaac is laying the pyre meant to end his life, he realizes that he does not know what the sacrifice itself will be. When he asks his father, Abraham answers, famously, “God will provide himself with a young beast for sacrifice, my son” (qtd. in Rain 4). As a whole, the scene is a demonstration of fealty and absolute trust, an act of belief that is undertaken even at the expense of loved ones. Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his son is, as Hermann Deuser puts it, evidence that “God’s authority is ultimate in matters of life and death” (1165).

The narrator of Rain references this passage from Genesis during the prologue of the novel in order to establish her own position in relation to her son, Jeffrey, who, as the reader learns much later into the narrative, has also been sexually abused by Barnabas:

Look at how obedient I am. Look how I build the altar and arrange the wood, the kindling first, then the brush and the heavier branches on top--here and here, just so. And I take it apart and build it again. And again. And finally now, after all these years, because the wood is so dry, and the pyre is good enough, because I must get on with it, I bind him and lay him on the altar on top of the wood. I stretch out my hand. I take the knife and I raise it higher and higher. (4)

In Kogawa’s allegory, which establishes the roles of the characters throughout the novel, Millicent stands in for Abraham while Jeffrey (“him” in the above passage) takes on the role of Isaac. Insofar as Millicent inhabits Abraham here, she also locates herself firmly within the religious tradition he gives birth to, most notably, as the remainder of the text focuses on Millicent’s attempt to find mercy for her pedophile father, the demand to forgive and “love thy enemy.” Because it acts as an introduction, Abraham’s story establishes the ideology through which Rain is framed.

However, for Kogawa, the exigencies of the Abrahamic tradition, aside from demanding absolute fealty, are the ways in which it impedes a potential forgiver’s ability to reflect on the consequences of his or her mercy. In the Abrahamic model, one must be willing to “rush headlong, impetuously, desperately, through the terrible light of our fears and our truths, glancing neither to the left nor to the right, till at last we come to the Mercy seat” (Rain 121). Particularly when it is evoked at its limit, in the figure of an unredeemable criminal such as Barnabas, this urgency precludes the care and attention
necessary for responsible clemency and invites further suffering and violence at the expense of the victim and his/her family.

What makes *Rain* such a difficult book to contend with, then, is not its less than perfect prose, or its un-*Obasan*-like aesthetics, but, more directly, its off-putting content: the notion that a pedophile could or even should be forgiven. Because of the viscerally uncomfortable response it evokes, the problem of pedophilia has proven to represent an ideological speed bump in Kogawa criticism. The theme of child abuse itself is not new to the author’s work; in fact, it makes an appearance in all three of her novels. However, critics have been unwilling or unable to contend with the real of this abuse—the physical/mental trauma of the violation—without appealing to the distanciation provided by metaphor. For instance, Donald Goellnicht argues that Old Man Gower’s abuse of a young Naomi, and the quiet that surrounds the event, is an allegorical representation of minority silence following a traumatic event: “Kogawa has effectively linked a particularly female condition of sexual silence to her more general concerns with the condition of minority silence” (296). Cherry Clayton’s analysis of the child abuse in both *Obasan* and *Rain* also takes refuge in the allegorical, when she argues that this abuse is “a kind of an analogy” (4) for the relationship between Japanese Canadians and the Canadian government.

What both Goellnicht and Clayton’s readings gesture towards is how critics historicize in very particular ways. For both of them, sexual abuse is a way of conceiving historical injustice on a larger scale, away from the subjective experience of the victim. However, not only can sexual abuse be read metaphorically, but also it can be understood as a very real consequence of separating families and disrupting the community structures that protected children. By dissimulating culture, community, and, most importantly, home, the state removed many of the safety measurements that protected children, making them exceptionally vulnerable to sexual predators. What is at stake in these scenes is not simply a metaphor for cultural injustice, but also a depiction of the physical and psychological damage inflicted on individuals. The fact that sexual abuse occurs in all three of Kogawa’s novels is testament to the ways in which this type of harm finds its way into communities that have been victimized by historical injustice.
Perhaps in order to avoid the difficulty of analyzing sexual abuse, both Goellnicht and Clayton sidestep the insistence of the traumatic real in all three of Kogawa’s novels and draw attention to the ways that critics move away from the subjectivity of a traumatic event in search of “bigger” meaning. Clayton asks if *The Rain Ascends* is “a way of confronting ghosts?” (4), to which Kogawa answers that abuse is a concept that she doesn’t “really understand the ramifications of” and, as such, it is “an ongoing journey” (4). Despite Kogawa’s assertion that this trope is uninterruptable, however, Clayton continues to unpack it: “I wonder if the fictional expression of child abuse wasn’t an attempt to address hypocrisy, because child abuse is often covered over by social hypocrisy, just as the treatment of the Japanese [sic] was covered over by political hypocrisy” (4). As Kogawa clearly illustrates in her original response to Clayton, trauma is not something that can be directly interrogated through close reading, but rather is a trope that drives the narrative to move forward. As such, child abuse remains an irreducible bodily event that connects the three texts in a very intimate yet sibylline manner.

Or, rather, child abuse in Kogawa’s novels is a *mise en abyme* that pushes the larger narrative of forgiveness and reconciliation that the author is working with into a continuous re-presentation of these ideas. This pain is an intensely personal and subjective experience that does not, unless gentrified through metaphor, contribute to a larger understanding of redress or historical injustice.

While not as blatant as its representation in its predecessor or successor, the sexual abuse of children is also made present in *Itsuka* when Naomi recalls a threat that occurred when she was working on the beet farm. At the very beginning of this novel, Kogawa introduces a stranger that lurks outside of the pool hall, reading passages from the Bible out loud to anyone who will listen. But, despite his pious appearance (which foreshadows the coming of Barnabas in *Rain*) the threat of sexual abuse permeates this character: “it’s also whispered about that he cornered a girl behind the rink and fondled her” (*Itsuka* 25). When Naomi is at work later in the story, this same stranger eyes her from the road, and when she sits down to rest he is suddenly “lurching towards [her], a five-dollar bill in his thick hand, his eyes so wide they are bulging” (26). Before Naomi or the reader can fully understand his intent, however, the girl collapses in dizziness and pain, soiling herself, and causing her Uncle and brother to coming running across the field to help her. While Naomi is never actually abused in this text, it is not difficult to identify the ways the trauma of her experience with Old Man Gower has spilled out of the pages of *Obasan* and into this sequel.
While the trauma of child abuse is present in all three of Kogawa’s novels, a pain that must be recognized as a proper part of all her texts, it is also something that cannot responsibly be “rationalized” into the official narrative of racial injustice perpetrated by disembodied state figures. If anything, this irreducible kernel, which Kogawa herself cannot seem to do away with, should be identified as the narrative stain around which her larger discussions of forgiveness spin. These moments cannot readily be absorbed into a larger state discourse of healing and reconciliation without metaphor. By addressing the culmination of abuse in The Rain Ascends, the oblique way in which the author maintains suffering as an integral element of forgiveness is exposed. For Kogawa, forgiveness must not only “revise the narrative of the Japanese Canadian internment” (McGonegal 112) so that this history can be woven into a larger understanding of Canadian history; it must also account for the pain that has no place, that cannot be reconciled into the “big picture.”

6.3. Empathy and the I/Eye of the Enemy

For Kogawa, along with most of the individuals who study forgiveness, empathy plays an important role in the ideological movement towards reconciliation. As mentioned above, in Rain, as opposed to either Obasan or Itsuka, two novels which call the reader into the world of the victim, the reader is asked to identify with the perpetrator and his family. Kogawa invites this perspective by making explicit use of the second person pronoun to implicate the reader in the narrative and the ethical impasse of loving the enemy: “He doesn’t respond. He may not have heard you. You repeat yourself. He would want to know why you were up all night. He would want it all to go away. So would you” (16). Compelling the reader to occupy the narrative space of the perpetrator and his family comes as a stark contrast to Kogawa’s earlier novels, which, in a more anthropological sense, “enable us to become, in imagination, a member of a Japanese Canadian family” (Harris 138). In Rain, “imagination,” in the sense of “becoming” a member of the family in question, proffers a much deeper question of ethics and the limits of readers’ abilities to locate themselves in a text and in the “I” of an individual who sympathizes with a monster. To quote directly from Rain, forgiveness here is dependent on the “world-altering labour of befriending the enemy” (200), which necessitates a visceral suffering from the one who attempts it. “Befriending the enemy” means locating
the “other” in “self.” As Cynthia Cohen argues, the enemy is “unconsciously seen to some extent as being like us, although on a conscious level they should not seem to be the same as us since they contain our unwanted aspects—those characteristics we vigorously reject” (268). Befriending the enemy, then, risks generating an “identity” without any concrete terms of reference. In forgiveness the boundaries of the “I” can no longer be strictly delineated.

Indeed, seeing through the eye or “I” of an architect of violence, as empathy and forgiveness demands, can be a physiologically damaging event. Testimony from translators at the South African TRC helps to illustrate this point: “It is difficult to interpret victim hearings ... because you use the first person all the time. I have no distance when I say ‘I’ ... it runs through me with ‘I’” (Krog 169). Tutu makes a similar point in his work: “it was particularly rough for our interpreters because they had to speak in the first person, at one time being the victim and at another being a perpetrator” (286). As both examples demonstrate, stepping into the “I” of the other collapses the seemingly irreducible distance between self and “enemy,” which invites a certain amount of pain and discomfort into the world of the individual attempting to empathize. In much the same way, the “you” of Rain draws the reader into the world of Barnabas, setting up the same (potentially painful) problems of over-proximity that the interpreters experience. As these literary tropes help to illustrate, the reciprocity of empathy, of putting oneself in the place of the other, and (ideally, in reconciliation) in the place of the enemy, actually represent another psychological threat to the victim. In other words, the process of forgiving invites suffering and distress into the victim’s subjective space and troubles the Abrahamic insistence that forgiveness promotes healing and wholeness.

Millicent’s task in The Rain Ascends, and thus by proxy the readers’, is to attempt to occupy “the shoes of the accused” (Rain 133), despite the pain implicit in inhabiting the space of the other. By struggling to locate herself in the subjective space of Barnabas, the narrator strives to understand her father without reducing him to the “monster” (174) society has cast him as, while simultaneously recognizing the need to vilify him. To be clear, this task is not an attempt to justify Barnabas’s actions, but to find some way to recognize his humanity while simultaneously acknowledging the depth of his crimes. Kogawa elaborates on the need to suspend the clear distinction between self and enemy, or “I” and “You,” in her essay “Is there a Just Cause?:”
in naming our enemies, I believe we should begin from that which is most knowable—the enemy in our own hearts. When we can see clearly the face of the enemy within, I believe we can more accurately identify the enemy on the outside—in the community, the country and the planet. (24)

In a very Judeo-Christian sense, a key element of relating to or forgiving the “enemy,” a term Kogawa is problematizes by conflating it with self, is recognizing that the other’s identity is in fact a proper element of who the “I” is. Or, to put it differently, Kogawa is insisting here that “enemy” begins with a definition of self and one must approach him or her from this point of origin. In either case, the collapse of the distinction between subject positions becomes a primary means for achieving reconciliation, insofar as both victim and perpetrator break down the division between self and other and come to occupy a single “I.” However, the responsibility for this deconstruction falls squarely on the victim. Inasmuch as “forgiveness is a power held by the victimized” (Minow 17), it is also a burden to be carried by an already injured party. Indeed, in Rain, it is Millicent’s suffering as (potential) forgiveness that dominates the narrative. For the most part Barnabas seems to have no guilt for his crimes and he continues to socialize, preach and laugh in the face of the damage he has caused for so many people.

In many ways empathy echoes the psychological movement that idealists argue founds reconciliation. As Worthington argues, “the objective [of empathy] is to allow the person to express both sides of the conversation personally” (24). Breaking down the seemingly impenetrable boundaries of self and other allows for mutual understanding and acceptance. Of course, this type of faith in empathy also necessitates that the perpetrator has at least a minimal amount of ethical responsibility, which in Rain is not proven to be the case. In essence, with the figure of the pedophile, what Kogawa is calling for in this novel is a limit test of the empathetic process that underscores forgiveness. Learning to understand and empathize with a pedophile illustrates the extent to which liberal tolerance and the Abrahamic demand to forgive can reach.
To be clear, in her study of empathy in *Rain* Kogawa is interested in what Worthington calls emotional forgiveness (as opposed to hollow or decisional), in which the victim is able to let go of the anger and fear directed at a perpetrator. Emotional forgiveness and empathy are intimately connected and intertwined. With emotional forgiveness, the victim trains him or herself to see through the I/eye of the enemy, to grasp their fears, their regrets, and uncertainties “from the inside” (Novitz 309). In doing so, the perpetrator becomes more affiliative and the victim is more able to see him/her as a proper part of self and community rather than an Other devoid of all vestiges of humanity. As Cohen puts it, “in enmity relations, all positively valued qualities tend to be attributed to one’s own group, the process of rehumanizing an enemy often involve simultaneously acknowledging the shadow sides of oneself and one’s group” (271). Empathy facilitates this by providing the proximity necessary for this shadow to be cast.

Indeed, for the majority of critics, empathy is an essential part of the process that allows people to forgive. According to Worthington, “the victim is presumed most likely to forgive if he or she can accurately identify the perspective and especially the emotions felt by the offender and respond with sympathy, compassion or love to those emotions” (74). Similarly, Novitz argues that,

> were I disposed to do so ... I could seek out ‘the other side of the story,’ and try to place your wrongful action in the context of your life and your needs, and in this way seek to undermine my grievance. By trying to see events from your point of view, I grasp, sometimes ‘from the inside,’ what motivated you, what errors of judgement prevailed, and why they had such a grip on your imagination. (309)

As both Worthington and Novitz help to illustrate, in order for emotional forgiveness to take place, the forgiver must be willing and able to understand the perpetrator from within the innermost spaces of that perspective. Empathy is thus an emotional movement between bodies and psyches that collapses any strict delineation of “self” and

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71 For a complete description of Worthington’s categories of forgiveness, see chapter one, pp. 41-43.
“other.” This level of understanding requires a certain psychological over-proximity in which the victim must put him or herself into the subjective space of the enemy.

Opposing Worthington, however, who argues that “empathy is morally neutral” (102), Novitz contends that aside from compassion, empathy also implies a hint of menace: “whenever we empathize we run the risk of losing ourselves in the other … there is a straightforward tension, then, between retaining a full view of our own importance, and the empathy that requires one to lose sight of oneself” (310). For Novitz, in locating oneself inside the Other during the empathic process, one risks losing a firm grasp of the ideas and ideals from which the conversation began. Indeed, in his understanding of empathy, the very notion of self becomes hazy. While on the one hand, Worthington privileges and praises the over-proximity implicit to empathy and forgiveness, Novitz, and, I argue, Kogawa, is cautious of the moral problems that arise when the victim engages (or is told to engage) with this method.

Indeed, while Kogawa recognizes the reconciliatory potential of forgiveness as a divine ideal, she also realizes that the work of empathy and emotional forgiveness is a traumatic endeavour that can render an individual both physically and psychologically inert. Or, to put it differently, for Kogawa forgiveness is possible, but it is not always healing. As a means of articulating this important point, she manifests Millicent’s ideological confusion on Millicent’s body itself, leaving a character who labours under the devoir of “forgiveness is everything” (74), paralyzed and quiescent:

I have been staying awake for too many nights, listening to the termites nibbling at the paper walls. My brittle arms can no longer hold up the roof. I’ve been trying hard to speak with father. With each failed effort the weight of silence grows. Some days I feel I can hardly move at all—one foot in the slough of loathing, the other in the glue of love. I’m stuck. I’m wretched with knowing and not knowing. (56)

As this passage helps to illustrate, the exercise of forgiving, which, for Kogawa, requires a debilitating empathetic process, is a brutal endeavour that literally weighs on its subject. Indeed, here Millicent is depicted as both physically and mentally “broken” in a sense that exceeds philosophical uncertainty and postmodern anxiety over absolutes. For Kogawa, this physical deliberation is an intrinsic element of the forgiving process, which the Abrahamic tradition can work to elide.
Aside from *Rain*, one of the best literary examples of the danger implicit in emotional forgiveness comes from Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela’s *A Human Being Died that Night* (2004). Gobodo-Madikizela’s perspective is particularly relevant to this conversation because she worked with Tutu during the South African TRC. While she is primarily seen as a sycophant of the Archbishop, her attention to the psychological and physical danger implicit to forgiveness provides for a more nuanced account of reconciliation in South Africa. Gobodo-Madikizela is a black South-African psychiatrist who served on her country’s TRC and *A Human Being* is a record of her experiences interviewing Eugene de Kock, or “Prime Evil” as he was famously nicknamed by the South African media. De Kock was a colonel for the South African Police Force during Apartheid and the commander of the South African Police counter-insurgency group, well-known for killing dozens of anti-apartheid activists. In 1996, he was sentenced to 212 years in prison for crimes against humanity. The eighty-nine charges against him included six murder charges and two charges of conspiracy to commit murder.

As in *The Rain Ascends*, Gobodo-Madikizela’s primary concern in this text is the problem of empathizing with the enemy, of allowing him or her into the space that defines her understanding of self: “I was afraid, not of the memory of the evil schemes that were concocted in that city but of my own empathy for de Kock” (116). Indeed, harkening back to Kogawa, one of the major philosophical concepts of the book is centred on the ethics of “stepping into the shoes of a murderer through empathy” (120). Perhaps the most important moment of *A Human Being* comes at the instant when Gobodo-Madikizela reaches out to touch de Kock, thus collapsing the subjective and moral spaces that separate them. Afterwards, in an instant that affects the author profoundly, de Kock tells her, “you know Pumla, that was my trigger hand you touched” (39). Following this realization, Gobodo-Madikizela experiences radical psychosomatic symptoms: for instance, she wakes up to discover that the hand that touched his is completely numb: “I couldn’t feel with it, as if my body were rejecting a foreign organ illegitimately planted. I tried again. For a long, anxious moment it felt disabled, grounded, as if placed on probation for engaging in a prohibited act” (39-40). In this moment of empathy, Gobodo-Madikizela’s body itself becomes an enemy to her, unwilling or unable to comply with her physical reality. Just as Millicent is rendered motionless as a result of her attempt to empathize with Barnabas, Gobodo-Madikizela’s deadened hand
symbolizes the somatic effects that empathy and forgiveness can inflict on the victim. The same empathy that Worthington insists is the basis for forgiveness is demonstrated here to be physically and psychologically damaging in ways that one might expect of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Aside from the physical reaction Gobodo-Madikizela has to this empathetic moment, she is also afflicted by anxiety about her moral position in relation to de Kock: “I felt guilty for having expressed even momentary sympathy and wondered if my heart crossed the moral line from compassion, which allows one to maintain a measure of distance, to actually identifying with de Kock” (33). Here, the psychiatrist is identifying the way in which empathy incites a radical confrontation with the ethical/moral foundations upon which one builds a definition of self. Clearly, what is at stake for Gobodo-Madikizela is the moral limits on which she constructs her engagement with her community: “as de Kock spoke, the boundaries of our worlds did not always seem so clear” (Gobodo-Madikizela 20). In reaching out to De Kock and collapsing these spaces, Gobodo-Madikizela is suspended in a moral vacuum. The effects of this space are made plain and visceral in her deadened hand, a physical manifestation of ideological confusion that Eric Santner calls “signifying stress” (109). Thus, inviting the other into the “I,” “letting him in” (122) through empathy, as Gobodo-Madikizela herself puts it, is shown to have very real consequences on the body, consequences which purveyors of unconditional forgiveness must elide in order to determine their projects as the means of creating “whole, healthy, happy persons” (Tutu 156). Gobodo-Madikizela does not discount forgiveness because of her experiences, but she does provide a detailed note of caution, and thus a more accurate topography, of the road to reconciliation.

Kogawa and Gobodo-Madikizela deserve to be put into conversation here, not only because of their intimate connections to victimized communities, but also because of the ways in which they engage empathy—and its consequences—as the primary methods for evoking forgiveness and reconciliation. Opposing Tutu, these accounts are more sensitive to the potential danger of forgiveness and the injury (as opposed to health) that can result from reconciliation. According to Gobodo-Madikizela, it is only “through forgiveness [that] a provisional vocabulary of reconciliation, if not friendship, is created” (132). Like Tavuchis, Gobodo-Madikizela conceives forgiveness as something
that precedes (and thus allows for) conflict resolution, but it is empathy that generates the moral and psychological movement that makes reconciliation possible:

We are induced to empathy because there is something in the other that is felt to be part of the self, and something in the self that is felt to belong to the other. Empathy feels with the other in a reciprocal emotional process in which one asks for it, or his very situation seems to ask for it, and the other responds by offering it. Empathy reaches out to the other [my emphasis] and says: I can feel the pain you feel for having caused me pain. (127)

In this passage, empathy is once again constructed as that which collapses the space between self and other. As the victim “reaches out” to the perpetrator, he or she is able to engage with the pain that the former feels, and in this moment of discovering mutual vulnerability more readily be moved towards forgiveness. In Gobo-Madikizela’s conception, empathy is thus directly related to proximity and touch. How close one is to the other dictates the ability to forgive. As Jonathan Tran argues, “horizontal proximity, being there with one another, closes the gap between fault and forgiveness by flipping vertical difference on its side. Now the relation is one of proximity and willingness to embrace” (223). However, proximity also allows the perpetrator, who has not necessarily acceded to a minimal ethical responsibility, the space to inflict further damage on a victim who has now exposed him or herself in an intimate and vulnerable way.

Ultimately, in Kogawa’s formulation of empathy, the suffering caused by forgiveness becomes too much for an individual to inhabit for any length of time. Indeed, by the end of the novel, as Millicent comes to accept the full extent of her father’s crimes and the impact they have had on her family and community, she is no longer able to remain in the state of “brokenness” demanded by the unlimited mercy prescribed by the Abrahamic tradition. Rather, forgiveness in this novel is finally guaranteed as an ethical act only when it comes subsequent to the perpetrator’s confession and lamentation; it is not, as the Abrahamic tradition suggests, necessary in any and all situations. As the narrator of Rain contends, “until you acknowledge the depths of your depravity, you will not waken to the cleansing flames. Until you walk into the field of fire, you will find no angel of mercy” (175).
For Kogawa, forgiveness is only possible, and ethical, when the perpetrator is willing to acknowledge the extent of his crimes and suffer for them. Full recognition requires that the criminal perform his own service of identification with the victim, which necessitates that he too, via the empathetic process, feels the pain of the crime. As Kogawa argues in the essay “Is there a Just Cause?”:

It is true that doubt and ambivalence can sometimes so immobilize us that in the end we serve to maintain oppressors in their positions of power. But healthy doubt is also that which prevents us from succumbing to the demonic power of unthinkable trust... Rather than abandoning the way of brokenness, I believe we need to remember the paradoxical power in mutual vulnerability. Where there is doubt, the authority of certainty is put aside, but the capacity to hear is heightened. We broken ones then, are not people who shout and stride, confident that our cause is just. But we listen, and we limp. In our limping we may discover that we walk with others who also limp and that even our enemies know pain. (20, my emphasis)

To argue this in a different way, for Kogawa, if forgiveness is the means towards more ethical interpersonal relations, it is only so when both parties locate themselves in the depths of suffering and brokenness she identifies above. Insofar as Barnabas neither admits responsibility for his crimes nor acknowledges the pain he may have caused, therefore negating any ethical responsibility for his crimes, he is not a forgivable subject.

Barnabas not only negates his own accountability for his actions, but also he actually uses forgiveness as a means to protect himself. The clergyman appeals to the Abrahamic rhetoric of unlimited forgiveness to justify his actions and protect his psyche from the anguish, or “brokenness,” that Kogawa argues is necessary. When Millicent is finally able to confront her father and demand his account of the past, asking, “[d]o you think you have been forgiven, Father?” (163), Barnabas will only reply that, “God came into the world to save sinners, and I am a sinner” (163). Here, the perpetrator makes it clear that while he is willing to admit that his actions were wrong, he is also relieving himself of any responsibility for them by appealing to the divine as the final judge. By suggesting that God’s forgiveness acts as a safety net between him and the hard ground of real moral depravity, Barnabas effectively relieves himself of accountability and the suffering that accompanies it, granting himself the space to continue to inflict suffering on other children. The lack of ethical responsibility to his victims and to his daughter...
renders the Abrahamic demand to forgive nothing more than a backdoor means of sanctioning his actions.

It is at this point late in the novel, when Barnabas makes it clear that he is using forgiveness as a means to close himself off to suffering rather than opening himself up to it, that Millicent finally admits to the dark underbelly of the exercise she has committed her life to. This is to say that while she does not abandon forgiveness entirely, she does recognize that in following the Abrahamic mandate to forgive categorically one actually opens up the space for the perpetrator to continue to inflict harm. In her past willingness to prescribe forgiveness again and again, “seventy times seven,” as Tutu puts it, Millicent sees herself as an active participant in Barnabas’ abuse against children. Each instance of clemency represents another tier in the pyre that ultimately offers her son as a sacrifice to her father. As she finally concludes, “I fed the monster on the flesh of my child. I turned aside as he engorged himself on other children” (174). Insofar as they facilitate Barnabas’ abuse by negating moral accountability, forgiveness and mercy are what allow for this violence to occur. Thus, for Millicent, unconditional forgiveness collapses the space of health and wholeness that are said to accompany it, turning mercy into a space of harm.

Driven by a revised definition of mercy, in which “forgiveness” and “licence” (163) are synonymous, and unwilling to further enable a forgiveness that contributes to the suffering and sacrifice it implies, Millicent—still clinging to the idea that religion can dictate the proper path to forgiveness—turns back to the Church for guidance. In the presence of an Anglican bishop, Millicent divulges her father’s crimes to someone outside of her family for the first time. After hearing her story all the way through, the bishop asks, rhetorically, “what would Jesus do?” (182), and Millicent, referencing Arthur Miller’s After the Fall, asks in turn, “Would he forgive? Are we to forgive endlessly, ‘as to an idiot in the house’?” (182). The unacknowledged quotation from Miller is informative. To forgive “an idiot in the house” is to assert that an individual does not have the capacity to take responsibility for his or her actions and thus to offer him or her one’s hospitality in spite of it. Imparting forgiveness to an individual who is capable of understanding the impact of his or her crimes and yet refuses accountability is to invite suffering and harm into the home, as Millicent realizes she herself has done. This final
position on forgiveness illustrates an ethical limitation to Millicent’s exercise in forgiveness and helps to shape the boundaries of mercy in Kogawa’s own work.

The distinction between the work being done by Kogawa and those working within the Abrahamic tradition is philosophically subtle and needs close attention. Both approaches are obviously deeply invested in the power of forgiveness and see it as an important step on the road to reconciliation. Indeed, Kogawa frames her novel within the religious order she is contending with as a means to illustrate the fundamental role it plays in developing Millicent’s own approach to mercy. The essential difference, of course, is that while proponents of the Abrahamic tradition insist that forgiveness is categorical, that it must be offered “without limit” (Tutu 273), Kogawa illustrates that it is in its very categorical nature that forgiveness risks inflicting the most serious harm on those compelled to evoke. Acknowledging the suffering that is implicit to forgiveness, not as a divine or spiritual act of sacrifice, renders forgiveness a much more volatile and problematic step on the road to reconciliation. If reconciliation is possible for Kogawa, and it is not clear that it is, it is not synonymous with healing and wholeness; rather, it is a space in which both victim and perpetrator have exposed wounds and reel from the impact of ideological collision.

6.4. Critiquing Mercy

Millicent’s eventual position on forgiveness in *The Rain Ascends* offers new insight into Kogawa’s use of the idea across her work, particularly in *Obasan* and *Itsuka*, texts which play an important role in Canada’s own understanding of forgiveness and reconciliation. Analysis of *Rain* is helpful not only insofar as it contributes to the field of “Kogawa criticism” (“After *Obasan*” 6) but also for how it extends our understanding of Kogawa’s program of forgiveness across her novels. The criticism that has taken up forgiveness in Kogawa’s writing recognizes the importance of mercy in the author’s work, but encounters difficulty when contending with the scope of the ethics Kogawa is
laying out. In part, this is due to the fact that the majority of the analysis ignores Rain’s contribution.\textsuperscript{72}

As an idealist claim, unconditional forgiveness is certainly a noble goal, and it should not be argued that Kogawa herself is doing away with the concept. Idealist perspectives on forgiveness rely on the tradition of mercy passed down through stories like the one Stephannie tells, in which the sublime moment of forgiving enemy heals the community’s wounds and reconciles victim and perpetrator without difficulty or contradiction. Where Kogawa intervenes into the forgiveness arguments offered by figures such as Tutu, however, is in her refusal to submit to the sublime of forgiveness, drawing attention instead to the suffering and violence that empathy and forgiveness unveil.

However, the criticism that has taken up the role of forgiveness and reconciliation in Kogawa’s writing has left the primacy of pain and “brokenness” implicit to her work unexamined, and has thus contributed to the unproblematic notion that forgiveness is always desirable, insofar as it “might provide the possibility of a different future” (McGonegal 112). Unsurprisingly, Kogawa’s “forgiveness” critics focus almost entirely on her most famous novel, Obasan. In Imagining Justice: The Politics of Postcolonial Forgiveness and Reconciliation, Julie McGonegal takes up the question of forgiveness in Kogawa’s work in comprehensive detail. McGonegal makes a compelling argument against reading Obasan as a model for resolution or clemency. Her position is that both Obasan and Itsuka challenge contemporary views on forgiveness as a teleology, thus inviting more nuanced critical perspectives:

\begin{quote}
Obasan and Itsuka press us to suspend our (postmodernist) assumptions that forgiveness and reconciliation are concepts necessarily complicit in
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{72} The major exception being Benjamin’s Lefebvre’s essay “In Search of Someday: Trauma and Repetition in Joy Kogawa’s Fiction.” Lefebvre also argues that, “Despite the differences in plot and subject matter, I see The Rain Ascends as an unacknowledged sequel to Obasan and Itsuka” (165). Trudy Govier is the only other critic I am aware of who contends with Rain and the nature of forgiveness, albeit very briefly. See Forgiveness and Revenge, particularly p. 156.
modernity’s logic of universal morality and teleology. The texts are useful for considering alternative approaches to these concepts because they do not elide or confuse them with amnesia, closure, submission, acquiescence, or transcendence; nor do they equate them with repression, consolation, or sentimentalization. Instead, they suggest that it may be time to interrogate reductive dualisms that insist on the incompatibility of resistance and reconciliation. (116)

This analysis rightly suggests that forgiveness and resistance are not mutually exclusive in Kogawa’s work. For McGonegal, the novelist illustrates that one does not have to forgive and forget: the past, and the emotions it carries, are compatible with, and necessary to, mercy itself. The critic argues that while both Obasan and Itsuka gesture towards the possibility of forgiveness and reconciliation, they do so with the key disclaimer that such goals are absurd without the existence of some provisions, such as compensation or apology. For McGonegal, when the perpetrator “shows no remorse, when [he/she] makes no reparations for its racist actions, the extension of forgiveness on the part of the oppressed is understood as a sign of hegemonic recuperation” (119). In this perspective forgiveness is only desirable for the victim—and indeed only ethical for the forgiver—when the wrongdoer is able to demonstrate remorse for his or her actions and to take tangible steps towards redressing the wrong. Like Barnabas, the unremorseful perpetrator who is forgiven is only given further opportunity to inflict harm and repression, which can cause further suffering for the victim. As I argue throughout this dissertation, any ethical account of reconciliation must be willing to acknowledge that the potential for pain is very often built into the mechanism for healing and this bifurcation must be taken into account. McGonegal helps to illustrate that without the proper returns from the perpetrator, forgiveness is always already morally suspect and the latent site of further suffering for the individual who evokes it.

McGonegal’s analysis of forgiveness in Kogawa’s first two novels is, like my own, based on the notion of empathy and the notion of mutual vulnerability developed in “Just Cause”:

forgiveness and reconciliation are thus possible for Kogawa, but they depend on a willingness to engage another perspective, namely by making a committed effort to listen to another version and by allowing the difference of that version to alter the prior univocality of one’s viewpoint. (123)
Clearly, the idea of giving way to the other, of allowing his or her perspective to coalesce with one’s own, is a large part of what is at stake for McGonegal in this analysis. However, I argue that by limiting her analysis to Obasan and Itsuka, she elides the suffering and violence implicit to forgiveness and reconciliation and frames mercy as a gentle and loving act, an idea that Kogawa goes on to challenge in Rain.

McGonegal’s primary example of forgiveness for her argument is the tender exchange between mother and daughter in Obasan: “Naomi enables reconciliation to enter the realm of possibility by attending silently to her mother’s version rather than dogmatically imposing her own interpretation” (121). In much the same way as I argue above, McGonegal is insistent that forgiveness “is contingent on genuine openness to the position of the other, or what Kogawa might refer to [in ‘Just Cause’] as ‘mutual recognition’ or ‘mutual vulnerability’” (120). This analysis is, of course, based on the empathetic approach to forgiveness I develop above. McGonegal also evokes the model of “brokenness” (and, by proxy, the pain implicit to it) that Kogawa opens up in her 1984 essay, thus drawing important connections between the author’s published works. However, by supporting her argument with the affectionate moment of forgiveness that occurs between Naomi and her mother in Obasan, she does not allow for the hermeneutic space to fully explore the limits of “mutual vulnerability” as a critical tool. While Naomi’s reconciliation with her mother is an evocative representation of the ways in which forgiveness can, in a Tavuchian sense, facilitate the movement to peaceful coexistence and the healing of pain, it does not contend with the violence and suffering implicit to forgiving the absolute other. As Kogawa herself puts it, “the most necessary work of our day is not the easy act of engaging with the like-minded, but the arduous, world-altering labour of befriending the enemy” (Rain, 200). Rain helps to clarify the boundaries of the forgiveness Kogawa is working with and illustrate the subjective struggle and suffering implicit to acts of forgiving the enemy.

Opposed to the idealist ideology that it is built out of, The Rain Ascends demonstrates the suffering and physical damage that is implicit to the forgiving process and cautions against its unconditional application. As a religious ideal, forgiveness is a dignified goal and Kogawa is not attempting to eliminate it from the set of steps that lead to reconciliation and healing. Indeed, in “Is there a Just Cause?” she argues that, “as we move towards naming our public friends and our public enemies, I trust and believe that
the energy for healing, for reconciliation, for forgiveness and for mutuality are endlessly, endlessly accessible to us” (24). Yet, what Rain demonstrates is that in this supposedly sublime space one cannot responsibly ignore the suffering that is inscribed within it. To do so is to invite further harm. Thus in the terms of forgiveness and reconciliation, and following from McGonegal’s analysis, Rain is the culminating text in what should be recognized as Kogawa’s trilogy of forgiveness narratives. The final novel in this series adds further depth and complexity to the notions of mercy that the author explores in relation to Japanese Canadians in Obasan and Itsuka and provokes new ways for researchers to conceive forgiveness across Kogawa criticism.

Kogawa’s project in Rain is not about unsettling forgiveness in order to expose the reality it obscures, just as Obasan is not simply about exposing the “truth” of internment; rather both novels are about layering and problematizing forgiveness and reconciliation outside of the tradition of the noble victim that the TRC relies on. Contra to the Abrahamic tradition, which demands unlimited forgiveness on every and all accounts, Kogawa’s suggestion is that forgiveness can actually be the cause of suffering, that health is in fact at risk in this dangerous process. Thus where Tutu argues that “the only way we can be whole, healthy, happy persons is to learn to forgive” (156), Kogawa suggests that forgiveness is a dangerous and volatile medicine that has the potential to inflict more harm than healing. Furthermore “brokenness” may be part of what makes forgiveness possible. In a visceral and uncomfortable way, which shakes the reader out of the complacency initiated by the victim narrative, The Rain Ascends demonstrates the physical damage that is implicit to the healing process. What Rain demonstrates is that the supposedly sublime space of forgiveness, what is widely seen as the most necessary step on the road to reconciliation, cannot responsibly do away with the suffering that is inscribed within it. As Eleanor rightly puts it in the novel, this formulation can be somewhat maddening, insofar as one must acknowledge that: “both healing and harm [come] from the same pair of hands” (Rain 42). Yet, without

73 See Goellnicht. “Minority History as Metafiction: Joy Kogawa’s Obasan.”
confronting the latter half of this formulation, choosing instead to embrace the divinity of forgiveness, one risks further contributing to victim suffering and a negligent, if not violent, reconciliation.
7. Conclusion: “How Many Times Will We Have to Go Over This?”

You already forgave me, you forgave me, how many times will we have to go over this?
-Death and the Maiden (54)

The above quote from Ariel Dorfman’s 1990 play is the most fitting epigraph I could find for the conclusion of this dissertation. The lines are uttered in frustration by Gerardo Escobar to his wife Paulina following a day of work at a national Truth Commission (which remains unnamed). What Dorfman establishes in this scene is the prevailing assumption behind the discourse of reconciliation, namely that once a victim proffers forgiveness the conversation is closed. While the interaction here is personal, Dorfman uses it as a platform to launch into a larger conversation on the politics of forgiveness and reconciliation.

In the play, Gerardo is appointed to a commission similar to the Canadian TRC in that it is a commission charged with investigating “Human Rights violations” (Dorfman 9). However, while the commission carries a certain amount of weight as a political performance, as a criminal practice it is almost entirely impotent. The commission can only narrativize the events; it cannot prosecute anyone. Perpetrators have full amnesty. Paulina, who suffered massive trauma at the hands of the offenders, is strongly critical of Gerardo’s work. Very early in the play, the audience learns that she views the commission as futile: “The commission can investigate the crimes but nobody is punished for them? There’s freedom to say anything you want as long as you don’t say everything you want?” (39).

In relation to the way Canada has positioned its own reconciliation, protecting its own perpetrators from prosecution, Paulina’s critique rings loudly and sharply. In 1998, roughly the same time in which RCAP was beginning to define Canada’s domestic policy on conflict resolution, Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lloyd Axworthy attempted to
identify Canada’s position on retributive justice and reconciliation. According to Axworthy,

An independent and effective international criminal court will help to deter some of the most serious violations of international humanitarian law. It will help give new meaning and global reach to protecting the vulnerable and innocent. By isolating and stigmatizing those who commit war crimes or genocide, and removing them from the community, it will help to end cycles of impunity and retribution. Without justice, there is no reconciliation, and without reconciliation, no peace.

Here, Axworthy clearly subscribes to a retribution qua justice model which is dependent on the identification (and public shaming) of perpetrators. At least initially, it appeared that Canada’s domestic policy would reflect the hard retributive stance Axworthy outlines.

However, while bill C-19 enhances Canada’s ability to prosecute domestic crimes against humanity and war crimes under the *Criminal Code*, the ongoing TRC, which, as mentioned above, finds its beginnings in RCAP, has no mandate to indict perpetrators for any crime that occurred during the Residential School era. Indeed, line “h” in the “Establishment, Powers, Duties and Procedures of the Canadian Commission” states that it

shall not name names in their events, activities, public statements, report or recommendations, or make use of personal information or of statements made which identify a person, without the express consent of that individual, unless that information and/or the identity of the person so identified has already been established through legal proceedings, by admission, or by public disclosure by that individual. Other information that could be used to identify individuals shall be anonymized to the extent possible.

As this clause illustrates, despite good intentions, the Canadian TRC is clearly in the business of protecting its perpetrators from retribution, while still garnering the positive effects of forgiveness from the victims. Roland Chrisjohn and Sherri Young point out that there is a serious conflict of interest in the fact that the people who admit responsibility are also the ones who will be “defining it, judging it, and passing sentence on it” (10). And that sentence is simply that the perpetrators will have to listen to the testimony of the victims. While Canada’s foreign policy towards conflict resolution is aimed at
retributive justice, its domestic policy is more about harbouring goodwill via apologetic gestures.

In reading pieces of literature like *Death* alongside the Canadian TRC, I have become more and more disillusioned with the potential for reconciliatory change in Canada. As in *Death*, the Canadian commission risks being nothing more than a performance for performance’s sake: a cultural act with no political foundation (i.e. political transition). If the continuing history of colonization continues to be actively ignored and forgotten by the politicians and people that offered apologies, then the changes occurring on the ground will be significantly stymied, if not reversed. Harper’s gaffe at the G20 is indicative of the wilful memory loss that Canada continues to apply to Canada’s violent past. It is difficult to retroactively read his apology to Residential School survivors as sincere after he announced to the world that Canada has no history of colonialism.

Still, while I have always had doubts about how reconciliation has been practised in Canada, at least at a political level, this does not mean that I think that the concept is without merit. For instance, I find the introductory argument offered in *From Truth to Reconciliation* very compelling: “[f]or Aboriginal peoples, the promise of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is that their truths, as they relate to this tragic chapter of history, will now have a place in the official story of Canada that is accessible to successive generations of Canadians” (Castellano et al 3). What the editors of this volume are suggesting is that reconciliation can be used as a revisionary tool, a means to decolonize Canadian history through Aboriginal perspectives and stories. Conceptually, this is a provocative and insightful way to employ reconciliation. Much like the Japanese Canadian redress movement, the TRC has the potential to alter the shape of Canadian history and its reception in what it returns to Canadian identity.

However, up until now, reconciliation as a political practice in Canada has been less about revising history than about closing conversations and distracting attention from the lived conditions of victims. Unlike “redress,” which, as Miki illustrates, was a term generated out of and for the Japanese Canadian community, “reconciliation” is a borrowed term. “Reconciliation” is historically conceived as an end to political turmoil--
such as apartheid or dictatorship. As such, like forgiveness, it is always already a word that implies the end of a conversation.

Of course, I still recognize that grassroots organizations have achieved some progress under the banner of “reconciliation--using the concept to their political advantage and capitalizing on the momentum for change that such a concept offers. I have illustrated some of the ways in which Canadian literature and Indigenous literatures in Canada identify the weaknesses in political reconciliation and provide new ways to approach the concept. Halfe and Loring are particularly instructive here. The Aboriginal Healing Foundation has also made giant strides towards promoting reconciliation in Canada, namely in the community events they have hosted and in the publication of the trilogy of reconciliation texts--From Truth to Reconciliation; Response, Responsibility and Renewal; and Cultivating Canada--which were distributed free of cost across the country. These texts, which include carefully selected pieces from community members, activists, and members of the Church, do not shy away from the conflict that reconciliation raises and, despite the state’s attempt to contain conflict resolution within a five-year mandate, explode the issue of reconciliation outside of any parliamentary attempt to manage it.

Grassroots communities and social media are also being used to promote reconciliation and to educate the populace about the legacy of Residential Schools. Twitter has provided a new voice and media for commentators to weigh in on the subject. Of particular interest to me while writing this dissertation were @TRC_en, created by parties to the Indian Residential Schools Class Action, which provides detailed accounts of reconciliation events and legal matters, and @InukHulk (aka Bruce Bannock), who troubles liberal conceptions of reconciliation with tweets that combine humour and politics. Since the TRC was announced, Canadians have also been confronted with artistic work from individuals and groups such as Digital Natives, the

74 One example from @InukHulk: “CAN’T FIND MEDICINE WHEEL AT CANADIAN TIRE! #FIRSTNATIONSPROBLEMS”
Still, deployed as an idealist concept, which imagines a space “beyond the contradictions that constitute our own historical place” (Chow xx), Canadian reconciliation aims to distract from the material impacts of conflict resolution while securing state interests. In blindly accepting the idea of reconciliation as a transformative (or transitional) politic, without properly considering its material implications, one may be turning away from a proper investigation of government intent behind the ideal. Idealism risks ignoring the possibility that conflict resolution itself may just be a “rhetorical manoeuvre designed to obscure ... the moral and financial accountability of Euro-Canadian society” (Chrisjohn and Young 63).

The four categories of reconciliation that I address in this dissertation--the call, apology, redress and forgiveness--allow me to engage with what I call materialist reconciliation insofar as they provide inroads for investigating reconciliation on a more intimate, detailed level. Breaking reconciliation down into a series of “steps” makes it easier to appreciate the ways in which individuals are forced to contend with it on a day-to-day basis. Each chapter examines either the emotional, political or financial difficulties that individuals and communities have to contend with in the reconciliatory process. As such, each of the categories evoked also invite contradiction and paradox into the conversation. What I do in this dissertation is to point out and unpack the contradictions that are already implicit in the discourse of reconciliation, yet are elided beneath idealist rhetoric. By shifting from an idealist to a materialist perspective, I illustrate the ways in which reconciliation has been mobilized strategically towards state interests and financial goals. This is not to take away from the value of the work being done by

grassroots operations and artists. Rather, I illustrate the extent of the ability of the state to *recuperate* and delimit reconciliation as a means to promote state interests.

Before addressing these four categories I first had to establish the historical background in which they function. Despite idealist appeals to reconciliation, which conceive it as a universal category that exists outside of culture and history, the reconciliation I contend with in this dissertation is born out of a very specific historical moment, the Nuremberg trials. What I establish is that reconciliation is not an abstract universal ideal but rather a symptom of law and ideology with an identifiable genealogy. Thus, chapter one traces the history of reconciliation beginning at Nuremberg and moving through Uganda, Chile, Yugoslavia, South Africa, Australia and Canada, demonstrating how and why the discourse of Human Rights, and its ideological influence on interstate politics, have developed into the language of Truth Commissions, Tribunals and TRCs.

In chapter one I established that the emphasis on performance that is currently found in Canada is not an entirely new version of reconciliation. Canada can be located in a long genealogy of performance and conflict resolution that begins after World War II. Looking back at Uganda, the first nation-state to employ a Truth Commission in the wake of Nuremberg, it is evident that performance has long been at the core of reconciliation: in Uganda, Idi Amin made a theatrical show of Human Rights to serve as a façade for any specific ethical action, which allowed him to continue to participate in the international economy. Re-introducing Amin into a conversation from which he is normally excluded, I argued that if researchers are going to measure Canadian reconciliation against the larger history of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions that they do not end their comparisons with South Africa. Amin’s transgressions are as much a part of this history as Tutu’s successes. While the Ugandan Commission certainly does not cast as favourable a light on reconciliation as South Africa, it is nonetheless an important piece of the reconciliation genealogy. Understanding this allows researchers to sketch out a more nuanced topography of reconciliation that incorporates the potential contradictions that the idea materializes once put into practice by political leaders.

Chapter two moves away from history towards a theoretical analysis of the difficulties surrounding First Nations’ attempts to make the trauma of Residential Schools
heard by the general public. As Louise Bernice Halfe indicates in her work, telling these stories often comes at the expense of the speaker and does not guarantee change or reconciliation for the community. As the poet puts it, the painful memories of colonial history are often “squeezed through ... / blistered tongues” (18). Those who attempt “listen to the bones” (19) over the din of colonialism must first be aware of how difficult it can be for some survivors to share their stories. In Halfe’s texts, despite their strength and determinism, the narrators of these events are often weary and worn from sharing their stories, and distrustful of a European audience. Thus, the demand that one share their traumatic history, again, simply because the government has declared that it is now willing to listen, ignores the further pain this testimony may cause.

Further, Halfe is cautious of the gap that exists between telling a story and hearing it. For the poet, one of the primary impediments to being heard is a matter of reception. This idea harkens back to my early point about the risk of “reconciliation,” as it is developed and defined by individuals, being deployed strategically against the authors that employ it. Abused words can rub the tongue the wrong way, and incite the blisters that Halfe draws attention to in the passage above. Once entered into the symbolic there is no way to control how people will receive “the call,” or how it will be (re)articulated by the individuals and groups that receive it. The centripetal force of language, and the struggle to make a specific “call” heard in the way intended by its author should be a serious consideration when analyzing the reception of reconciliation discourse.

Blue Marrow helps to illustrate this in the narrator’s anxiety over the reception of her own text: “My words get in your way. / I feel your sting” (33). Here, the primary concern for the narrator is that language is actually an impediment to communication. Words “get in the way.” Meaning and misinterpretations are used as weapons to flog their author and deflate his or her cause. Inasmuch as the discourse of reconciliation relies on “sincerity” (the notion that spoken and written words accurately portray the inner feelings of their author) to establish its validity, this reading of Halfe opens up some important questions about authorial intent and the performance of anxiety in a text.

Indeed, the anxiety over reception and interpretation that Halfe performs in Blue Marrow is something I argue that political apologies lack. Harper’s apology for Canada’s Residential Schools, which I examined alongside Jane Stewart’s “Statement of
Reconciliation” in chapter three, is especially problematic in these regards. The fact that
his administration would even name the “sorry” offered to survivors of Residential
Schools a “Full Apology” (which could just as easily be read as Complete Apology, or
“Statement that will conclude the conversation on Canadian colonial history”) demonstrates how this administration is attempting to end that discussion and limit the
possibility of “going over this again.” Rather than acknowledging the lack implicit to his
speech, the way in which no apology can ever account for the depth of historical
injustice, Harper attempts to make his apology complete by naming it complete.

The Canadian government is not breaking any new ground in its latest apology. Rather, Harper is following in a long tradition of performed apologies offered by the
Canadian government to Aboriginal peoples. I argue in chapter three that the apology
which Coyote offers in Green Grass, Running Water is a comic critique of the ways in
which “sorry” has been used historically to stymie political retaliation from First Nations
communities. Coyote’s repetition of “sorry,” which he offers to four “Old Indians,” mirrors
the multiple apologies that had been offered to First Nations from a number of Church
leaders far before Harper offered his own “Full Apology.” While King does not go so far
as to fully demonstrate Coyote’s insincerity via any direct action, he does undercut the
apology and put the Indians’ trust into question by punctuating the performance of regret
with the trickster’s giggle. Harper’s apology echoes the scene in Green Grass in the
Prime Minister’s laughable assertion that Canada has “no history of colonialism.” Both
“giggles” are subsequent to elaborate demonstrations of regret and undermine the
sincerity that Harper and Coyote initially establish. While the snickers are both tangential
to the apology, insofar as they are not directly acknowledged by their interlocutors as a
part of the apology itself, they are indicative of the way in which the idea of an apology is
troubled by its translation into a practice.

Indeed, in order for the idea of reconciliation to be realized in the socio-political
sphere, it must first pass through the ideologies of the speaker. In this translation
reconciliation stops being a report on a state of being and becomes a political action
aimed at accomplishing certain goals. J.L. Austin helps to illustrate the material impact of
“apology” in his analysis of what words do, shifting analysis away from what they report
on. Harper’s neo-liberal politics employ reconciliation as a means to protect government
interests. In this sense, he does not only reflect on the injustice perpetrated by
Residential Schools, he also enacts a means for the government to contend with this injustice while protecting its financial interests. In sum, this chapter further complicates the movement between apology and forgiveness in Tavuchis’ progression and illustrates the ways in which apologies can be strategically mobilized by the state.

In chapter four I further expand on Tavuchis’ definition of apology by unpacking the relationship between saying “sorry” and giving material recompense. For Tavuchis, apology and redress are essentially different parts of the same process. Inasmuch as apology facilitates genuine change in a victim’s life it is, for Tavuchis, comparable to material redress. I demonstrate the problems with this formulation by turning to financial compensation and examining the ways in which it can interfere with apology. Here, I argue that reconciliation and financial capital are inextricably intertwined. By fleshing out Roy Miki’s contention that we approach “redress as a gift” (Redress 322), I suggest that gift theory provides new ways to consider the formidable dynamics of restitution within a framework that is sensitive to the tensions that arise out of financial compensation.

It is no coincidence that Pierre Bourdieu argues that gifts are “sometimes intended to set the seal on alliances or reconciliations” (191). Gifts make apologies tangible and exchange promotes the passage into forgiveness. Indeed, the discourses of the gift and reconciliation are interknit within language. In both English and French “giving” is built into the etymology of forgiveness (pardonner). Of course restitution and redress, which I use interchangeably, are also based on sophisticated and delicate principles of giving. Applying the theory first developed by Marcel Mauss, I argue that if one is to approach redress as a gift, as Miki suggests, one must first acknowledge that it is both an act of healing and an agent of harm. As Alan D. Schrift argues, “although the gift may appear free and disinterested, it is in fact both constrained and quite interested” (4). In other words, as Miki illustrates, redress is not a one-way exchange. Despite the

76 Of course it should be noted that in the Cree language giving and forgiveness do not have the same etymological link as in French and English. According to The Alberta Elder’s Cree Dictionary, forgiveness is “kasinamawew” and gift is “mekiwin.”
fact that it is represented by the perpetrators as what Derrida calls a “pure gift”, an
uninterested act of giving, redress implicitly requires a return from the recipient.

Recognizing redress as a gift, not only as recompense or compensation, allows
researchers to trace a path of communication between giver and recipient. Gift
economies can open up discourse and facilitate empathic relationships. According to
Miki, those who are involved in redress proceedings should not accept the idealist
approach to redress as a “pure gift.” For him, identifying “redress as a gift” means
implicating oneself in an ongoing cycle of give and take, or (for)give and (for)get: a cycle
which both affirms the traumatic past of the recipient and generates a tradition of
responsibility between victim and perpetrator. Miki makes the Japanese Canadian
ctribution to Canada clear by returning to the more rigorous definition of citizenship
that the Canadian state received in exchange for the compensation it gave to Japanese
Canadians. Redress is “successful” in Canada, then, not when it gives “anything close to
total vindication” (157), as Roy Brooks suggests, but rather when it recognizes the
reciprocity implicit to it and thus enters two parties into a mutual relationship that
establishes obligation and empathy based on some sense of loss. As Hopkinson
demonstrates in Brown Girl in the Ring, if society is unable to acknowledge the return
implicit to redress, we risk opening up the potential for the government to employ it as
justification for violent state intervention.

Forgiveness, the topic of my final chapter, is, out of all the subjects examined in
this dissertation, the most synonymous with reconciliation itself. For many, forgiveness
represents the one space of passage into reconciliation. Indeed, as Pumla Gobodo-
Madikizela argues, it is only through forgiveness that one can arrive at reconciliation:
“through forgiveness a provisional vocabulary of reconciliation, if not friendship, is
created” (132). The intimate relation between forgiveness and reconciliation is made
most apparent in Desmond Tutu’s tenure with the South African TRC. Since South
Africa, the world has seen TRCs in Sierra Leone, Peru, South Korea, Liberia, the
Solomon Islands, East Timor, and, of course, Canada. While all of these have
adopted/adapted the TRC model to match their own circumstances, Tutu’s (Abrahamic)
model of forgiveness is infused into the core of each movement. According to Marlene
Brandt, co-editor of the Canadian text From Truth to Reconciliation, “reconciliation
involves perpetrators asking for and victims offering forgiveness, as they acknowledge

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and accept the past and recognize the humanity of one another” (385). In Brandt’s conception, apology and redress are removed entirely from the conversation and forgiveness is underscored as the means to achieving reconciliation. As the Archbishop himself puts it, “the only way we can be whole, healthy, happy persons is to learn to forgive” (156). Further evidence of the link between forgiveness and reconciliation is found in the rhetoric of reconciliation itself.

If forgiveness, in post-South Africa conflict resolution, is indeed the lynchpin of reconciliation, it is also one of the most philosophically troubling elements of the TRC model, because it asks victims, pace Tutu, to overcome, pain, fear, anger and the desire for vengeance unconditionally. As such, forgiveness becomes the *sine qua non*, of peace and reconciliation, the only space in which a community and a nation can be healed and thus a project that the victim *must* undertake under any and all circumstances. Indeed, according to Tutu one should be willing to forgive the neighbour “not just once, not just seven times, but seventy times seven, *without limit*” (273, my emphasis).

As a categorical imperative, however, forgiveness can threaten the well-being of the forgiver. Indeed, this is the difficulty that Joy Kogawa explores in her third novel, *The Rain Ascends*. As opposed to her earlier two novels, which deal with forgiveness at the level of the state, *Rain* contends with forgiveness within the frame of the Church. The shift from state to church emphasizes the religious foundations of forgiveness and the difficulty one may find in extracting oneself from these foundations. What *Rain* demonstrates is that while forgiveness may very well be a necessary, and even foundational, element of human interaction, this in itself does not mean that one can ignore the suffering that is inscribed within it. To do so is to subscribe to idealist thinking and to invite further harm into a discourse of healing. *Rain* suggests that the Abrahamic demand to forgive propagated by the Church is actually counter to a project of healing and social restoration. For Kogawa, the “exercise in forgiveness” (53) demanded by religious idealism opens the forgiver up to further emotional and physical trauma. As such, the result is not always health and happiness, as suggested by Tutu and other supporters of the forgiveness/reconciliation model, but rather frustration and even further suffering for the victim/forgiver. For Kogawa, mercy is only the beginning of the conversation, not the end. As her narrator contends, “the most necessary work of our
day is not the easy act of engaging with the like-minded, but the arduous, world-altering labour of befriending the enemy" (*Rain* 200).

Following Kogawa, I do not see forgiveness as the end of a conversation on reconciliation. The “world-altering labour of befriending the enemy” requires that one deconstruct preconceived narratives and build new discourses and interpersonal relationships. Indeed, I made the decision to end this dissertation with forgiveness because it leaves the conversation open. As Pamela Hieronymi argues, “an articulate account [of forgiveness] must make use of the fact that emotions are subject to rational revision by articulating the revision in judgment or change in view that allows us to *revise* our resentment while maintaining the judgements that occasioned it” (535). To put it differently, forgiveness is an act of amendment, modification and reconsideration. It is a plea to re-evaluate (without condoning) an event and its consequences and it is thus an act beginning (once again) a conversation on historical injustice and conflict resolution. Because it is an act of revision, rather than completion, and because it leaves the conversation in the sphere of the victim, I decided to leave forgiveness as the final chapter here rather than seeing Tavuchis through to his conclusion.

It is my hope that this dissertation will provoke new conversations and debate around the topic of reconciliation from a materialist perspective. As such, there are at least two possible pathways for further research that I would like to point towards here. The first is based on political considerations. Part of my reasoning in leaving this dissertation open by “concluding” with forgiveness is based on the notion that closure can be mobilized in political directions that undercut equanimity and peaceful relations. Indeed, political constancy is one of the issues that is most at stake in the current neoliberal environment. A nation without ambiguities and contradictions is simply a better business partner. As such, reconciliation is a sound investment. As one Canadian government official admitted to Carole Blackburn:

we just need to get on with developing British Columbia. We can’t with this unresolved aboriginal rights and title issue out there. So we’re looking for certainty so we know what the rules are and can get on with business, developing the province. (587)
As Blackburn makes clear in her work, reconciliation is not first and foremost about achieving a utopic ideal of coexistence with Aboriginal people. Rather, “resolution” is about erasing the contradictions that interfere with business. Jeff Corntassel, Chaw-win-is and T’lakwadzi make a similar argument. According to them,

Given an overarching desire to secure a stable land base to facilitate corporate investment, the Government of Canada, as well as certain provinces, including British Columbia, have begun to use the language of reconciliation in negotiations with Indigenous peoples (for example, in the B.C. Treaty Process as well as in the proposed ‘New Relationship’ legislation) in order to establish the ‘certainty’ of a land claim in such a way as to facilitate the extinguishment of original Indigenous title to the land. (145)

As both pieces of the above research exemplify, economic and political stability are the key goals in state discourse that is built on neo-liberal ideologies. As such, a more radical critique of Harper’s administration may not be that they have been insincere in their apologies, as I argue in chapter three, but rather that their sincerity has been levied towards economic stability. Further examination on how reconciliation is being recuperated by neo-liberalism as a tool for promoting economic stability is an important part in understanding the ways in which TRCs are being mobilized in contemporary settler states. More research needs to be done that highlights the connections between neo-liberalism and contemporary reconciliation movements in intra-national colonies. Of particular interest here is how reconciliation is being adopted in settler states by conservative governments, such as Howard in Australia and Harper in Canada, for instance. Chapter three provides a foundation for future scholars to build on.

Continuing on the point of settler reconciliation, another point that deserves further consideration is the Canadian derivation from historical models of reconciliation, which were based in transitional justice. I have attempted to sketch out some of the key differences between these perspectives in chapter one, but more historical and theoretical work must be undertaken. While Canada is the latest addition to the TRC genealogy, it is also radically different from its predecessors, namely in the fact that it is not clear that any political transition has taken place. There may be an argument to be made that Aboriginal sovereignty and a return to treaty rights and land claims have the
potential to take on the aspect of transitional justice, but more analysis is necessary to illustrate the potential and problems with this formulation.

I argue that settler states like Canada and Australia are allowed too much leeway to align themselves with transitional movements such as South Africa’s and, to a lesser extent, Chile’s. This quick conflation allows them to borrow from the gravitas of a figure like Tutu, while also appearing to be politically progressive and compassionate, thus drawing attention away from the ways in which “reconciliation” is being employed as an ideal in order to facilitate state interests and protect perpetrators. Future research should focus on further unpacking Canada’s relationship to the transitional justice paradigm and the ways in which the state both follows and deviates from it. Building on my work here, researchers pursuing a study of reconciliation in settler states should take into consideration the ways in which the “idea” of reconciliation, as generated in South Africa and Chile, is being used strategically as a tool of neo-colonialism.

Reconciliation can be conceptualized in a number of ways, be it as an acknowledgement of the past, a way to promote peaceful coexistence, or as a process of decolonization. However, as I have argued here, reconciliation is also a discourse of power that can be strategically mobilized by a government to promote nationalism and to protect financial interests. Good intentions notwithstanding, reconciliation has historically been used as a means to stabilize a citizenry and restore confidence in the governmental body--hence its seminal use as a tool of transitional justice. Leaders of new democracies, such as Nelson Mandela and Patricio Aylwin, have used reconciliation and TRCs as a means to bolster social equality and to promote democratic change. However, rather than facilitating new forms of interaction between the state and its citizenry, reconciliation in Canada appeals to the affective power of apology and forgiveness while diminishing the import of land claims and treaty rights and authenticating the perpetrator’s right to rule. The gap between concept and practice is palpable and potentially dangerous to the future use of reconciliation.

Materialist reconciliation rejects the idea that there is a “full” or complete state of reconciliation and looks instead towards the relations and exchanges that take place during its instantiation. For those who are looking for an end to the conversation (like Gerardo in Death and the Maiden), a materialist system can only provoke a proliferation
of apologies; it cannot provide a conclusion per se. As such, materialist reconciliation is much more reflective of the dialogues and debates that are created in reaction to reductive state policies. Despite the Canadian government’s attempt to contain the debate surrounding conflict resolution by limiting it to a five-year mandate, the conversation surrounding reconciliation is already growing far beyond these limits. This is the case not only in the proliferation of new work that directly addresses the Canadian TRC and the legacy of Residential Schools, as in Kevin Loring’s Where the Blood Mixes or in the Aboriginal Healing Foundation’s publications, but also in criticism that returns to earlier texts, such as Blue Marrow or Green Grass, Running Water, that offer new ways to unpack and develop thinking on the call, apology, redress, forgiveness and reconciliation.

In this sense, the gap between government and grassroots projects gives the latter a platform to push against, extending reconciliation beyond the temporal and ideological limits that the government has set. Marlene Brant Castellano argues that “movement toward reconciliation […] requires that awareness and acknowledgment be experienced at a thousand points of encounter between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people” (395). Each of these points of encounter can lead to new constellations of ideas which press against the constraints of the “official” discourse. While the extent of the state’s ability to recuperate reconciliation is, as I illustrate in this dissertation, deeper and more complex than proponents of reconciliation have noted, the potential for new thinkers, activists and artists to revise government strategies will maintain the vitality and viability of the concept.
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