

# Creative Subversions

Whiteness, Indigeneity,  
and the National Imaginary

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## Preface

By most accounts, the second decade of the twenty-first century has opened with rarely before seen displays of a “new Canadian patriotism.”<sup>1</sup> And yet two very different stories about this surge of national sentiment emerged from the Winter Olympics and the mass protests at the G20 Toronto Summit (2010). At the Olympics, pundits, ranging from John Honderich (former publisher of the *Toronto Star*) to Mullkam Samint (on his Vancouver Ethiopian Blog) suggested that “finally, Canadians have shown their patriotic side,”<sup>2</sup> making these games a “coming of age moment” for the entire country.<sup>3</sup> Honderich was a “lucky spectator” at the Montreal (1976), Calgary (1988), and Vancouver (2010) Olympics and suggests that there was a “total difference” in Vancouver, where “the explosion of passion, patriotism and deep emotion about country were nothing short of extraordinary.”<sup>4</sup> During the same year, mass protests against the G20 Summit also prompted an outpouring of national passion. In contrast to the self-congratulatory commentary on offer during the Olympics, however, protesters used nationalist images for more uncommon ends. Here commentators like Margaret Atwood, in an article for the *Globe and Mail*, highlighted the emergence of a “new Canada” by drawing attention to the militarization of public space, breaches of protesters’ right to peaceful assembly, and mass arrests of over a thousand people – the largest mass arrests in Canadian history.<sup>5</sup> And, in the weeks after the G20 Summit, as thousands of people gathered to demand a public inquiry, many continued to invoke ideas of the nation by carrying or wrapping themselves in the Canadian flag, while others spontaneously sang the national anthem while facing down riot police.<sup>6</sup>

These dramatically different examples of nationalist sentiment nevertheless hold in common important ideas about Canadianness. First, many of the images of Canada on display at both the G20 protests and the Winter Olympics link Canadianness with “doing good.” The very “Canadian” idea of a normally benign and compassionate nation was evident in the signature



**Figure 0.1** “Canada Get Well Soon.”  
Flag carried by a protester at Canada  
Day protest, 2010 Photograph by  
Mitchel Raphael



**Figure 0.2** Flag tattoo inspired by  
2010 Olympics patriotism Amazing Ink,  
Edmonton, AB. Courtesy of Edmonton CTV

image chosen by *Maclean's* in its coverage of the Canada Day protest in Toronto, where thousands gathered at the Ontario legislature to demand a public inquiry into police tactics at the G20 protests (Figure 0.1).<sup>7</sup> Here a Canadian flag carried by a protester has graffiti, which reads “Canada: get well soon,” drawn over the maple leaf. The graffiti bemoans a temporary illness associated with extraordinary events and hopes for a return to a well-adjusted normality. Similarly, the Winter Olympics also highlighted the connection between Canadianness and goodness. As CTV News reported in March 2010, this inspired a rash of Canadiana-related consumerism, including specialty tattoos from Amazing Ink, an Edmonton-based tattoo shop. An interview with Mike Henderson, the “man behind the needles,” who had just applied a Canadian flag to a customer’s arm (Figure 0.2), suggests why he thinks business will continue to be brisk. The Canadian flag

makes a great tattoo, Henderson commented, because: “(a) We do good. (b) We’re proud of our country. And (c) We’re proud of our freakin’ country.”<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the implicit and explicit connections between Canadian-ness and goodness, both Olympics organizers and G20 protesters shared a commitment to highlight Indigenous people as central icons in their events.<sup>9</sup> From the “unprecedented inclusion” offered Indigenous people that signed on as co-hosts to the Olympics to the first demonstration to take to the streets at the G20 telling the world about Canada’s violations of Indigenous rights,<sup>10</sup> images of Indigenous people were key to how each group positioned itself on the global stage.<sup>11</sup> Further, of the astonishing 15.5 million Canadians who watched the “Aboriginal-inspired” opening of the Olympics, 66 percent “agreed that the opening ceremonies ‘reflected Canada’ as they know it.”<sup>12</sup>

The “new patriotism” highlighted here rests, however, on a much older foundation, for if overt expressions of nationalist sentiment are to be described as “new,” they must be contrasted with a much more common set of assumptions, including the sense that Canadian-ness can only be covertly known – indeed, that it is often undefinable. The actor Mike Myers has pithily described this as “the essence of not being. Not English, not American. It is the mathematic of not being.”<sup>13</sup> In a front-page article in the *Globe and Mail* on Canada Day, 2010, Patrick Brethour put it a little differently. He argued that, despite the recent displays of nationalist fervour, Canadians continue to “take delight” in “not demanding plaudits, indeed in not being noticed at all.”<sup>14</sup>

So are Canadians “secretly nationalistic”? And, if so, what does this actually mean? And if many people across the political spectrum from Olympics fans to G20 protesters think we live in a compassionate and moral nation (which, from time to time, sickens and loses its way), then why are we so persistently ill at ease with nationalist emotions? And finally, how does our attachment to images of Indigeneity as emblematic of the nation co-exist with a continuing antipathy towards actual Indigenous people – the only group in Canada who continue to live in “Third World” conditions in a country that consistently rates among the top ten in the United Nations Human Development Index?<sup>15</sup>

This book takes up these contradictions by exploring how some of Canada’s most recognizable national icons can illuminate the puzzles associated with nationalist attachments. If most Canadians believe that the core of Canadian-ness is “fairness,”<sup>16</sup> as does James Orbinski, the long-serving head of Doctors without Borders, then how do commonplace and even kitschy symbols articulate Canadian-ness through implicitly white concepts



of justice and evenhandedness? I investigate this question by examining historic and contemporary discourses – about beavers, railways, Banff National Park, and “Indians” – in order to understand how taken-for-granted emblems can also be deeply suggestive artefacts of a national culture. To do this, I employ the theoretical work of Michael Billig to reflect on what I take to be one of Canadian nationalism’s most salient features: its banality.

In addition, I explore the persistence of the idea that Canadians, while passionately nationalistic, nevertheless prefer to be “not noticed at all.” Here the work of Indigenous writers and scholars has been crucial to my investigation as they point to aspects of the national psyche that are experienced as shadowy or even beyond words. Métis activist and author Maria Campbell, writing in *The Book of Jessica*, says: “Using the word ghost is good because that’s what the old people say when they talk about white people in this country: ‘Ghosts trying to find their clothes.’”<sup>17</sup> I highlight Campbell’s assessment as I am interested in employing the predictable emblems of national purpose in order to explore the ghosting of national identity and the spectres haunting the Canadian imaginary. In sketching out how ideas about haunting link significant themes in Canadian visual culture, I also highlight the potential of select artists to befriend and reimagine Canada’s troubled inheritance as they take up its banal symbols and give them new, suggestive meanings. My objective is to engage with what Jacqui Alexander calls “different kinds of remembering” that invite new forms of struggle and, thereby, articulate possibilities for different collectivities and different selves within and beyond the Canadian nation.<sup>18</sup>

Yet this research did not begin with banal objects or ghosts; rather, like many other intuitively grasped projects, I began with what I loved: namely, the work of select Canadian artists who have presented radical, if ephemeral, challenges to Canadianness. Having begun to write about artists, however, I became curious about the connections between seemingly disparate projects. Consequently, my research methodology itself became haunted as visual and artistic texts returned me to questions regarding the material and historic conditions of nation building, and the work of contemporary artists took me back to explore how national symbols had come to serve as points of condensation for a host of contradictory meanings. Thus, I began to investigate how the most predictable objects might still invite a self-reflexive engagement through the displacing image of art.<sup>19</sup> In each of the following chapters, then, I highlight the contradictory meanings implicit in historic images and contemporary artistic work, and invite viewers to reconsider taken-for-granted ideas about power, memory, and national identity.

## *Preface*

This book, then, emerged at the juncture of two divergent but intersecting questions. I wanted to explore the ways in which cultural analysis and artistic engagement can serve as contrapuntal methods for reimagining white, Anglo-Canadian historical memory. And here the use of “contrapuntal” refers to both the contrapuntal perspective developed in postcolonial theory (which challenges myths of cultural purity to trace how imperial identity has been furnished by non-Western difference)<sup>20</sup> and contrapuntal music (which proceeds with several simultaneous and contrasting melodies).<sup>21</sup> Thus, the following chapters investigate banal objects of national purpose in order to explore how, with regard to the past, they offer the possibility of moving from unproblematized possession to imaginative reconsideration.<sup>22</sup>



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When I first started this book, I had little real sense of how my own family history intersected with my research; however, over the course of the writing, I became aware of a myriad number of connections. I learned that the most common occupation listed in our family Bible was “hatter,” so some of my ancestors might have made beaver hats; that a bachelor uncle worked for many years on the railway; and that my Fife ancestors were responsible for bringing Red Fife wheat to Canada. Red Fife wheat has a short growing season and enabled farming in previously inhospitable areas of Ontario and the Prairies, helping to make Canada the “Granary of the Empire” while also displacing Indigenous communities from their lands and livelihoods. I have learned this history in conversation with my father, who is the family genealogist, and I thank him for his work to preserve these stories. While these connections highlight my familial implication in colonialism, I hope this book can be one step in the long project of imagining and acting otherwise.

In recognition of their very different forms of courage, I dedicate this book to my parents, Jack and Patricia Francis.



# Creative Subversions





# 1

## Introduction

### "Ghosts Trying to Find Their Clothes"

Using the word ghost is good because that's what the old people say when they talk about white people in this country: "Ghosts trying to find their clothes."<sup>1</sup>

– Maria Campbell, *The Book of Jessica*

#### An Auto-Ethnographic Story

Although the intellectual work of this project led, on its own account, to a consideration of haunting, the material conditions of writing offered a parallel process, one that also invited me to consider how the experience of ghosts is implicated in the everyday geography of Canadianness. Much of my writing on spectres was done after working at Algoma University College (AUC) in Sault Ste. Marie, an institution built, literally, from the bricks and mortar of the now (in)famous Shingwauk Indian Residential School.<sup>2</sup> As I had spent many summers canoeing in the Fox Islands in Georgian Bay, I decided when I accepted the position at AUC that I wanted to live with a view of Lake Huron. With the help of my new colleagues I was able to rent a small house in Bruce Mines, a historic village of six hundred, east of the Sault, which, in the late 1800s, had been a thriving mining town and the second largest community in Ontario. The house was built in 1854 and has large picture windows that provide a view of the water and the twin industries that fuel the local economy: tourism (at the thriving local marina) and resource extraction (as signalled by the huge barges hauling their cargo across the open mouth of the bay).

One of the first things I learned when I moved to AUC was that members of the two nearest Anishinaabek communities, Garden River First Nation and Batchewana First Nation, had, from 1900 through to 1968, been internationally famous for their performance of a play based on Henry

Longfellow's epic poem *Song of Hiawatha*. Longfellow based this poem on ethnographic writings about the Anishinaabek mythology originating from precisely this region of the upper Great Lakes. In Chapter 5, entitled "Playing Indian," I assess the multiple meanings associated with these historic performances. And, in a research project begun while I lived in Bruce Mines, I explore the Garden River First Nation's current re-engagement with this legacy through a series of new productions that reimagine community theatre from contemporary Anishinaabek perspectives.

In order to understand the background for this long-running series of theatre performances, I began to investigate the history of Garden River First Nation and, by extension, my own village of Bruce Mines. Janet Chute's fascinating history of Anishinaabek leadership in Garden River tells us that the copper mining that provided the rationale for Euro-Canadian settlement in this region originated from the work of Anishinaabek prospectors who had, from the early 1840s, brought samples of copper, gold, silver, and iron to local government agents and private entrepreneurs. The purpose of their proactive work in identifying the mineral resources of that territory was to lobby for Anishinaabek proprietorship. More specifically, they wanted a system of leases and royalties to ensure they gained a share in potential profits from mining on their land. And their concern in mounting this lobby was well founded, as, by 1849, the Montreal Mining Company sank some of the first shafts to search for copper in Bruce Mines.<sup>3</sup>

The company's initiative to capitalize on these resources suggests an assumption that the issue of Anishinaabek land claims would, if ignored, simply disappear. And this is not surprising, as, by the late 1840s, the Indian Department had already begun to pressure Anishinaabek communities to relocate from the area under development. Nevertheless, Chief Shingwaukonse, working with other community leaders, prepared a petition to be sent to the Indian Department, which declared their commitment to remain. The petition provided a scathing assessment of Euro-Canadian/Anishinaabek relations:

Already has the white man licked clean up from our lands the whole means of our subsistence, and now they commence to make us worse off. They take everything from us ... I call God to witness in the beginning and do so now again and say that it was false that the land is not ours, it is ours.<sup>4</sup>

As Chute notes, their letter received no reply.

During the same period, there was a run on the sale of additional mining sites, located along the north shore of Lake Huron and Lake Superior, that were in competition with those held by the existing companies. These included claims in Garden River and in the adjacent town of Bruce Mines. In response, the Anishinaabek lobby intensified: Shingwaukonse and several other elders made further petitions, participated in a controversial and dangerous blockade to stop operations in Mica Bay (a mining operation on Lake Superior), travelled to Montreal to lobby the corporations and government directly, made a presentation to the governor general (the text of which was published in the *Montreal Gazette* and widely praised), and gave numerous public interviews.<sup>5</sup>

The following spring, the government initiated treaty negotiations with all the communities of the North Shore region. According to Chute, negotiators for Upper Canada used the tactics of divide and rule to separate Shingwaukonse from his allies in neighbouring communities. The result was a treaty in which Indigenous petitions for a share in the royalties from mining operations were unequivocally rejected. Indeed, according to government officials at that time, the Anishinaabek people, by definition, could not hold title to territory or resources, and no Indigenous leader had ever exercised the authority to transfer land to a Western power. This treaty (which provided the template for all others in that region), at one and the same time granted the Anishinaabek little autonomous decision-making power in the governance of their own territory and withdrew most substantive opportunities for economic self-sufficiency. Indeed, "Indians" could only be imagined as those who were due a generalized form of annuity or allowance, which essentially meant they could only exist as "dependants" of the state.<sup>6</sup>

I read this history while at my desk, looking out the picture windows of my house in Bruce Mines. I had always known that this house was built in 1854, but I do not remember at what point I learned that it had been built by the Montreal Mining Company, the very same enterprise that sank early shafts to search for copper in that community.<sup>7</sup> I do, however, remember the moment, near the end of my research, when I read who the colonial government had appointed to negotiate on its behalf. His name was William B. Robinson. The name meant nothing to me until I learned why he had been considered a "clever political appointment." In the late 1840s, William B. Robinson had been the manager of the Montreal Mining Company in Bruce Mines, and, thus, he was familiar with the territory and the people of the North Shore region.

Thus, the government of Upper Canada had sent, as its representative, the former manager of one of the mining companies that stood to benefit from resource extraction in the very territory contested by the treaty-making process. It was this man who would negotiate the Robinson-Huron Treaty, a document that ensured the Anishinaabek people would have access to *none* of the revenues from the mines. And I was reading this history while living in a house built, possibly as an operational headquarters, by that same company.

To put the matter plainly: I was living in that house in the company of ghosts. And all of them, from the early Anishinaabek prospectors to the Montreal Mining Company employees, had offered me both hospitality and stories.<sup>8</sup> So the next question seemed to be: how would I respond?

The cultural theorist Kathleen Brogan argues that one of the most frightening aspects of being haunted is its involuntary nature: we cannot choose our ghosts.<sup>9</sup> Nor do we choose the open secrets of Canadianness. But these “secrets” can provide a way into thinking through what Robert Jay Lifton calls “the potentially transformative influence of death on theory.”<sup>10</sup> For histories of death and dispossession through the consolidation of Canadian nation building are far from exemplary. On the contrary, the story I have just recounted is noteworthy precisely because histories of this nature are both little acknowledged and ubiquitous. As scholars such as Bonita Lawrence and Victoria Freeman argue, an investigation into the history of Indigenous/Anglo-Canadian relations in southern Ontario, where I now live, would reveal very similar themes.<sup>11</sup> So while it was the Anishinaabek reappropriation of Hiawatha that led me to investigate the history of Bruce Mines, this “background” research soon became a history of my own country and people – and our continuing implication in the secrets of Canadianness.

How, then, to understand this notion of histories that are implicitly known and, at the same time, frequently denied? Here I turn to Michael Taussig’s notion of the “public secret,” which provides an evocative framework for my exploration. Taussig describes public secrets as a form of knowledge that is generally known but that, for one reason or another, cannot be articulated.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, the secretiveness of the public secret is constituted through a whole set of “strategic absences” that ensure that most citizens know “what not to know” through an active “not seeing,” a process that is often accomplished without the slightest conscious engagement.<sup>13</sup> In this context, I ask: when banal emblems of national belonging convey a knowledge that is both articulated and refused, what might this

teach us? To address this query I assess how, in a Canadian context, the "regime of the open secret" operates through images and discourses of national belonging.

If public secrets are one of the most powerful undercurrents of our collective consciousness, then, as Susanne Luhmann asserts, they are also an animating force for cultural production.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, I would argue that the everyday iconography of Canadianness is itself a form of cultural work through which Anglo-Canadian settlers have engaged with the symbolic inheritance of these traumatic legacies. My work is intended to contribute to mapping the affective processes through which spectres are both remembered and refused within the national consciousness. I do this through case studies that investigate how nationalist emblems construct banal and nostalgic versions of a past that cannot be expelled or assimilated. The irony, however, is that, insofar as Canadians consume versions of a past that do not nourish, the living can themselves become ghostly. Indeed, drawing on the work of Kathleen Brogan, I argue that nationalist emblems often memorialize the past as a form of banal possession, with the result that the present continues, as a failure of memory, to render history useable.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the traumatic ordeals of nation building continue to haunt both those excluded or dispossessed of the full benefits of national belonging *and* those who are at the very centre of a particularly Canadian hegemony.

In the conclusion to *Specters of Marx*, Derrida turns to the theme of the links between power and haunting, suggesting that "the intellectual ... if he loves justice at least" should learn from ghosts, talk to them, "even if it [the ghost] is in oneself, in the other, in the other in oneself. They are always there, spectres ... [and] they give us to rethink the 'there' as soon as we open our mouths."<sup>16</sup> But how might one learn from ghosts? Walter Benjamin offers a few thoughts on this dilemma. The problem, he suggests, with "outing" a ghost, or with revealing a public secret, is that the act of exposure often threatens to distort the inner content of that which has been hidden and to appropriate its energy rather than to undertake a revelation that does it justice. Taussig, reflecting on Benjamin, notes that "the whole problem lies in the ease with which the secret invites injustice, an invitation [the] Enlightenment cannot easily resist in its unappeasable hunger for the raw energy provided by demystification."<sup>17</sup> Thus, both scholars highlight the importance of self-reflexive engagements with secrets and ghosts. The point is not simply to demystify the public secrets that shape a national consciousness, a project that they suggest is tantamount to wanting the power of mystery without the mystery;<sup>18</sup> rather, it is to engage in a drama

of re-enchanting the world, or revealing a secret, but only through a “transgressive uncovering” of what is already “secretly familiar.”<sup>19</sup>

Throughout this book I explore how select Canadian artists have taken up the task of uncovering the secretly familiar and consider their efforts to re-enchant a banal nationalist imaginary. I start this process through auto-ethnography as a way into sketching out a politics of “locatedness.” But I hope the various methods of “storying-in-and-against colonial legacies”<sup>20</sup> provided throughout this text allow for multiple entry points for considering Benjamin’s reflection: that the “truth is not a matter of exposure which destroys the secret, but a revelation which does justice to it.”<sup>21</sup>

### Material and Spectral Exclusions

This book traces a double haunting: mapping how whiteness and Indigeneity are both occluded and conjured up in the visual emblems of Canadian social life. If the trauma of nation building cuts both ways, to haunt both those excluded from national belonging and those at the centre of nationalist hegemonies – though in very different ways – then it would seem useful to begin this exploration of haunting, public secrets, and national belonging with a brief tour through the contradictory meanings associated with spectrality. I start with the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Theatre and Performance*, which highlights how spectral presences return to disturb the present, representing those excluded from power and demanding retribution for a past wrong. Some of the earliest examples of this come from early modern stage figures associated with revenge tragedy.<sup>22</sup> In Victorian England, those groups most identified with having access to the spectral realm were women and the working classes – an unsurprising coincidence as haunting has traditionally been associated with those who were outside the rationalist modes of thought associated with the Enlightenment.<sup>23</sup> However, Renee L. Bergland argues, that after the Enlightenment, ghost belief shifted, with communal phantoms growing more significant as “enlightened” people began to speak more about the ghosts that haunted national rather than familial communities. In Europe this was the ghost of communism, and in North America it was the spectral return of slaves and Indigenous peoples.<sup>24</sup> Ghosts have also always been connected to issues of law and justice, with the question of land and ownership having a central place in this legacy. Patricia Williams articulates the connections between these different threads when she describes her search for traces of her great-great-great-grandmother, a slave, and her great-great-great-grandfather, Austin Miller, a slave owner. Here spectral

exclusions are hinged at the intersection of the meanings associated with family, property, and ideologies defining progress.<sup>25</sup>

Freud's essay "The Uncanny" also makes reference to the intersection of haunting and property through analyzing how the meanings associated with two seemingly opposite terms actually circulate through each other.<sup>26</sup> These two terms are *heimlich* (the homely, the familiar) and *unheimlich* (the uncanny, the strange, and the hidden). Freud argues that an experience of the uncanny can emerge when the place one considers home is somehow rendered unfamiliar, so that one is pressed into a sense of being "in place and 'out of place' simultaneously."<sup>27</sup> Julia Kristeva's book, *Strangers to Ourselves*, takes this paradox further by reflecting on the difficulties of disentangling what is considered home from what is considered foreign or strange. Here the notion of the uncanny speaks to anxieties that afflict home directly:

Freud wanted to demonstrate at the outset, on the basis of a semantic study of the German adjective *Heimlich* and its antonym *unheimlich*, that a negative meaning close to that of the antonym is already tied to the positive term *Heimlich*, "friendly, comfortable," which would also signify "concealed, kept from sight," "deceitful and malicious," "behind someone's back." Thus, in the very word *Heimlich*, the familiar and intimate are reversed into their opposites, brought together with the contrary meaning of "uncanny strangeness" harboured in *unheimlich*.<sup>28</sup>

Kristeva's strategy for dealing with the ambivalence at the heart of the "home" is to individuate it, exploring how we come to terms with the "stranger in ourselves." My interest is to take this notion in a slightly different direction, namely, to explore the ways in which the uncanny intrudes on the Anglo-Canadian historical and cultural (un)conscious. Like Avery Gordon, then, I am interested in reflecting on "the political status and function of systemic hauntings" and the ways in which collective ghosts "conjure up social life."<sup>29</sup>

Jo-Ann Episkenew's study of Indigenous cultural production in Canada also highlights stories of cultural haunting and explores the role of literature in reimagining histories of colonization and displacement. Her study traces the ways in which the literature of cultural haunting can lead to an awareness of how collective stories continue to inform, sometimes even possess, the living. Yet Episkenew's reading of these spectral themes suggests that they can also provide a necessary and even positive introjection. In looking



at Maria Campbell's autobiography *Halfbreed*, for example, Episkenew explores how Campbell, as someone haunted by the traumatic legacies of racism and dispossession, writes about her Métis family and community.<sup>30</sup> It is only through writing a testimony of her experiences, reconfigured from a Métis perspective, that Campbell can begin to decolonize that story and so escape the self-loathing that distorted her familial and community history. Thus, Campbell's book attempts to move from haunting as "deathly possession" to haunting that enlarges her sense of self by contesting the violence of colonial relations.<sup>31</sup> In this context, stories of cultural haunting can be read as a record of the struggle to gain enough distance from the past to move from memory as traumatic possession to a place where one can re-narrativize those memories in ways that allow for revision. In Episkenew's analysis, then, Indigenous literature about cultural haunting serves to emphasize the importance of calling into question nationalist narratives that signal a failure of memory and thus to render history useable. For Euro-Canadian readers, in particular, this analysis invites us to confront national myths as a nostalgic flight from history, where alternative voices nevertheless reassert themselves, much like the return of the repressed. Thus, the disparate implications associated with ghostliness highlight the ways that spectral tropes have ambiguous meanings: signifying the perils of unresolved wrongs and the phantasmal as sources of nourishment and life. An engagement with ghosts, then, while hazardous, can also be the occasion for necessary and even positive introjection.

How might these analyses of spectrality influence our exploration of Canadianness? And what are the links between haunting and the narratives of Anglo-Canadian nation building? G. Turcotte suggests that our national literature is resonant with numerous examples of the uncanny precisely because these enable the articulation of fears that are, in other circumstances, unmentionable – fears of dispossession, miscegenation, and contamination.<sup>32</sup> Historically, one can trace a terror of the nameless "other" by examining the charts available to early explorers of the Americas. As Margaret Turner notes, when the adventurers dared to go beyond the circumference of the known world, their maps warned them what to expect: "Here there be monsters."<sup>33</sup> And, while these "monsters" could be understood as the "fantastical beasts" thought to inhabit the new continent, they also served as metaphors for the anxiety emerging from the confrontation with new philosophies and peoples. Thus, the very conception of Canadian space within the European imagination, Edwards argues, "invoke[d] a crisis of selfhood that continues to move like a spectre within Canada's borders."<sup>34</sup> And, lest we assume that these spectres are only a historical phenomenon, in a recent

special issue of the *University of Toronto Quarterly* (2006), the editors argue that much of the work being produced by contemporary Canadian authors, artists, and filmmakers indicates that many seem "obsessed with ghosts and haunting."<sup>35</sup>

In this context, I believe Taussig's notion of the open secret provides a useful framework for exploring one of the most obvious, and yet frequently occluded, contradictions shaping Canadian identity: namely, our history as a country founded on a commitment to democratic forms of order and good government for some, while, at the same time, endorsing devastating forms of legal exclusion, forced assimilation, and mass death for others. In an international context, John Eddy and Deryck Schreuder argue that *all* settler colonies enshrined a democratic system for "citizens" and an exclusionist set of laws and regulations for Indigenous peoples and multiple groups of racialized "others." Their account does not fully trace the ways that access to the political benefits of citizenship were not only racialized but also hetero-masculinist and restricted to those with access to capital and property. They do highlight, however, how the "colonial nationalism" of settler countries was based on a sense of ideal citizenship that was inclusionist in its populism while being exclusionist in relation to Indigenous peoples and to all those immigrants racialized as "not white" – a form of ethnocentrism and racism that was legitimized by state immigration policies.<sup>36</sup> As Sunera Thobani summarizes, in Canada this resulted in a "world divided: on the one side, a world of law, privilege, access to wealth, status, and power for the settler; on the other, a world defined *in law* as ... a world of poverty, squalor, and death for the native."<sup>37</sup>

Ann Laura Stoler argues that narratives of colonial authority in many European settler outposts were built on an overarching premise, namely, "the notion that Europeans in the colonies made up an easily identifiable and discrete biological and social entity – a 'natural' community of common ... racial attributes and political affinities so that lines separating colonizer from colonized were thus self-evident and easily drawn."<sup>38</sup> But as in most colonial contexts, including Canada, this premise did not hold. Indeed, as Renisa Mawani has argued for British Columbia, the "colonial contact zone" was "a space of racial intermixture" that reconstituted the terrain of racial power as Europeans, Indigenous peoples, and racialized migrants came into frequent and sometimes unexpected contact.<sup>39</sup> Thus, Canada's far-flung and often far from respectable settler outposts were formed through diverse racial intimacies.<sup>40</sup> Further, by the turn of the twentieth century, there was even more intermixture as 800,000 of the 3 million immigrants who arrived in the major wave of in-migration between 1896 and 1914 were from the

non-Anglo-Saxon world.<sup>41</sup> In this context, a heterogeneous mix of “state racisms” determined the politics of life and death, particularly for Indigenous peoples and racialized newcomers.<sup>42</sup>

However, the most shattering impact of Euro-Canadian settlement was felt in Indigenous communities. While it is not possible to review the details of this history here, Canada’s role in this process proceeded through a host of different actions: from the unchecked and sometimes deliberate spread of disease, which resulted in the deaths of between 70 and 95 percent of the original Indigenous population, to attempted physical extermination (as among the Beothuk and Odawa), to brutal armed conflict, to the practice of eugenics and forced sterilization.<sup>43</sup> In 1876, the Indian Act provided a coercive and patriarchal set of cradle-to-grave directives governing Indigenous culture and education, while also setting arbitrary and gendered standards for who was, and was not, a status Indian. This legislation began a process that continues to profoundly undermine local self-governance, in particular women’s spheres of authority within communities.<sup>44</sup> Further, the imperial ideology governing treaty agreements and the seizure of huge tracts of non-treaty land, along with the marginalization of the remaining Indigenous communities to reserves, deprived them of a sustainable economic and political base. They were also barred from the federal franchise until 1960.<sup>45</sup> On the cultural front, the state outlawed Indigenous religions, cultural practices, and languages, and profoundly distorted the integrity of familial and community structures by removing generations of children to residential schools, where, until the end of the Second World War, up to 50 percent of them died.<sup>46</sup> As Stasiulis and Jhappan conclude, “taken together, these and other measures denied Indigenous people access to legal or political forums and betrayed a clear and plain intent to destroy their cultures and economies and indigenous forms of female autonomy, as well as to abrogate their citizenship and democratic rights.”<sup>47</sup>

Yet, while the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs noted in 2006 that the situation of Indigenous peoples remains “the most pressing human rights issue facing Canadians” in the new millennium, there is still only the barest public acknowledgment of this crisis.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, despite Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s widely praised apology for the government’s role in residential schools (2008) and Canada’s recent decision to sign the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2010), profound inequities remain. Just one example highlights the disparity: contrary to the idea that Indigenous people get “special privileges,” the average Canadian receives government services at a rate almost two-and-a-half times greater than that received by Indigenous citizens.<sup>49</sup> In

other words, Indigenous people are the most disenfranchised citizens in their own land. In this context, it is important to note a recent survey by the Coalition for the Advancement of Aboriginal Studies in collaboration with the Canadian Race Relations Foundation (2000-1), which found that 80 per cent of first-year university and college students had gained little exposure to Indigenous issues, while those in secondary school said the information that is available left them unprepared to address contemporary conflicts between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.<sup>50</sup>

How then might one understand the work of nationalism, public secrets, and ghosts in this context? And what role do seemingly banal national emblems serve in the reproduction of the affective ties through which Canadians continue to identify themselves as, by and large, a benign and moral nation? National symbols are, at root, metaphors, and the logic of the metaphor is that it can provide an image through which people distance themselves from those things that are closest to them.<sup>51</sup> As many scholars have already noted, this process of "distancing from that which is closest" has profoundly shaped popular representations of the "noble savage." For it was only after the long period of intense conflict over land and resources was substantively over that those people once described as "savages" could become "noble." Ernest Renan notes that most nations, once they are established, depend on a general amnesia about the often brutal methods through which unity has been established.<sup>52</sup> However, this process does not consist of a simple loss of memory; rather, it consists of a dialectical movement in which conscious remembering and forgetting are not, in fact, polar opposites. Just as most of life follows established traditions through which actions transmit past grammars and semantics, so national traditions can be simultaneously present and absent – available in everyday objects in ways that preserve collective memory without the conscious activity of individuals remembering.<sup>53</sup> Thus, banal forms of commemoration also function as forms of haunting – for they are the affective process through which the ghosts of memory adhere within a popular consciousness. Or, to use a different metaphor, they can be understood through Pierre Bourdieu's notion of "habitus": the dispositions and practices that constitute the "second nature" in the routines of daily life. These also emphasize remembering and forgetting, so that habitus – or embodied history – is internalized as a second nature and thus forgotten as history.<sup>54</sup>

Michael Billig's exploration of banal nationalism is useful in precisely this context for his analysis attempts to grapple with the continuing reproduction of nationalist sentiments that are present when a country becomes an established homeland. He argues that the "metonymic image of banal

nationalism is not a flag which is being consciously waved with fervent passion: it is the flag hanging unnoticed on the building.”<sup>55</sup> Similarly, the ordinary signifiers of Canadian identity – from the ubiquitous beaver to wilderness parks to canoes and railways – all serve to turn background space into a very specific “homeland space.” But this does not mean that any of these serve as a magnet for intense national feeling. Quite the reverse, for all these reminders of national belonging are habitually discounted and overlooked in the routines of a place marked as “home.” At the same time, these images do tell a story of “our” people and homeland, and define the borders that distinguish us from them. Thus, Billig argues that seemingly innocent narratives can also prompt powerful forms of affective nationalist sentiment – just like the seemingly hot mass movements fuelled by overt emotion. Indeed, one of the ways established nations, like Canada, normalize and legitimate their own passionate and patriotic sentiments is through identifying nationalism as something surplus and alien: as something other people have. Thus, our patriotism is presented as banal, invisible, and benign, whereas their nationalism is presented as the dangerous property of irrational others.<sup>56</sup>

Building on Billig’s analysis, then, I explore how the Canadian cultural imaginary is constructed through objects whose very banality belies their crucial role in rendering both the crisis of national identity and its reproduction. Perhaps it is their very ordinariness that ought to make us suspicious for, in the following chapters, I show how Canadian emblems have articulated elements of an ideological struggle between European settlers and those who were marginalized from the nation-building project. Indeed, as Eva Mackey argues, these images have constructed a variety of others in central narratives of Canadianness at the same time as they have produced the investments that fashion an unmarked yet dominant national identity.<sup>57</sup>

While all settlers who were racialized as not-white were excluded, in different ways, from the rewards of citizenship, the legacy of settler colonialism and its impact on Indigenous peoples constitutes the most profound spectre to hover over the banal images explored in the following chapters. I suggest that these ghostly Indians, who are both acknowledged and refused in the Canadian imaginary, also impinge on the present, or move from one present to another and, in so doing, are paradigmatic of the public secrets that continue to haunt Canadianness.<sup>58</sup>

One of the most thoughtful explorations of this Indigenous absent presence comes from the Sioux cultural critic Philip Deloria. He argues that ideas about American truth and freedom have rested on the United States’ ability to “wield power against Indians – social, military, economic, and political – *while simultaneously drawing power from them*” (emphasis added).<sup>59</sup>

Deloria's language here is unsettling as his illustration turns the spectral Indian on its head and like the quote by Maria Campbell at the start of this chapter focuses attention back on white settler colonialists. The classic biological image of an organism that draws its life power from another is the parasite. According to the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, "parasite" comes from the Greek *parasitos*, "one who eats at another's table."<sup>60</sup> Interestingly, the force of this naming seems, inexorably, to lead to another because, if we carry the allusion to its conclusion, the figure that lives by drawing out the life (blood) of another is the vampire. And, perhaps not surprisingly, this chain of associations returns us to the ghost: for a vampire is defined as a "ghost" who "preys ruthlessly on others."<sup>61</sup>

If Deloria's observation originated in an exploration of the American experience, what is distinctive about the force of the public secrets embedded in the settler colonial relationship to Indigenous peoples in Canada? This legacy has often been encapsulated in stories related to what Eva Mackey calls the "benevolent Mountie myth." The narrative relies on the idea that Canadian expansion proceeded with a benevolent gentleness that was a result of the naturally superior forms of British justice.<sup>62</sup> Scholars have written about the ways in which this myth misrepresents the encounter between cultures and the brutal history of conquest and cultural genocide upon which Canada was founded.<sup>63</sup> Yet these critiques have done little to lessen the affectionate sentiment that accrues to this iconic figure. In the United States, by contrast, the violence of western settlement is widely acknowledged. Indeed, the American experience of conquering the frontier has been mythologized as foundational to the national character through what Richard Slotkin aptly terms "regeneration through violence." Here a whole host of public discourses has valorized early settlers' racial aggression as a kind of heroic ideal, with public memorials to countless battles, from the Seminole Wars to the Battle of Little Big Horn. And, in the twentieth century, we have the spectacle of Hollywood's version of the Wild West.<sup>64</sup> While Canada's history with regard to Indigenous populations must be distinguished from that of the United States, the effects here were also ruinous.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, the Indo-Canadian filmmaker Ali Kazimi has described this distinction with the pithy phrase "genocide through bureaucracy."<sup>66</sup>

If the force of the cultural haunting associated with Euro-Canadians' parasitic relationship to Indigenous peoples has had different symbolic consequences than has the bloody history glorified in the United States, how might one encapsulate this distinction? I argue that the "Indians" who are both acknowledged and refused in Canadian national symbols do not mythologize a national character forged through violent struggle; instead, they





Figure 1.1 Indian sculpted into the stonework over entrance to the Department of Justice building, Ottawa, 1936 Photograph by Jeff Thomas

reinscribe Canada's peculiarly benign self-image. We can see this process at work directly in figures that range from the "noble Indian" sculpted over the entrance to the Department of Justice on Parliament Hill in 1936 (Figure 1.1) to the Indigenous-inspired Olympic mascots (Miga the sea bear, Quatchi the sasquatch, and the hybrid animal spirit Sumi) developed for the Vancouver-based 2010 Olympic Games.<sup>67</sup> Here, as in most other official representations, noble and even kitschy images of Indianness have served a richly metaphoric purpose. They signify Canada's commitment to the values of justice and racial harmony, and, consequently, they assist primarily white Canadians, as well as a wide range of others, to bask in the warm glow of being from a nice country that is innately given to tolerance and civility.<sup>68</sup> Throughout the following chapters I argue that these images also contribute to cleansing the national memory. For, insofar as Canadians avoid examining the relationship between banal symbols of national purpose and the ways a nation forgets its own complicity in a deeply racialized legacy, we ourselves become ghostly.

### A "Subject without Properties"

While one thread in this book traces the simultaneous erasure and spectacularization of Indigenous peoples through emblems of Canadianness,

another looks at the ways that national emblems construct a seemingly benign and yet hard to define national self-image. Perhaps the deeply contradictory nature of this process can best be introduced through a consideration of how clichéd national images – hard-working beavers, an enterprising railway, and the towering mountains of Banff National Park – might be seen in dialogue with our national literature. Put simply, on the one side we have banal symbols that articulate tropes of an enterprising and heroic masculinity, while on the other side we have our national literature, which has traditionally presented precisely the opposite – namely, anti-heroes just barely clinging to survival. To illustrate: A.A. Den Otter highlights how the Canadian Pacific Railway has most often been seen to embody the hopes of a “young and virile country,” where the “vacant” and “boundless” plains were imagined as crying out “come and till me, come and reap me!”<sup>69</sup> And the railway answered with a “ribbon of steel” thrust across the west signifying imperial speed, mastery, and control.<sup>70</sup> Here the tropes of an implicitly white masculine vigour and feminine fertility ventriloquize the imperial and patriarchal values imposed on a wilderness that was seemingly just waiting to be “taken.” Yet, in our national literature, Margaret Atwood highlights a distinctly anti-heroic aesthetics. Her 1972 book *Survival* argues that, if the definitive American symbol is the Frontier, the Canadian equivalent is the struggle for survival. This could mean a preoccupation with the bleak physical challenges of the land and climate or a more internal set of terrors.<sup>71</sup> While Atwood’s focus is on Canadians’ self-image as “born losers,” Gaile McGregor, writing in the mid-1980s, highlights Canadians’ fascination with and awe of nature. She argues that Canadian literature and painting present the natural world as a gothic symbol of chaos and indifference.<sup>72</sup> Thus, both these influential authors present a national psyche grappling for survival in the face of chaotic challenges.

The past three decades have witnessed the development of a considerable body of literature that challenges these early nationalist representations. Yet this same tendency to picture white Anglo-Canadians as representative of a benign country in a struggle for survival has continued as a prominent strain in the nationalist imaginary. To take just two examples: we continue to see these themes in multimedia heritage programming in public school curricula and in English-language print media responses to the events of 11 September 2001. Katarzyna Ruksztó assesses the salience of these trends in *Heritage Minutes*, a series of sixty-second dramatizations of important Canadian events aired on television and incorporated into the public education system. As her analysis of the visual and curricular aspects of this project demonstrates, the cultural “DNA of our nationalist discourse



as represented in the Heritage Minutes is quite racially specific," so that white Canadian heritage survives as exemplary of the Canadian spirit, while "diversity" is managed as folkloric, and conflicts, historical grievances, and inequality are excluded, contained or disavowed."<sup>73</sup>

And these splits between "us" and "them" – terms which, tellingly, never seem to need definition – have become substantively worse since the events of 9/11.<sup>74</sup> As a recent manifesto on the "War on Terror" written by twenty-one Canadian academics and activists notes, the "clash-of-civilizations" discourse, which is frequently invoked in contemporary debates on multiculturalism and "reasonable accommodation,"<sup>75</sup> continues to reify the idea that Canada is emblematic of a decent and tolerant nation struggling for survival. At the same time, this discourse avoids responsibility for exclusionary immigration policies, escalating anti-Muslim and anti-Arab discourse in civil society, anti-terrorist legislation, the use of security certificates, and other limitations on civil liberties.<sup>76</sup>

Thus, it seems that significant strains in contemporary popular discourse continue early literary themes in their representation of white Anglo-Canadians engaged in a struggle for survival while under siege.<sup>77</sup> However, the emblems of identity explored in the following chapters suggest precisely the reverse. Here we see triumphal narratives articulated through images of an enterprising and resilient hetero-masculinity. Yet perhaps this binary actually suggests two sides of the same coin. On the one hand, we have banal national emblems: the hard-working beaver, the enterprising railway, the majestic mountains – all of which present the values, technologies, and landscapes of white enterprise and manly accomplishment. On the other hand, we have a national literature and popular discourse that suggest we couldn't possibly be associated with the more rapacious aspects of imperialist adventure because the Canadian character is best expressed by anti-heroes absorbed in a struggle for survival. Might these seemingly oppositional images express the state of play between the renewed respectability of an innocent white Anglo-Canadian identity versus our fear of annihilation? And is the outcome of this tension a sense of Canadianness so riven by contradiction as to be a blank and formless void?

Interestingly, both sides of this dilemma remove us from the actual traumas of our colonial history of nation building *and* from the contemporary contradictions of a multiracial globalizing economy. In other words, both the discourse of heroic innocence and the discourse of the fear of annihilation function as decoys. For while most representations of Canadianness are neither heroic Mounties who sort out other people's problems nor anti-heroes who survive despite the assault of the wilderness or

the demands of unruly others, these extreme images do have an important function. As Richard Dyer argues, it is over and against these extremes that ordinary whiteness *becomes* ordinary. In his words:

The extreme image of whiteness acts as a distraction ... Extreme whiteness is, precisely, extreme. If in certain periods of derangement – the empires at their height [for example, the British Empire], the Fascist eras – white people have seen themselves in these images, they can take comfort from the fact that for most of the time they haven't. Whites can thus believe that they are nothing in particular [and thus maintain the elision of their own history] because the white particularities on offer are so obviously not them. Extreme whiteness leaves a residue, a way of being that is not marked as white, in which white people can see themselves. This residue is non-particularity, the space of ordinariness. The combination of extreme whiteness with plain, unwhite whiteness means that white people can both lay claim to the spirit that aspires to the heights of humanity and yet supposedly speak and act disinterestedly as humanity's most average and unremarkable representatives.<sup>78</sup>

And so it is that images of Canadianness vacillate between the hero and the anti-hero – for it is in the residue of such representations that the unremarkable and banal ties to national belonging take shape.

David Lloyd argues that one of the key philosophical underpinnings of colonial expansion is the idea of the white European as a "subject without properties," by which he means someone with the capacity to attain a position of disinterest, abstraction, distance, separation, and objectivity, all as a mark of what is necessary to create a civilized public sphere.<sup>79</sup> In contrast, non-white peoples are presumed to be still, and perhaps forever, bound by the local, the particular, the raced, and as not having made the move to disinterested subjecthood. In this context, he argues that the "global ubiquity" of the white European becomes almost "self-legitimizing since the capacity to be everywhere present becomes an historical manifestation of the white man's gradual approximation to the universality he everywhere represents."<sup>80</sup> Lloyd's discussion suggests the extent to which whiteness is associated with pure spirit or disembodiedness. These connections are echoed by the anthropologist Ruth Frankenberg in her study of white identity, which highlights white people's own affective descriptions of "race." She notes that many of the women she interviewed talked about the sense of "formlessness" they associated with being white.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, Richard Dyer, in his cultural studies analysis of the ways in which whiteness is embodied, notes how

Christian beliefs, along with ideologies of race and imperialism, all emphasize the paradoxical struggle between the body and the spirit, which is central to white representation.<sup>82</sup>

Throughout the following chapters, I explore how the troubling formlessness attributed, in particular, to white, Anglo-Canadian identity might be linked to a set of visual and discursive practices through which this same group has imagined itself as the most civilized, peaceful, and benign of nations. Here classic images of national purpose have articulated masculinity, enterprise, and racial purity as “authentic” aspects of the Canadian ethos. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries this process was, as Benedict Anderson argues, often expressed through a paradoxical binary: “On the one side, the hunt was on for ‘authenticity,’ ‘roots,’ ‘originality,’ and ‘history,’ as nationalism’s historically new consciousness created a radical break with the past. On the other side, nations were everywhere understood as ‘gliding into a limitless future,’ developing in perfect synchrony with the breakneck speed of Progress.”<sup>83</sup> I investigate how this process took shape through a very ordinary, even banal, set of images that allowed specific national emblems to articulate an imagined set of “roots” that would enable “the short tight skin of the nation [to be] stretched over the old, gigantic, transcontinental body of the empire.”<sup>84</sup>

My intent throughout this analysis is not simply to debunk the romantic narratives usually associated with national belonging; rather, I trace how the visual and discursive meanings associated with national emblems take shape through the process of nation formation. The struggle over the meanings associated with national symbols has also been a historical contest over the building of communities and political participation.<sup>85</sup> Consequently, I explore how the categories of meaning relating, for example, to racial purity and sexual respectability, were constructed in and through national images in order to decontaminate a mongrel nation.<sup>86</sup> The common starting point in all these analyses is a focus on how language both constructs and reflects meaning, and an understanding of discourse that allows the old split between the material and the ideological to be abandoned in favour of a concept that embraces both ideas and practices.<sup>87</sup> Here the dialectical and relational character of nation formation is always its most fundamental characteristic. As Homi Bhabha notes, in democratic and political contests “the question of identification is never the affirmation of a pre-given identity, never a self-fulfilling prophecy – it is always the production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image.”<sup>88</sup> Consequently, I inquire into how ideas about Canadianness have been transformed through particular emblems that signify national purpose and,

conversely, how, over time, those same images have been reimaged in ways that often serve dominant versions of nation building.

### **Befriending Ghosts: The Politics of Art and Secrets**

How, then, might contemporary artistic work prompt questions about the nature of Canadian benevolence while also articulating alternative visions of the ties that bind in this deeply contested nation? The artists profiled here engage this task through critical and aesthetic strategies that exploit the creative contradictions that are the very precondition of the Canadian nation. These interventions appeal to me, in part, because of the possibilities they offer for complementing critique with other practices that may not be so "sure of themselves."<sup>89</sup> Indeed, in a context in which the exercise of state and corporate power is deeply tied to affect, Brian Massumi argues that alternative forms of agency must learn to meet "affective modulation with ... abductive participation" and thus engage the "performative" in politics.<sup>90</sup> This is not to say that energy should not continue to be directed towards the detailed and difficult negotiations for structural and systemic change – these are desperately necessary. But attention must also be paid to a range of ethico-political practices that enlarge the possibilities for new forms of memory, analysis, and activism. And, in this process of re-enchantment suggested by Benjamin, the legacy of trauma and the sparks of playfulness both have a crucial role.

The artistic work profiled in the following chapters includes a diverse range of media, from video to photography, from performance and sculpture to painting. It ranges from the wildly humorous appropriations of Banff National Park by Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan in *Lesbian National Parks and Services* (1997); to Jin-me Yoon's postcard series *Souvenirs of the Self* (Banff Park Museum), 1991-2000, which presents a wry confrontation with taxidermic museum display practices in relation to beavers as emblems of the Canadian nation; to Richard Fung's video *Dirty Laundry* (1996), which deftly reimagines the Chinese workers on the Canadian Pacific Railway; to the Cree painter Kent Monkman, whose series *The Moral Landscape* (2003) smartly reconfigures issues of power and sexuality in relation to the colonial legacy. Indigenous artists make up the largest group within this mix, an unsurprising fact given that many are responding to white imaginings of Indianness.

The force of all these works can be seen in the performative use of language and the body in ways that deliberately cannibalize Canadian culture. As Kobena Mercer argues, these practices of counter-appropriation

exemplify the critical work of art insofar as they are self-consciously aware that, to quote Bakhtin:

The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes "one's own" only when ... the speaker appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation the word does not exist in a neutral or impersonal language ... but rather it exists in other people's mouths, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word and make it one's own.<sup>91</sup>

But "making the word one's own" involves a paradoxical process as minoritized artists have had to identify with emblems that exclude them – and it is this process of identification gone awry that has most interested me. For, as Ella Shohat and Robert Stam argue, nationalism's potentially regressive "ideological effects" can *also* open up opportunities for utopian imagining.<sup>92</sup> So while the process of responding to visual texts is, at one level, "structured and determined," it is also possible to read images against the grain for their unexpected and polymorphous possibilities.<sup>93</sup> The artists included here have read themselves and their own life narratives into particular kinds of objects or moments, with which they were not supposed to connect.<sup>94</sup> Of course, this strategy is risky, for artists can be implicated within the terms of the very discourse they seek to assess and subvert. Monika Kin Gagnon succinctly describes this predicament in relation to "race": "naming racism's operations means racializing oneself and others within the very terms and operations that have historically enabled racist discourse to proliferate."<sup>95</sup> Nevertheless, these tactics can also allow for the articulation of multiple kinds of resistance amidst the contradictory eddies of power. And these tools also provide an opportunity, as José Esteban Muñoz suggests, to "breathe new life into old situations," allowing a "suturing of different lives and reanimating through repetition with a difference, a lost country that is relished and loved."<sup>96</sup>

Now what might it mean to speak of "love" as I draw these introductory comments to a close? I use Muñoz's words here to signify something other than the "love of country" that one might typically assume. Indeed, this alternative form of love rejects the exclusivity associated with the Aristotelian model of *philia*, wherein the bonds of responsibility are usually directed towards fellow citizens. Instead, it draws on models of affiliation that were first articulated by early challengers to Aristotle at a time when friendship was understood "as philoxenia, or a love for guests, strangers, and foreigners."<sup>97</sup> So while the polis defined exclusion as the principle origin for that

"city of men," there are other ways of imagining the bonds of alliance. And I argue that it is these alternative forms of love that bind together the artistic works included here.

In this regard, I draw on Leela Gandhi's work on the politics of love and friendship, for, taken as a whole, the artists whose work I consider do not simply propose alternative models of national belonging; rather, they *play with and against* the very notion of belonging as it has been organized through nationalist ideas of affiliation. Thus, the political potential of these artistic challenges can be seen in how they introduce the profoundly disruptive categories of *risk* and *doubt* into otherwise banal and heroic narratives. Gandhi elaborates this alternative through positing the twinned tropes of hospitality and guest friendship, which suggest the risk of

becoming strange or guestlike in [one's] own domain, whether this be home, nation, community, race, gender, sex, skin, or species. So too, the open house of hospitality or the open heart of friendship can never know guests-friends in advance, as one might a fellow citizen, sister, or comrade. Such sociality might take the form of Judith Butler's coalition, "an emerging and unpredictable assemblage of positions." Or it might arrive in the form of Donna Haraway's fabulist cyborg community, "permanently partial ... monstrous and illegitimate."<sup>98</sup>

In this spirit I suggest that the artistic works explored in the following chapters promote doubt about banal nationalist fantasies of security and point instead towards an unknown set of alternatives. Just as nationalist images "gather up ... the residues of the past, recontextualize ... and re-presence them,"<sup>99</sup> so do the artists included here reiterate familiar symbols whose etiology is contested or forgotten. These counter-narratives work in the space between memory and forgetfulness to address the continuing traumas of nation building. Thus, the following chapters attempt a number of risky tasks. The first is to reimagine the secretly familiar phantoms that shape Canadianness. The second is to fashion tactics of demystification that memorialize the nation according to a different set of terms – terms that admit the doubts that follow from acknowledging the incommensurability of different historical moments and competing interpretive frameworks. And, finally, they attempt to sketch out multiple ways of responding to Walter Benjamin's invocation to engage in a drama of re-enchanting the world through a "transgressive uncovering" of what is already "secretly familiar."<sup>100</sup>

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