

Editor's Introduction

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This past year marked a watershed within Canada's collective memory. The nation, which celebrated its 150th anniversary, has been forced through such forums as the recent Truth and Reconciliation Commission to examine itself with increased critical scrutiny. The editors of *Crossings* solicited papers that were tied to the theme of the sesquicentennial in order to challenge our conventions of how we remember, to engender critique, and to offer alternative accounts of the Canadian project. The editors also welcomed papers that were on other themes.

This volume's cover art is suggestive of the ambivalent legacy of Canada 150. It is a pictorial representation by artist Jude Claude of the mighty Red River with the Redwood/Harry Lazarenko Bridge as its backdrop. The Red River was once the trade route for First Nations and fur traders. It is one of the very first agricultural settlements in the West, a settlement whose very survival depended on the aid and the good will of the peoples of the land. It is now, notoriously, the dumping ground of casualties of the most brutal forms of colonial violence. It is here that Tina Fontaine's young body was found, and it is here that untiring local activists and family members pool their own labour and resources to "drag the Red" in desperate search of family members and loved ones. The river, like the nation that has recently celebrated its 150th anniversary, is sullied and troubled.

Several essays in this volume speak directly to Canada's problematic colonial legacy. In "Competing Conceptions of Land in Canada: From Locke to Kulchyski and Coulthard," Dylan Chyz-Lund

identifies contending notions of land that inform colonial Canadian and Indigenous epistemologies, and that make dialogue between them problematic and, at times, irreconcilable. Through detailed analysis, Chyz-Lund traces John Locke's abiding influence upon Western liberal thought; thought which regards sovereignty over and possession of land as the divinely mandated right of the individual. In contrast, Kulchyski and Coulthard situate land within what Coulthard refers to as "modes of life," or practices within specific communities, which include of sharing, political life, labour, and culture.

Adrienne Tessier's article, "Smoke in the Court of the Thief," also challenges staid conceptions within Canadian political life. Her essay specifically looks to the segregation of religious and political life, specifically through a case study in which a parent in British Columbia sued the school district for smudging (a supposedly "religious" practice) in her children's school. As Tessier demonstrates, the case displays the ongoing need for reconciliation in Canada, a reconciliation that demands that Indigenous practices be accommodated within public settings. Citing the protocols of Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning and the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Tessier demonstrates that Indigenous religious or spiritual practices can—and indeed must—be accommodated within public institutions without violating individual freedoms.

Dani Nowosad's article is an exploration of Métis identity through the records of the author's ancestor, Peter Fidler. Nowosad critically examines the biases that inhere in Western forms of memory keeping, specifically through written archival documents, which occlude both female and Indigenous experience in favour of male lineage and colonial ascendancy. Noting the absence of female and Indigenous family members in the colonial record, Nowosad acknowledges the significance of Fidler's legacy who incorporated

Indigenous knowledge and engaged Indigenous cultures in their own right throughout his life and career.

Janelle Gobin's essay critically examines propaganda used by the agricultural industry to represent farming in Canada as a mode of environmental protection and farmers as stewards of the land. Gobin locates these contemporary advertisements within a colonialist and nationalist narrative that she traces from eighteenth and nineteenth-century settlement to the present. Such propaganda naturalizes and lauds conceptions of land ownership and progress, while minimizing or negating Indigenous and environmental concerns.

Jeden Tolentino looks at the nation from a different perspective—that of Filipina immigrant workers, particularly women, who were employed as nurses and in the garment industry in Manitoba. Tolentino examines the complex familial relationships that were established by female immigrants from the Philippines as kinship ties were reconceived in Manitoba by creating “substitute sibling families,” while they also took on parental roles in assisting Filipinos—both back home and in Canada. These women also sponsored family members to immigrate to Canada and thus were vital sources of familial support and growth during the first generation of migration.

Jonas Brandt's essay takes up the question of the public sphere and the degree to which it is amenable to positive religious expression. Engaging John Rawls' notion of public reason, Brandt argues that this discursive standard actually obscures much of religious speech, including the sermons and writings of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Tapji Garba's essay likewise engages religion in the public sphere. Garba analyses the 2009 acceptance speech of the Nobel Peace Prize by Barack Obama and claims that it was replete with a theodicy that justifies the United States' perennial interventionism. According to Garba, Obama justifies the United States' policies

through a theological mechanism of glory, an idea that the suffering (indeed the blood) of soldiers has a redemptive effect.

Aaron Demeter's essay is an examination of contemporary Iranian cinema and its relationship to the Iranian Revolution of 1978. Demeter argues that, in spite of the many strictures imposed through the new Islamic Republic of Iran post-1978, filmmakers managed to circumvent the prohibitions imposed upon them through artistic reticence, just as filmmakers prior to the Revolution implicitly challenged the Shah's regime. In his reading of Iranian film, Demeter makes the case that art is able—to a degree—to evade political ideologies, and that Iranian film in particular flourished in the midst of the very prohibitions imposed upon it.

Shanae Blaquiére's "Transgression or Conformity? A Critical Analysis of the Fat Acceptance Movement," looks critically at the Fat Acceptance Movement (FAM), arguing that, while it has had the salutary effect of enabling individuals to gain deeper self-acceptance, it is nevertheless caught up in regimes of truth that are neoliberal in nature (consumer choice is tantamount to freedom) and fails to look at the manner in which obesity is most often situated within impoverished and racialized demographics. Without addressing systemic issues that surround obesity, FAM fails to interpret obesity adequately within its wider societal framework, and perpetuates the notion that fat, even while it is celebrated, is an individual matter.

Jazz Demetrioff likewise looks at the social construction of the body. In this case, she examines the manner in which madness was constructed as illness within antiquity, and particularly in the historical accounts given of Emperor Gaius Caligula. Demetrioff surveys the textual record on Caligula, as well as other ancient sources which account for the manner in which illness was conceived, and argues that Caligula, in fact, probably suffered from

what was known as the “sacred disease”—what contemporary medicine identifies as epilepsy.

Caitlyn Gowriluk’s essay uncovers the flaws in those theories that claim social media as a neutral and accessible public space. Taking the video-sharing platform, Vine, as a case study, Gowriluk examines the exploitation of prosumer labour and the immanent power dynamics of social media, which is driven not by citizen use or democratic ideals, but by profit.

Each of these essays, in spite of their broad range of themes, share a common habit of thought: each questions the degree to which staid and received ways of conceiving or representing the world are, in fact, the only or the proper way of perceiving it. Whether it is the seeming conformity of Iranian cinema to the state’s directives, or the stated aims of an admittedly good movement such as the Fat Acceptance Movement, or the Agriculture Industry’s vaunting of modern farmers as “stewards” of the environment, these students know to look deeply and critically beyond the platitudes and the placards of contemporary life. As such, they offer hope for a future in which our critical capacities will most manifestly and urgently be required.

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