

“Nothing but the Truth”:
Discursive Transparency
in Beatrice Culleton

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[T]ext is an event under contest.

ANNE MCCLINTOCK, “The Very House of Difference” (204)

EARLY CRITICAL RESPONSES to Canadian Métis writer Beatrice Culleton’s *In Search of April Raintree*, situating the novel in terms of its simplicity, honesty, authenticity, and artlessness, implicitly bifurcate testimonial immediacy and artistic craft, assigning uncrafted testimony to the “Native informant.”¹ Several reviews paradoxically locate the novel’s art precisely in its artlessness: “an earnest, artless journal-cum-fiction that is all the more powerful for its simplicity” (Moher 50) and “irritatingly naive at times, but a more sophisticated style would rob it of its authenticity, which is its greatest asset” (Francis 20). Or they inadvertently imply an art ostensibly not contained within traditional aesthetic parameters: “What the book lacks in literary polish is more than made up for in compassion, understanding and *beautifully controlled* emotion” (Sigurdson 43; emphasis added). At best, they evince a difficulty in devising an aesthetic language to account for the text’s emotional power; at worst, condescension and nostalgia for the unmediated authenticity of the speaking “Other.”

Yet even after Indian literature was “discovered,” attempts to open the canon to it based themselves—mistakenly, to be sure, yet powerfully, nonetheless—on an appeal to the “naturalness” of this literature, as though it was not individuals and cultural practices but the very rocks and trees and rivers that had somehow produced the Native poem or story, and somehow spoke directly in them.

ARNOLD KRUPAT, *The Voice in the Margin* (98)

"Trembling, but honest" is the Crown Attorney's characterization of April Raintree's testimony at the rape trial where she witnesses to the assault upon herself. "Not once did she waver between truth and fiction," he avers (184).² (The inherent destabilizing irony of this assertion, and of the disjunction on which it depends, in the context of a novel, where "truth" might occasionally be expected to coincide with fiction, is heightened by the publisher's curious placement of the supplemental notes. Appended to a rather anxious differentiation between the story and Culleton's own biography, the conventional disclaimer [that legal fiction, "... any resemblance to people living or dead..."] is printed on the last page of the story itself, hard upon Cheryl's discovery of a sense of purpose and an identification with her people.³) In a novel in which the telling of untruths and half-truths proliferates both socially and personally, in which "lies, secrets, and silence" are both inflicted upon April and her sister Cheryl by foster parents, social workers, and history books, and prove to be a destructive component of their own interactions ("I lie to protect her and she lies to protect me, and we both lose out" [205]), "honesty" and "truth" seem to function as talismans. Certainly they do so for reviewers. Ray Torgrud, selected to promote the novel on the back cover, refers to Gertrude Stein's maxim "Write the truest sentence that you know" and, describing the book as autobiographical fiction, notes its "unflinching honesty." The perceived simplicity of *In Search of April Raintree* is aligned with its presumed honesty: Rob Ferguson speaks in one breath of "an unapologetic honesty and a simplicity in writing style" (42).⁴ The immediacy of her truth-telling becomes Culleton's guarantor of literary power. Judith Russell, speculating that Culleton has "invented the odd experience," concludes that "in those cases, the story loses impact through distance" (193).

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"Honesty." Hard behind "honesty is the best policy" in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, I came across another maxim, unfamiliar to me: "plant with purple flowers & translucent pods." Taking "plant" to be the imperative of the verb ("il faut cultiver son jardin," and all that), I was struck at once not only by the beauty

of this long-ago metaphor (although the full significance of the purple flowers eluded me initially) but also by the applicability of the aphorism to perceptions of Culleton's writing. The translucent pod of her story, its near-transparent honesty, had apparently allowed its intense (even over-wrought, "purple") emotion and bold flowerings to appeal directly to her reviewers. Simple candour might somehow adequately contain literary brashness, as in Penny Petrone's description of the novel as "elevated from melodramatic cliché by its daring honesty and its energy" (140).⁵ Advice on how to live and how to write: "Plant with purple flowers & translucent pods."

It's true, that's how I read the *Oxford* entry. Honestly.

And, after all, what can be more unequivocal and straightforward than a dictionary entry?

* * *

In a recent graduate course I taught, explicitly directed to Canadian literatures "on the margins," it was *In Search of April Raintree* which sparked the most heated discussion about issues of literary merit and literary elitism, about the politics of guilt and the status of the truth claim, about visceral responses and intellectual ones, about literary author-ity and literary audience(s). As far as one student was concerned, the book—so simplistic and poorly written he would not have chosen to finish reading it—was on the course only because it was written by a Métis writer. This same dedicated student, for the first time, failed to appear for the subsequent class on Culleton and, later, to the Freudian quips of fellow students, confessed somewhat wryly to having lost his copy of the text. By contrast, another student, attributing reader discomfiture to the book's "naked," "unembellished" visceral appeal, described being distraught and off-kilter for twenty-four hours after reading it, without for some time being able to pinpoint the source of her distress. A third proposed the analogy of the car that, despite its ramshackle condition, still provides reliable transportation, wondering whether the book was "a beater that just won't die."

The flash-point in what had hitherto in the term been a decorous class came in reaction to a student suggestion that the novel

served to provide Métis readers with a recognizable reality. Why then, someone shot back, as disconcerting in his abrupt anger as in the rawness of his formulation, did Culleton not simply distribute the book to her friends in local bars. Other students rose to this at once, equally passionately, with countercharges of literary snobbery (though not, interestingly enough, of racism). Clearly even to students versed in notions of hegemony and counter-discursive production, the presence of a book like *In Search of April Raintree* on the syllabus was fraught and disquieting. As with reviewers, subsequent discussion that day tended to eddy around the idea that Culleton had said what she meant and meant what she said (one student's phrase), and the question of whether, from a literary standpoint, such Horton-like faithfulness sufficed. In a later paper, one participant in the class, Carter Meland, defended Culleton's aesthetic and a catholic critical reading, arguing that "[t]he modernist aesthetic and the sentimental sensibility are only separated by a cultural manicheism which privileges the 'artful' over the 'artless'" (4).

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Loosely speaking, "translucent" can be, and often is, interchanged with "transparent." And, botanically speaking, a translucent pod, by comparison with leguminous seed-vessels of a more guarded nature, is relatively forthcoming about its contents. But "translucent," falling as it does between "transparent" and "opaque," means transmitting light but not without diffusion, seen through but not seen through simply. April, it might be noted, resists the condescension in her attorney's formulation of herself, refusing his fashioning of her as tormented, honest *naïf*.

Transmitting light but not without diffusion. A second meaning of "to diffuse," less well known than the first ("to pour out so as to spread in all directions"), is "to perplex."

[A]uthenticity is implicitly a polemical concept, fulfilling its nature by dealing aggressively with received and habitual opinion, aesthetic opinion in the first instance, social and political opinion in the next.

LIONEL TRILLING, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (94)

Interplaited with the notion of authenticity in *In Search of April Raintree* is the question of identity, both authorial and fictive.

Culleton has characterized the novel, initially about alcoholism in her conception, as ultimately about identity (Lutz 99). April and Cheryl come into maturity as Métis women, in the face of racist-sexist affronts to that identity, most blatantly represented by the "native girl" [sic] syndrome" detailed by their social worker (66-67). The story of that process is sustained, for most reviewers, by Culleton's own identity as a Métis woman. "Beatrice Culleton set out to tell a story—her own story—in the plainest available language. Nothing else is needed," says Judith Russell (192). Just as Culleton's writing can be read as the straightforward documentation of eclipsed facts of social reality, with her personal experience of racism, foster care, poverty, alcoholism, and sibling suicide warranting the truth status of the novel's representations,⁶ so the characters' struggle with identity can be read as a quest for the true self. In particular, April's story can be taken as a dis-covery of an intrinsic selfhood persistently denigrated by others, a sloughing off of false personae ("Only at the end does April realize her mistake of trying to become a white person" [Holman 11]), and a final embracing of an authentic self ("The real April Raintree, the April Raintree she tucked away for safe-keeping, begins to emerge" [Keeshig-Tobias 58]). Paul Wilson who also treats the issue of April's identity as transparent—"April determines at last to embrace her real heritage"—does admittedly go on at least to nuance that heritage, proposing that April's initial pursuit of a white identity is "as faithful to a part of her heritage" as Cheryl's identification with their Native background (30).

Such readings, of the author's and characters' breaking through to a reality and a given identity which have been obscured—historically and personally—by inaccurate representations, are the literary equivalents of recent directions in history. The tendency in history is one which Joan Scott identifies (and subsequently goes on to interrogate): "The challenge to normative history has been described . . . as an enlargement of the picture, a correction to oversights resulting from inaccurate or incomplete vision, and it has rested its claim to legitimacy on the authority of experience," with experiential evidence perceived referentially as simply "a reflection of the real" (776). Such

readings treat the novel's medium as transparent, identity as immanent, experience as self-evident, and Culleton as the trembling but honest truth-teller.

[A] mixed-blood must waver in the blood and it's difficult to waver [on?] the page. You have to find some meaning not in the sides but in the seam in between and that's obviously where a mixed-blood, an earthdiver, a trickster, must try and find all meaning, imaginative meaning. . . . We're trouble, and I'd rather be trouble than an image.

GERALD VIZENOR, *Winged Words* (174)

In Search of April Raintree is not a seamless, unitary narrative. At the simplest level, it contains two voices, April as narrator and the interpolated voice of her sister Cheryl. The latter voice is represented in a variety of discourses: the stumbling (and unlikely) letters of a pre-schooler; subsequent letters; academic speeches and essays on Métis history; oratory written for a university newspaper but in the end delivered orally and privately to her sister at a Pow Wow; dialogue, most centrally; and, posthumously, diary entries. In addition, the novel either represents or addresses a range of other discourses, including social work and foster care tutelage, classroom history lessons, Native-produced history, ecclesiastical infallibility, the rhetoric of misogynist/racist violence, legal testimony and courtroom summation, the romance of home and fashion magazines, the eloquence of the literary Indian, and the visual/tactile communication of a Native elder. What the characters "experience" is a series of representations, and, especially in the first half of the novel, conflicting and incompatible representations, and outright falsehoods, sufficient to induce in them a certain exegetical wariness. What the characters impart is likewise a series of contingent, partial (in the sense both of incomplete and of partisan), and discordant renderings conducive to the same kind of caution in the reader.

Subjects are constituted discursively and experience is a linguistic event.

JOAN SCOTT, "The Evidence of Experience" (793)

In one of Cheryl's letters to April, mourning JFK's assassination, Cheryl concludes, after a brief tribute to the Kennedys' youth and energy, not with the man himself nor his political and legislative accomplishments. Instead she gestures towards his

speeches and, curiously yet, towards his speech-writers, expressing the hope that Robert Kennedy will keep the same writers. In preparing to teach *In Search of April Raintree*, I was struck most forcibly by this passage, as a key to reading the novel. The president is dead, long live his discourse. Admittedly, in part the passage represents a narrative nod towards Cheryl's developing literary and oratorical strategies, merely a stroke of characterization. But I was startled by the nonchalance of the acknowledgment, the affirmation even, of crafted (and stirring, politically effective) speech that stands in place of the person himself, does not require the authenticating impress of immediate inner emotion, is not necessarily the outer manifestation of an intrinsic self. (Contrast this with the welling up and pouring forth of cathartic torrents attributed to Culleton, by comparison [Sigurdson 43].) Impervious to the romance of authenticity, Culleton takes for granted the notion of performance (in the delegated, and eventually bequeathed, voice, are there hints of a disseminated, endlessly deferred self?) and our dependence on representations. And this from the point of view of a child, presumably more susceptible to naïve notions of spontaneous self-expression; in the context of a political administration sustained more than many by personal charisma and so by imperatives of sincerity and authenticity; and regarding an earlier period somewhat less proficient in and cynical about manipulation of the political image than the present. Of course, to contemporary readers with the advantage of time, and to the author herself—"At that age, you don't know all the back-room stuff and you just see the image presented," she comments about her own early admiration for Kennedy (Garrod 88)—the dismantling of the Kennedy myth, the underside of Camelot, adds another, ironic, layer to the passage's recognition of the *making* of a president.

"Accuracy" in history is a genre.

ANNE MCCLINTOCK, "The Very House of Difference" (226)

In one of the rare critical references to this aspect of the text, Margery Fee concludes, "Both [Jeannette Armstrong's *Slash* and *In Search of April Raintree*] show how the dominant discourse functions so clearly that some readers may find the demonstra-

tion too 'obvious' or explicit to be aesthetically pleasing" (177). Certainly the novel's attention to the hegemonic construction of Native reality is relentless. Cheryl's teacher's vapid assertion "They're not lies; this is history" (57) marks but one of the narrative's many moments of irony and confutation. But its examination of what Michel Foucault calls the "political economy" of truth (*Power/Knowledge* 131) and our embeddedness in systems of meaning-making is more far-ranging than that. In the opening pages of the novel, five-year-old April's capacity to apprehend her circumstances is complicated both by apparent mystifications—the word "medicine" for alcohol—and by the constraints of her own experience—her perception of a masturbating man as "peeing" or her mother's childbirth as a hospitalization brought on by obesity. The text is an intricate choreography of (mis)representations, the relationship of the two sisters being no less fraught with the complications of self-construction (and -invention) than are the versions of themselves and their history that they are fed by a racist society. Mrs. Dion's simple instruction that telling the truth is always easier and better than lying, which earlier on seems a touchstone against which the adult hypocrisies surrounding the children can be measured, becomes less compelling over the course of the book. The entire plot of the novel turns on the considerable impediments to truth-telling. Its merit remains more imponderable. Most unsettling, though, truth itself becomes less self-evident. Is Cheryl's final, bitter, and self-destroying conviction that she is confronting "the true picture of my father" (217) any less misleading than April's similar callow conclusion as a youngster that "I knew the truth about them [my parents]" (52)?

Even the novel's apparent endorsement of Roger's lie about an Ojibway brother Joe (which I find offensive, especially coming directly after April's dismissal of whites' half-baked claims to know what being Native is like, but which seems to serve its purpose ultimately in creating a playful intimacy between the two suitors) may function to disrupt the moral economy in the novel of wholesome truths and pernicious lies. It confounds not only simplistic judgements but, given Roger's Ojibway friend Joe, the ostensible binarism of truth and falsehood itself, being nei-

ther simply one nor the other. More radically, since April goes on to note her own bewilderment over Cheryl's drinking, the endorsement could be read as helping to disrupt any singular, totalizing, privileged access, through the authority of experience or otherwise, to "what it's like being a native person" (157).

"There are no truths, Coyote," I says. "Only stories."

THOMAS KING, *Green Grass, Running Water* (326)

The acuity and persistence with which the novel registers how the effects of truth are produced render suspect those readings which present the text as a straightforward corrective telling-it-like-it-is. In fact, Culleton rehearses many poststructuralist conclusions about reality as constituted rather than given. In April's inability to take back dishonest words making her an orphan and in Cheryl's suggestion that April's pretence of not caring seems to be turning into reality, Culleton records the power and autonomy of even second-order discursive constructions. In Mrs. DeRosier's precluding of her husband's corroboration of April's complaint of mistreatment, poisoning the well with lies about a flirtation, the text documents the control of the discursive means of production. Mrs. Semple's dismissive "Don't try to tell me that you walked all that way" (65) and Cheryl's wry surmise that her very resentment at the prejudicial paradigm of the Native Girls' Syndrome marks her as a likely instance of the syndrome both display the Catch-22 scope of pre-emptive discourses. In Mrs. Semple's presumption that the DeRosier mother and daughter "have no reason to lie about who did what" (66), we have the familiar "objectivity" of the hegemonic position and dubious "interestedness" of counterdiscourse. The situatedness of knowledge is given quite literal illustration in April's discovery, regarding an otherwise familiar conversation with her sister about their Native background, that "sitting there in our tent, surrounded by proud Indians, everything seemed different" (168). April's capacity to draw contrary conclusions from Cheryl's inspirational pieces on Riel—"Knowing the other side, the Métis side . . . just reinforced my belief that if I could assimilate myself into white society, I wouldn't have to live like this for the rest of my life" (85) and "White superiority had conquered in the end" (95)—like her capacity to see watery eyes and leathery skin where Cheryl

sees quiet beauty, conveys the multivalence, the indeterminacy of the text they are both reading.

But here I catch myself saying “registers,” “records,” “illustrates,” “conveys,” “documents,” using the language of, and so reinstating, the very epistemological (and critical) model I that (along with Culleton, I suggest) wish to contest. I am speaking as if the truth, reality—in this case about knowledge and the operations of discourse—were a prediscursive absolute to be brought to view through the window of Culleton’s narrative rather than a contested and provisional system of signification in whose workings the text implicates itself.

Experience is at once always already an interpretation *and* something that needs to be interpreted.

JOAN SCOTT, “The Evidence of Experience” (797)

Culleton has spoken of using *In Search of April Raintree* to rewrite circumstances, using the characters to do what she wishes she had done (“Images” 51). The example she gives is of inventing the Indian and Métis books which hearten Cheryl, proleptic resources whose existence in the 1950s she doubts and for which her own novel provides *ex post facto* confirmation. Characters too rewrite their scripts. In the immediate aftermath of her rape, April uses her scripted role of helplessness and victimization strategically; feigning vomiting to secure the rapists’ license plate number and ultimately their arrest and conviction.⁷ (The latter elements may, like Cheryl’s Native pride and activism, entail affirmative biographical re-vision on Culleton’s part.⁸) At the rape trial itself, the inhibiting instructions about legal evidence and the constraints on inference—“One could testify to what was directly known” (164)—are shown to discredit and deflate April’s testimony:

“Now would you say the defendant was intoxicated?”

“I don’t know.”

“Didn’t you state that you smelled liquor on his breath?” (179)

Besides again highlighting disparities in entitlement to (self)-representation, the passage provides ironic (and metafictional) commentary on narrow, disempowering definitions of what constitutes experience,⁹ on the simple testimonial’s vulnerability to

appropriation, and on the suspect division of labour between informant (transparent channel for authentic “raw” data) and specialist (responsible for interpretive elaborations and artistic transformations). Just as April tells a fuller story than her legal role allows, the novel resists the confinement of the witness box.

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Transparency. Transparency can be tricky too. We have become accustomed to using “transparent” as trope for lucidity, ingenuousness, clarity, artlessness. In the Toronto apartment we have rented for the year, I have just had the skylight above my desk implode. The sonic boom it simulated sent us running out into the street, seeking more distant explanations. Fragments of skylight showered the (mercifully empty) room, from one doorway to the other, splattering around corners, into alcoves. Splinters of glass impaled themselves in the desktop, in the baseboard and mouldings. The paperback books on my desk are now inscribed in braille. Now that the glass has been swept up, I survey a patch of rug, reassure myself that it is clear, shift my position several degrees, and catch another sparkle. I bend to pick up a shard, place my hand on its location, and the glass has shifted as I stooped. When I switch on the ceiling fan, bits of crystal ambush me from its blades. I locate pieces of transparency at night, with my bare feet.

We have knocked out the tracery of filaments, the glass filigree, surrounding the central jagged emptiness, but whenever the skylight must be opened or closed, a glass rain falls. I place a bedsheet over my desk and floor for the repeated visits of tradespeople come to measure and note down serial numbers which they cannot find. Only a half dozen shards gleam against the white, hardly worth the effort. But when I gather up the sheet, the tinkling colloquy tells of a multitude. And I discover opaque granules I have not seen before. I fold the sheet away, triumphant. But I have neglected to shut the skylight.

Transparency has its secrets. Ah, you say, but I am speaking to the special case, the transparent in fragments. (A single glass chip plops to the floor.) Then this is the pent-up story of transparency, its unspoken promise. (From my bowl of trophies, I toss a

piece up to capture the sound of its encounter with the rug; it vaults against my foot and vanishes under the desk. I find several new fragments instead.) Even whole and intact, transparency is crafty. With the aid of only two Barbadian rum punches, I have walked headlong into a glass door. I have immersed my face disconcertingly in a stream whose surface was closer than I had anticipated. I have watched darkness convert a window to a mirror, sunlight do the same for a lake. I have been instructed by the concluding image of Margaret Laurence's *Diviners*, as the writer-protagonist prepares to set down her final, fictional words: "Only slightly further out, the water deepened and kept its life from sight" (370).

With our focal point fixed on the Métis experience of Culleton's text, do we risk running face-first into the self-reflexive medium wherein she tells the story of how that experience comes into meaning? In any case, is *In Search of April Raintree* unfractured, monologic, cohesive, a single pane of language? Or is it a scattering of stories, glittering into self-consciousness one moment, craftily effacing the act of storytelling the next, positioning itself here, then with a shift of perspective turning up over there?

Q: What is more elusive than something you cannot see because you see through it?

A: Many pieces of the same thing.

"What is the proper word for people like you?"

BEATRICE CULLETON, *In Search of April Raintree* (116)

Identity. Shape-shifting. Vigilant against being named into Otherness, Cheryl multiplies identities:

"But you're not exactly Indians are you? What is the proper word for people like you?" one asked.

"Women," Cheryl replied instantly.

"No, no, I mean nationality?"

"Oh, I'm sorry. We're Canadians." (116)

"Apple" to her little sister, "Ape" to her vindictive foster sister, April Raintree/Rainry/Radcliff too eludes definition, with various selves glinting into and out of sight. Locating herself inconsistently, she can fantasize of "passing," of living "just like a *real*

white person" at one point, yet later puzzle over racial slurs wielded by her rapists, surprised she should be "*mistaken as a native person*" (49, 161; emphases added). With one identity unreal and its alternative mistaken, she challenges assumptions of a fundamental self, a true north against which other positions are measured as self-betraying defections. By acceding to neither designation, locating herself nowhere, she disrupts the binarism that naturalizes such identities.

When Cheryl assures April that at the Roseau Pow Wow she will finally meet "real Indians," April cannot determine whether her sister is being enthusiastic or sarcastic. The novel is similarly equivocal on such matters. Cheryl notes ruefully that her poetic turns of phrase derive from Indian books, that "most Indians today don't talk like that at all" (175). At the same time, she is re-investing this rhetorical tradition with significance, having appropriated it from the discursive archive out of which she fashions herself. Where does authenticity lie, when a self-defined Native, in the very course of describing her white-identified sibling as a sister in blood but not in vision, is estranged from her own example, acknowledges herself as unnatural? Suggestively, the space that is opened in the novel for a revelation about Native existence remains emblematically empty, a stubborn lacuna, as the two white men issuing the invitation pre-empt Cheryl's voice and substitute their own convictions.¹⁰ Given that April comes to Métis identity at the moment that Cheryl abandons it and that the itinerary of April's Nativeness is the inverse of her sister's, can the narrative be said to posit any fundamental Métis reality? Can the search for April Raintree be said to end with the book's conclusion?

The doubling of protagonists further confounds the question of identity. Polar opposites, the two sisters are illustrations of antipathetic extremes—of gratification in and repudiation of their Native heritage. Simultaneously, they are said to be, except for skin-colouring, like enough to be identical twins, so much so that April characterizes her praise for Cheryl's beauty as oblique self-admiration. In place of the bounded and unitary self, *In Search of April Raintree* creates permeable and melded selves. The narrative voice is fluid and inclusive, neither hermetically singu-

lar nor neatly bifurcated. (In early third-person drafts, Culleton felt the necessity to represent Cheryl's perspective more fully [Bridgeman 45; Garrod 90]). Rather April's narrative voice is deflected and expanded by, required to make room for aspects of Cheryl's vision. The framework of the novel is chiasmic (the double helix provides an apt model), with the dual storylines intersecting and reversing direction, protagonists exchanging roles. Structurally, the critical moment of cross-over is the rape scene, with the interchange between protagonists enacted physically, as it will thereafter be enacted psychologically and politically. April takes on Cheryl's body, is raped as Cheryl, and thereafter, in narrative time if not chronological time, the sisters trade places regarding Métis pride, Cheryl taking on April's shame, her secretiveness, and her superior knowledge of their parents, April Cheryl's resilience, her allegiance to community, and, finally, her son.

Julia Emberley argues that the ending marks a reclaiming of "'identity' over difference . . . a new synthesis of the split narratives of subjectivity constituted in Cheryl and April . . . a new order of unification and reconciliation in which the 'Indianness' of Cheryl is absorbed into the 'whiteness' of April" (162). By contrast with reviewers, Emberley resists what she sees as a reinstating of authenticity in the figure of the Métis. But the narrative has been one of unstable (and even exchanged) subject positions, positions repeatedly renegotiated in response to social and discursive practices. The troubled history of Cheryl's Métis affiliation forestalls conclusiveness in April's move onto the same ground. The self constructed in the novel is multiple, provisional, discontinuous, and shared. To the demand for a "proper word" to identify people like Cheryl and like April, *In Search of April Raintree* withholds an answer.

"I" is, itself, *infinite layers*.

TRINH T. MINH-HA, *Woman, Native, Other* (94)

The undermining of unitary and essentialist discourses of identity in the novel countermands notions of the author's own originary identity and the authenticating imprint of her experience.¹¹ Which of these various stories is Culleton's "own"? Who is Culleton? If "Métis" has been revealed as the product

of divers(e), sometimes competing discourses, then the search for Beatrice Culleton becomes more vexed. And Métis, in all its multiplicity, is only one set among a multitude of subject positions, not always commensurable, that Culleton occupies. It does happen to be the exegetical configuration fixed on single-mindedly by most reviewers. Margaret Clarke, by contrast, emphasizing a feminist reading of the novel, suggests that for Culleton the experiences of female identity and Métis identity are inseparable (141). And these are but two of the "matrices of intelligibility" (Judith Butler's term, 17) within which biographical experience might come into meaning. "Canadian," for example, is another such matrix, as Cheryl's self-naming and Culleton's pained comments on the exclusion of Native people from Canadian identity suggest ("Images" 50).

The "author" of the revised edition, as constituted through textual apparatus, moreover, is less simply the subject of life experiences similar to those in the novel than is the "author" of the original edition. In the revised edition, she is constituted instead as more of a successful professional with speaking engagements in the schools, involvement in Native organizations, and a developing writing career (*April* iv, 185). That Culleton now goes by and writes under her birth name, Mosionier, simply problematizes again, at the level of the signature, the notion of a singular, unified, intrinsic identity.

[W]e imagine ourselves, we create ourselves, we touch ourselves into being with words.

GERALD VIZENOR, *Winged Words* (158)

A reading of the novel as spontaneous, cathartic truth-telling, the laying bare of shocking but revealing realities, is complicated too by the publication, one year after the initial text, of an expurgated/adapted version, entitled *April Raintree*. Culleton produced this school edition, attenuating or deleting obscene language and the explicit details relating to sexuality in particular, at the behest of the Native Education Branch of Manitoba Education.¹² With the presence of this sister text, Culleton's "truth" immediately becomes double, duplicitous. The revision acts as a reminder, at the level of dissemination, of precisely the social, economic, and institutional (specifically educational)

constraints on what can be said and heard, on how it can be said, that Culleton conveys within the novel. We can observe "specific effects of power," which Foucault describes as working to certify "truth," being bestowed on one version of the story in preference to another (*Power/Knowledge* 132). Culleton though has also demonstrated her commitment to getting Native materials into the schools, to transforming the discourse of Nativeness in practical ways ("Images" 48-51; Bridgeman 49). To the extent that her cooperation with Manitoba Education is more than a coerced concession to necessity, the textual twinning marks a recognition of the plurality and particularities of places of discursive practice. Oral story telling, to use another instance, is not fixed but varies with occasion, season, audience, function, and time.

April Raintree, furthermore, is not just a bowdlerized, diminished version of the original. In addition to meeting the requirements of Manitoba Education, Culleton has extensively reworked other aspects of the text. She has corrected matters of fact, like the name of a Winnipeg bridge.¹³ She has improved verisimilitude, making Cheryl's preschool spelling more phonetic and more plausible, for example.¹⁴ She has added explanatory detail, on how April remains ignorant of her fiancé's resources or how she comes to overhear her mother-in-law and her husband's lover. She has toned down potential melodrama, making the assault on Cheryl by a disgruntled aspiring customer less deliberate and prolonged, and eliminating April's revelation to the indignant witness of Cheryl's suicide: "She was my sister, mister" (*Search* 209, *April* 169). She has revised wording to reflect the participant's rather than the observer's perspective.¹⁵ She has made scenes less static. Cheryl's report of her confrontation with school authorities is contextualized within dialogue with April and a friend Jennifer. April's solitary readings of Cheryl's letters are dramatized as communications with the dog Rebel, with Rebel's inattentiveness permitting more irony and indirection than April's original temporary enthusiasm. With rare exceptions, Culleton has revised in the direction of reducing rather than increasing editorializing, letting scenes speak for themselves.¹⁶ She has replaced statement with illustration and dialogue.¹⁷ In particular, she has expanded scenes between April

and Roger, eliminating his sometimes ponderous condemnations of "game-playing," reducing his knowing comments on Cheryl,¹⁸ and providing engaging, playful banter instead. In these scenes and elsewhere, she invests April with added traces of strength and initiative.¹⁹ Whether in particulars of paragraphing and diction or larger matters of tone and characterization, almost every page of *April Raintree* attests to the existence of an/other version of Culleton's story, and one that has been crafted so.²⁰

Neither edition therefore can stand as the definitive text of this narrative, each offering details and exhibiting merits which the other lacks. By their divergent existences—with the full story, the "true" story, flickering into view now in one text, now in the other—*In Search of April Raintree* and *April Raintree* testify against the presumption of artless, raw honesty. Taken as a single, internally discrepant document, (*In Search of*) *April Raintree* conveys the simultaneity, the layered heterogeneity of the ways the fictions of experience, self, and truth can be composed. Its own boundaries become permeable, its identity elusive, multiple, palimpsestic.

* * *

Perhaps the image of the translucent pod, however diffuse its transmission of light, is the wrong metaphor, implying as it does some kernel of reality, of truth, seen through a glass darkly. Perhaps the trope of transparency, however evasive and crafty the transparency, risks reinscribing the divide between seeing and seeing through, between experience and its discursive transmission. Consider instead then the secondary definition of transparency, as entity rather than as attribute. Consider *the* transparency—the photographic slide or better yet the colour separations used to produce book and magazine illustrations. The representation inheres within rather than existing beyond the transparency itself. Indeed, in the case of colour separations, the representation is constituted entirely in the layering of the medium itself, residing as a totality nowhere. Monochromatic transparencies in combination, through careful registration or alignment, produce a cumulative impression, one readily trans-

formed by simple substitution—of a blue transparency for a yellow one, say—as the versions of the same picture in photography magazines, now in shades of orange, now of purple, can testify. Or, using a bank of projectors, one can create an indefinite series of differing images simply by superimposing projections from carousels of transparencies, in predetermined or random combinations. The effect, the image, has no single origin, no true original. Like discourse, in Foucault's definition, the transparencies produce the realities they convey (*Archaeology* 49).

* * *

Several years ago, I gave a paper on Jeannette Armstrong's *Slash*, raising issues I felt needed to be attended to by those of us who found the novel outside the familiar literary parameters of our Western, non-Native cultural experience. After the presentation, a woman in the audience stood up and presented her dilemma. She wanted to include Native writing in her syllabi but found Armstrong's and Culleton's writing thus far inadequate, although they might mature as writers in the future. It was my first experience with something women of colour describe repeatedly, in their encounters with white feminist audiences, the experience of having been edited out, of not having been heard at all. Not that I thought I had made a irrefutable case. In fact, I was anticipating the argument that, even given my premises, Armstrong's novel did not entirely succeed. But my questioner was so oblivious to the considerations I had put forward and the ways in which they were implicated in her dilemma, that for a moment I was convinced she had arrived only after the panel's conclusion. Her impervious goodwill was a revelation, to me, of what marginalized texts are up against: the incapacity of discursive systems even to register information that lies too far outside their paradigms. My abbreviated and stymied response—what could a thirty-second problematizing of aesthetic absolutes accomplish that a thirty-minute attempt had not?—was to suggest that more harm than good came from teaching works one was convinced were inferior and to recommend other titles by Native authors which she might contemplate using.

Catch-22: It is better to refrain from teaching works (from other cultures) that one considers inferior.

* * *

Time for a confession: Although I am committed to teaching it, I have, until now, found *In Search of April Raintree* embarrassing to teach. I have tended to place it on the syllabi of lower-division courses, and, in those instances, of Women's Studies courses where the focus is less on the literary/aesthetic dimension of the text and where students' disciplinary diversity makes them less literarily exigent. In the case of the graduate course I have described earlier, I selected it deliberately as an instance of the problematics of reception, genre, audience, and aesthetic standards. Even there, wary of student unreceptiveness, I scheduled it late in the course, after issues of reception and normativeness had been problematized, to ensure that it received a hearing. Gratified at evidence of literary "sophistication," such as the wry allusion to the Battle of Seven Oaks in the naming of the racist social worker, Mrs. Semple, I find myself wanting, but largely failing, to vindicate the text in the conventional terms of the academic and literary milieu into which I have introduced it.

My graduate student was not far off in insisting that the text would not have been on the course were it not by a Métis writer. But is that necessarily an insupportable decision? If I hadn't been teaching *In Search of April Raintree*, I wouldn't have had to pay close attention to the text. I wouldn't have been struck by the discrepancy between the novel's attentiveness to signifying practices and the reviewers' uncritical, representationalist appeals to mimetic reflection and authorial experience. I wouldn't have made discoveries from and about the novel.

... the contradiction of reading literary criticism which uses Derridean post-structural theory, for example, in order to abstract indigenous knowledges of interpretation into a First Worldist discursive consumption.

JULIA EMBERLEY, *Thresholds of Difference* (164)

But what is going on here? In reading Culleton as resisting the naturalization of reality, experience, and self, am I co-opting *In Search of April Raintree* into the contemporary crisis of epistemological legitimation? Insisting on applying to the text the

“linguistic turn” in critical theory? Imposing a postmodern/poststructuralist master narrative of polyvocality, instability, and indeterminacy on a (relatively) coherent, realist narrative? Am I simply substituting for authenticity a new value, the capacity for sophisticated discursive critique, to compensate, like the reviewers, for perceived inadequacies of craft? Resuming the trope of transparency, have I, as critic, been putting my fingerprints all over the glass or celluloid of the text and then, in the guise of illuminating the novel, merely studying the intricacies of their whorls?

More importantly, am I in danger of depoliticizing the novel by reducing it to yet another self-reflexive postmodern discourse about discourse? Are the potentially decolonizing effects of the text neutralized by a hermeneutics of indeterminacy? What happens to Cheryl’s revising of Métis history or April’s final commitment to the future of her people in a reading sceptical of ultimate certainties? Does my problematizing of identity in the novel undermine the politics of identity it may serve, the authority of self-representation the novel claims, the characters’ hard-won achievement of an autonomous coherent subjectivity that is, as Fee points out, however illusory its self-determination, both compensatory and subversive within a culture hostile to such subjects (172)? Amid calls that room be made for Native voices, have I just erased the Native author behind the text? Just how colonizing is this approach?

Certainly, *In Search of April Raintree* provides a number of passages seeming to resist my reading and to warrant treating the novel as an empiricist reflection of reality. In Cheryl’s schoolgirl conviction that “history should be an unbiased representation of the facts. And if they show one side, they ought to show the other side equally” (84) and her resolve to transform the Native image so as to give April pride, in April’s Christmas essay that both articulates and implements her wish for someone to listen to and hear her, and her adult hope that someday she may be able to explain to others why Native people kill themselves, one can read self-referential glosses on the novel’s positivist undertaking, emphasizing the necessity for different representations rather than for the problematizing of representation.²¹ Speaking of Pemmi-

can's educational mandate and of the wrong ideas about Native people held by many teachers (Bridgeman 49), Culleton (but which Culleton[s]?) seems persuaded of the possibility of replacing a "clouded" vision with a "clear" one, to use Cheryl's formulation (175). April's closing words, that it has taken her sister's death to "bring me to accept my identity" (228), seem to affirm identity as immanent, as does Culleton's concurrence with interviewer Andrew Garrod's suggestion that April is not being true to herself (85). Is the novel, ultimately, as Petrone claims of Canadian Native writing generally, in a discussion immediately preceding her analysis of Culleton, "attempting to distinguish once and for all right from wrong, truth from fiction—to set the record straight" (139)?

"Seriousness" has become the justification for our enterprises of academic literary criticism and literary pedagogy and is the source of their tension with the general public. Once-popular books are plumbed in literature courses for their serious content, not for the sources of the enjoyment that drew people to them.

NINA BAYM, *Novels, Readers, and Reviewers* (24-25)

Then too what about the pleasures of narrative, of story-telling? Does my approach evade or even obscure the origins of the novel's appeal to numerous readers, interjecting intellectual complexity into a text I am incapable of appreciating on its own terms because the intellectual is the only (academic) way I know to approach stories? The classes of Native students who, by report, identify most strongly with this novel as a powerful confirmation of their experiences,²² are presumably not identifying primarily with the way the text implicates itself in the deconstruction of discursive singularity or the way it establishes April's newly achieved identity as provisional. What about the nine-year-olds Culleton mentions who helped inspire her rewriting of the book, children who have never read before but who are reading *In Search of April Raintree* (Cahill 62)? What about my Women's Studies students who describe crying several times while reading the novel?²³ The book is on my syllabi, after all, in part because of my desire to learn more from and about writing that moves and speaks to many, that serves needs that may differ from my own or the academy's.

The deconstruction of identity is not the deconstruction of politics; rather, it establishes as political the very terms through which identity is articulated.

JUDITH BUTLER, *Gender Trouble* (148)

To argue that Culleton is attentive to the politics of representation may not necessarily be to co-opt her writing into a chic critical movement. Native traditions are notable for their respect for the power of language and their sensitivity to the dangers of its misuse. To cite only one example, Douglas Cardinal (Métis) speaks of the human potential to shape reality through language, in ways reminiscent of contemporary theory but deriving from an entirely different cultural tradition: "The essence of creativity in all things is what makes the universe shift. It is to cause something to become from nothing. The word in that way is powerful. When we speak a word we declare something. We create it and then it can be" (89).

Culleton, whose upbringing was largely outside Métis communities, may not be shaped in obvious ways by this discourse. But her own interpellation as "Native" subject (in itself a self-contradictory formulation from some perspectives) into a variety of incompatible and antipathetic signifying systems inevitably produces a parallel awareness. Several of her essays, "What a Shame" and "Images of Native People and their Effects" in particular, surveying her painful and impossible negotiation of the constructions of Nativeness, suggest that epistemological wariness arises readily from such a position and need not wait on the trends of academic theory. Such wariness lends itself naturally to the highly political question of who gets to tell the stories, but does not preclude the proposing of more plausible stories, however provisional all must be considered to be. Cheryl's final undoing, for instance, can be read as deriving alternatively from a risky reliance on undependable narratives, like the edited story of her parents' merit, or from the exclusion from public discourse of positive narratives of the Native present, such as the one hinted at in the story of her friend Nancy.

That is how identity politics may be fruitfully understood now: as sites of struggle, rather than as sites of "identity."

CHICAGO CULTURAL STUDIES GROUP,
"Critical Multiculturalism" (548)

To argue that self and racial identity are constructed, moreover, is not to argue that they have no reality, where that reality is constituted precisely through their effects (see Butler 32). To cite a familiar, rueful quip, knowing that race is constructed does nothing to help a black academic hail a cab in New York during rush hour. Nor does the recognition of self/selves and racial identity/ies as constructs preclude agency. Neither acquiescing in the hegemonic "felicitous self-naturalization" (Butler's term, 33) of constructs like race²⁴ nor removing herself to some impossible position outside discourses, April ultimately treats identity as verb not noun, as action not condition, as performative not inherent—and as communal not individual. Her final claim to have accepted her identity has less to do with some essence she discovers in herself (or other Métis or Native people) than with her mobilization of the relations, historic and present, in which she finds herself. She begins to deploy positively connections she has hitherto resisted. Her speaking of the words "MY PEOPLE, OUR PEOPLE" (228) enacts a political affiliation, an involvement with others in the hopeful shaping of the future.

[A critic] requests us to read the poems thoughtfully, not because they are good poems, but because we owe a debt to the Aborigines which cannot be redeemed by any Budget allocations. . . . but what about the quality of the verse?

MUDROOROO NAROGIN, *Writing from the Fringe* (85)

With some other Native texts like Jeannette Armstrong's *Slash*, I sense that I am ignorant of the cultural traditions out of which they are written and so I refrain from premature judgement. With *In Search of April Raintree*, part of the problem with my aesthetic appreciation of the text may arise because I assume that I am familiar with its genre, the realist novel, and with the book's limitations according to the standards of that genre, and fail to consider the uses to which it is being put. My concern about formulaic characterization and plotting, wooden dialogue, flat, recapitulative narration, sensationalizing, stylistic blandness (in most of which I echo the reviewers I have critiqued) draws on the norms of high (bourgeois) realism, with its focus on the individualizing of experience, refinements of self-understanding, aptness of detail, originality of language. I am requiring the satisfac-

tions of subtlety, indirection, complexity, values which creep into my summary of the revisions to Culleton's second edition. Yet quite other genres—romance, for example²⁵—and quite other pleasures are possible. What about the satisfactions of clarity—moral and otherwise—narrative familiarity, emotional heightening, rapport with a commonplace narrator,²⁶ pathos?

Wendy Rose differentiates the values subtending Native art and Euro-American art, describing the latter as “special, elite (much of it requires formal training in ‘appreciation’), non-utilitarian, self-expressive, solitary, ego-identified, self-validating, innovative (‘to make it new’), unique, and—in its highest forms—without rules” (18-19). While noting the limitations of pan-Indian generalizations, she stresses the place, in Native art, of the ordinary, community-oriented, useful, familiar, co-operatively produced, and communally integrated. Functionality and beauty in this art, she argues, are interdependent.

Culleton has spoken of being influenced by “what they call the trash books” (note her implicit reservation about that label) and by movies and television shows, all popular genres (Garrod 87, 95; Lutz 104).²⁷ She has expressed surprise at finding her book taught in university classes when she had directed it towards the general reader (Bridgeman 47).²⁸ The rhetorical conventions which her plain-speaking, expository narrative voice invokes are less those of fiction or even of dramatized story-telling than of family history or the everyday recounting of personal experience, aligning her rhetorically with thousands of unofficial, daily chroniclers. Like the Native art that Rose describes and like the proletarian novels of the depression era (where the formulaic or generic was also taken to gainsay literary merit), Culleton's writing fuses pragmatic and artistic ends, and grows out of the consciousness of a community. Like the proletarian novels also, her book writes beyond the ending of the classic domestic novel or the romance quest, opening up beyond individual self-development into a vision of collective action (see Rabinowitz 77, 70). If novelty, authorial self-expression, and originality of execution give way in Culleton's aesthetic credo to instrumental and communal values, then her writing may require different methods of evaluation, recognizing these values also as artistic achievements.

Transparent: 4.a Readily understood; clear. b Easily detected; perfectly evident. c Guileless; free from pretence. (*Webster's*)

Within a modernist Western criticism, writing like Culleton's that does not "distinguish" itself and by extension its author (as different, as superior), writing that speaks with the voice of everyday, has its craft rendered invisible. "Honest" and "earnest" are, after all, rather odd recommendations for a fiction. Such writing becomes artless, art-less. Transparent. With the author function, the dimension of discursive production, erased from the text, the writer is restored ironically, not as author but as anthropological site, source of authentic life experience, that which is being viewed. Such a critical stance lends itself further to an epistemology in which not only the text but the reality it purportedly transmits so directly, a reality that can somehow be separated from its textual rendering, is no longer a matter of discursive consensus, but remains unmediated, singular, unproblematic. Clarity of language and form threatens to generalize to other critical perceptions, so that first other dimensions of the text and eventually experience itself are understood as equally simple, manifest, and unequivocal.

With its rhetoric of the commonplace, its democracy of manner, *In Search of April Raintree* does admittedly allow an eliding of its status as artefact, for a focus on the experiences it reveals. That illusion of transparency is one of its accomplishments. But only one of its accomplishments. My concern has been to restore some of the density, the craft-iness, of that transparency, the density and craft-iness both of the medium and of the experiences that are constituted within it. *In Search of April Raintree* is a duplicitous (a multiplicitous?) book. In terms of author as well as character, it both invites *and* disrupts notions of the real and of the self, of authenticity and of identity, of truth.

NOTES

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¹ See, for example, "understated tragedy and relentless honesty" (Norrie 63), "a novel of documentary realism" (Sand 22), "written in a raw, unsentimental style . . . a powerful story which has been welling up inside of her for quite some time" (Sigurdson 43), "honest, poignant account" (Turner 266), "one of the rawest,

most tragedy-laden, saddest, most violent books" (Krotz 64), "a raw, honest portrayal of the experience, not shaped by any particular political viewpoint" (Wiebe 50-51), "almost artlessly told" (Wilson 30), "a book that comes from the heart and from the guts . . . full of honesty, commitment, and love" (Cameron 165, 166). Margaret Clarke, in her 1986 review of the revised edition, has noted a similar tendency among reviewers: "The book was considered the product of an unsophisticated artistic talent, an author who knows her subject matter, and often instinctively makes good stylistic choices, but who generally is unaware of the subtleties of literary technique" (136).

- 2 Unless specified, references are to the unrevised edition, *In Search of April Raintree*.
- 3 The insistence on invention and the denial of literalness, directly after Cheryl's urgent injunction "Be proud of what you are" (227), some of my students experienced as an abjuration of the story and a diminution of its impact. (To further confound questions of reality and honest response, though, I should add that these student comments emerged as part of a dramatized—playacted—debate on the literary merits of the text.)
In the revised edition, the biographical note has its own page, the sentence distinguishing Culleton's foster-home experience from April's is deleted, and the disclaimer is moved to the copyright page.
- 4 Ferguson is reviewing *April Raintree*, in fact, but the point holds.
- 5 Complaints about Culleton's literary deficiencies and lack of subtlety pepper the reviews: "rough carpentry" (Engel 68); "stock characters" (Holman 11); "caricatures" (Krotz 64); "One cannot, in all fairness, review *April Raintree* for literary style" (Russell 192); "blunt moralizing, black and white situations" (Ferguson 42); "a bit of clumsiness that lacks all pretension of doing anything more than saying something that needs to be said. . . nasty characters seem like 'boogeymen' . . . problems of quite stilted dialogue" (Morris 113); "harsh and blunt, with little artist style" (Keeshig-Tobias 58); "the work of a person who has much to learn of her chosen craft" (Cameron 165). (The latter five reviews, incidentally, are of the revised edition.) Clarke, by contrast, confounds the dichotomy of documentary power and stylistic skill, referring positively, for instance, to Culleton's employment of "a typical and *useful* stereotype" (138; emphasis added).
- 6 Rape is another narrative component rooted in Culleton's own life (Garrod 90), but since it was not included in the biography appended to the text, reviewers do not allude to it in their authenticating of the text.
- 7 In the original edition, this follows from April's involuntary retching over forced urination into her mouth. In the revised edition, the retching is feigned and strategic throughout and spares April the renewed assault by the driver, as well as securing the license number.
- 8 Of her own rape, Culleton has only indicated in the public forum that she wanted to convey the brutality of rape and her recognition that the raped woman has not somehow asked for it. Writing about rape was, for her, not therapeutic but something to be gotten through (Garrod 90).
- 9 Since a younger April would have smelled "medicine" on the assailant's breath, even this, like any "raw" evidence, is not unmediated. The passage ironically anticipates Russell's disparagement when Culleton purportedly deviates from direct experience (193).
- 10 Emberley would probably insist that it is specifically Indianness as difference, not Nateness, which remains unrepresented (Cheryl is asked what being *Indian* is like) and which is finally effaced in the novel, with the sacrifice of Cheryl (Emberley 162). Though often positioned as Indian by others and sometimes conflating Indian and Métis politically and culturally, however, Cheryl repeatedly situates herself as Métis in history and identification.
- 11 I am not trying here to invoke the intentional fallacy to erase the relevance of biographical context. Clearly perceptions of authorial biography are constit-

uent elements in reader response (see for example the controversy around the "authenticity" of *The Education of Littletree*), as they are in my selection of and approach to this text, and in its inclusion in this special issue of *ARIEL*. These perceptions, however, are themselves artefacts, in a symbiotic relationship with the text, artefacts whose construction and implications themselves require investigation.

- 12 Details of the mother's nakedness and the masturbating man disappear from an early scene, for example (*Search* 13, *April* 4). Instances of non-marital sexual activity, Cheryl's prostitution, and substantial portions of the rape remain. In the latter instance, specifics of breast, crotch, and penis disappear: "As he prepared to actually rape me" replaces more explicit details; the anal rape becomes implicit only, with the deletion of April's being turned over; and feigned vomiting precludes the forced oral sex and urination (*Search* 141-44, *April* 112-14). Clarke has analyzed the unfortunate diminution entailed in the deletion of misogynist invective and of the anal and oral assaults from this scene (Clarke 140-42). In other cases the sanitizing seems more *pro forma*, as in the substitution of "scumbags" for "bastards" (*Search* 180, *April* 145). April's internalized racism is not expurgated, with the exception of one reference to "bloodthirsty savages"—and that deletion seems to be more a matter of fine-tuning (*Search* 78, *April* 57). Other passages, though, with the potential to hurt children, like April's shame that her clothes make her look "worse than a Hutterite," are deleted (*Search* 71-72, *April* 52).
- 13 Naim Bridge is changed to Disraeli Bridge (*Search* 202, *April* 162).
- 14 "[C]uld" becomes "kood," and "wuz" becomes "was," for instance (*Search* 33, *April* 21).
- 15 As random examples: "I was very grateful for their acceptance" becomes "I was grateful to be one of them"; April's detached comment on her self-pity at the prospect of seven more years with the DeRosiers becomes the more immediate "I wondered how I was going to ride them out"; and her gratitude for the ban on trial publicity becomes the more implicit "I would still have my privacy" (*Search* 25, *April* 14; *Search* 53, *April* 37; *Search* 166, *April* 133).
- 16 Examples of such deletions include the dropping of "I suppose the speech would have been okay if I had been guilty of any wrongdoing" and "I knew that she had liked them [the MacAdams] a lot and that they were real nice people" (*Search* 79, *April* 58; *Search* 55, *April* 39). An exception is the addition of commentary on the paternalism greeting Cheryl at the Radcliff New Year party: "it was the fact that they felt they had to say something accommodating, that was the most annoying" (*Search* 117, *April* 91).
- 17 Cheryl's "two cents worth" about April's lifestyle becomes "... You like associating with these rich snobs?" (*Search* 117, *April* 92). The lighter tone with which April is said to ask Cheryl for help after snapping at her following the rape finds expression with the addition of "You available?" (*Search* 149, *April* 118).
- 18 The exception here is the addition of his comment that Cheryl had an understanding, related to their self-images, to offer April (*Search* 205, *April* 165).
- 19 April is forthright about her own interest in Roger, for instance, rather than simply speculating about his implied attraction to her without the "gumption" to inquire (*Search* 154, *April* 123). Her more successful intervention during the rape is the most salient example of such revisions.
- 20 Both Clarke and Cameron note evidence that Culleton has attended to matters of craft in making her revisions, Clarke examining specifically the deletions following Cheryl's oratorical address to the White Man (Clarke 136; Cameron 165).
- 21 I am drawing here on Homi Bhabha: "The problem of *representing difference* as a problem of narrative can only be seen, within this kind of [traditional Nationalist] critical discourse, as the demand for *different representations*" (106).
- 22 Conversation with Agnes Grant, 14 March 1985.

- 23 Lutz too describes students crying or becoming outraged while reading the novel (103).
- 24 Butler is speaking specifically of gender. Though I have focussed on race here, Cheryl's claim to the category "woman," as well as to the category "Canadian," implies that both have been constituted inconsistently in ways that exclude her, at the same time as "Métis" has functioned as a constrictive regulatory category.
- 25 Clarke recognizes these possibilities, analyzing the novel as "somewhere between the moral fable and the serious fairy-tale" (139).
- 26 One reason for Culleton's immediacy, for her inspiring simultaneously identification and aesthetic reservations, is her familiar, low-key narrative voice with its reliance on exposition, sequential unfolding, and editorializing: "That summer and the following summer, we all went to a Catholic camp at Albert Beach on Lake Winnipeg"; "If I'd had such a grandmother when I was growing up, maybe I wouldn't have been so mixed up" (35, 175).
- 27 Culleton's appreciation of Margaret Laurence's skill in revealing how others think *despite* Laurence's omission of the big climaxes or epiphanies of soap operas, suggests an inversion of the conventional aesthetic hierarchy (Garrod 95). Like Culleton's desire to exalt Cheryl so as to make her death more tragic (Garrod 95; Lutz 102), her regard for soap operas reveals a valuing of the strong effects her critics tend to deplore.
- 28 Pemmican Publications estimates sales of the novel to 1992 of 80,000 copies (phone conversations with Sue MacLean, managing editor, 31 August and 1 November 1993). Since Peguis took over publication in January of 1992, sales of both editions have averaged over 6,000 copies annually, with *In Search of April Raintree* outselling *April Raintree* by a ratio of three to two (phone conversation with Annalee Greenberg, managing editor, 26 October 1993).

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