Experimental Writing and Reading across Borders in Decolonizing Contexts
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Abstract: Reading across epistemic borders in a globalizing world requires a revised understanding of how experimentation functions in decolonizing contexts by intervening to trouble the prevailing paradigms through which readers understand how meanings are made. Experimental fictions free the imagination to envision cognitive and social justice, which take different forms within different settings. By examining several texts written out of contexts of incomplete decolonization and ongoing imperialism in Canada, Australia, and the Caribbean, this paper shows how their various innovations navigate the problems of scale and generate new forms for representing cognitive justice in its many different potential manifestations, thus revealing the vitality of nonscalable worlds and the links between the scalable and the nonscalable. Wilson Harris' music of living landscapes is set in dialogue with Alexis Wright's fictions; Patrick White's artist as vivisector with Christian Bök's *The Xenotext*; Dionne Brand's quest for a cognitive schema beyond captivity with Wright's and Tomson Highway's turns to the space/time imaginaries of their people; and Shani Mootoo's small island world with Jamaica Kincaid's small place.

Keywords: decolonizing literary experimentation, cognitive justice, scale, globalization, Wilson Harris, Dionne Brand, Alexis Wright, Tomson Highway, Shani Mootoo

Even though a poetic act may not appear to make much happen, it remains a potent model of a creative form that attends to the ethical call of otherness.

Roy Miki, "Are You Restless Too?"

Most modern science demands scalability, the ability to make one's research framework apply to greater scales without budging the frame.

<div align="right">Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, "On Nonscalability"</div>

Can criticism still be philosophical if it depends on judgments that can no longer, as with Kant, look to a common human sensibility for their stabilization and ground? Nothing would seem more obvious than that experimental writing today appeals to no broad public.

<div align="right">R. M. Berry, "Experimental Writing"</div>

I. Introduction: Budging the Frame

This paper argues that reading across epistemic borders in a globalizing world requires a revised understanding of how experimentation functions within and across the creative practices of actors—readers and writers—working in different cultural contexts. Currently, as Anna Tsing notes, "Most modern science demands scalability . . . *without budging the frame*" (522 "On Nonscalability"; emphasis added). Does literature encounter similar pressures toward scalability? This paper argues it does. Decolonizing experimental practices, however, budge the dominant frames that define modernity and its rules of intelligibility, including its assumptions about what experimentation is and how it functions. In *Globalectics*, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o writes that "colonization of the cognitive process was the everyday experience in a colonial classroom anywhere" (39). Experimentation in decolonizing contexts disrupts such cognitive schemas with whatever resources it finds at its disposal. In short, therefore, literary experimentation may best be understood in performative terms as an intervention that seeks to trouble the prevailing paradigms and scales through which readers understand knowledge production, artistic practice, and interpretation. The goal of such troubling is to imagine forms of cognitive justice that can free the imagination to create social justice, a task that will take different forms within different social settings.[1]

This essay examines several texts written out of contexts of incomplete decolonization and ongoing imperialism in Canada, Australia, and the

Caribbean to show how their different innovations navigate the problems of scale and generate new forms for representing cognitive justice in its many different potential manifestations. Scale has emerged as a disputed keyword in globalization studies. In this paper I follow Nirvana Tanoukhi, Karen Barad, and Anna Tsing in their engagements with Neil Smith's articulation of "the exclusionary nature of the production of scale" (qtd. in Barad 245). Each finds the idea of precision-nested scales inadequate to the experience of lifeworlds, in life and literature. Tanoukhi, in questioning the scale of world literature, argues that comparative literature must develop a "critique of *scale*" (emphasis in original) and a "phenomenology of scale" (605). Tsing, in thinking about worldmaking more generally, argues that "it is time for a theory of *nonscalability*" ("On Nonscalability" 505; emphasis in original). Barad's critique of the limits of scale when employed in geometrical terms corresponds to Tsing's critique of scalability when understood to mean "the ability to expand . . . without rethinking basic elements" (505). Barad's stress on "the entanglement of matter and meaning" (the subtitle of her 2007 book) leads her to question the tradition in science studies of positioning oneself "at some remove, to reflect on the nature of scientific practice as a spectator, not a participant" (247). She links this kind of distancing in experimental conventions to the kinds of distance associated with forms of scalability that fail to rethink the frames.

What I take from this work is an agreement across many disciplines with Tsing's argument that "it is time for a theory of *nonscalability*" and that such a theory will require revisiting experimentation as a practice. Tsing points out that "the free play of diversity was banished from the plantation and the factory" ("On Nonscalability" 514) and as a result, "[e]xpectations about scalability have blinded observers to the vitality of nonscalable worlds—and to the links between the scalable and the nonscalable" ("On Nonscalability" 516). She sees that blindness in both capitalism and "classic twentieth-century population genetics . . . because it was a science of expansion" ("On Nonscalability" 522). She notes that challenges to this kind of scalability are now emerging "from a new combination of evolutionary, ecological, and developmental biology, which has studied interventions across species in the generation of

multispecies life" ("On Nonscalability" 523). Tsing argues that "[w]e need nonscalability theory to understand how such multispecies landscapes work," and the "place to start is *critical description* of relational encounters across difference" ("On Nonscalability" 523; emphasis in original). Such critical description is where decolonizing literary experimentation (as creative practice and critique) excels.

To make this argument, this essay turns to the ways Wilson Harris' theorizations of the music of living landscapes, set in dialogue with Alexis Wright's fictional worlds of *Carpentaria* and *The Swan Book*, exemplify alternative scalar relations along with the vitality of nonscalable worlds. I then place the modern, distanced, and expansionist model of scalability exemplified in Patrick White's metaphor of the artist as vivisector in dialogue with that of Christian Bök's *The Xenotext*, a God-like intervention into the very shape of life itself. Dionne Brand's quest for a cognitive schema beyond captivity starts from a very different place, an experience derived from the Atlantic slave trade that has been seen as specific to a particular people and therefore nonscalable—that is, not generalizable to the human race as a whole. Yet her quest resonates with Wright's and Tomson Highway's experimental pursuits for exploring alternative kinds of scalar imaginaries beyond those determined by solely Western experiences. The paper concludes by setting Shani Mootoo's *Valmiki's Daughter* in dialogue with Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*, two texts that respond to the tyrannies and vitalities of small worlds in a global context that defines such experience as both nonscalable and unimportant within the larger, global scheme of things.

As Tsing points out, "[w]e learned to know the modern by its ability to scale up. Scalable expansion reduced a once surrounding ocean of diversity into a few remaining puddles" ("On Nonscalability" 523). As a result, "expandability has gotten out of control" and "scalability has left ruins in its wake" ("On Nonscalability" 523). Tsing's interest is in "the fate of biological and cultural diversity on earth" ("On Nonscalability" 524). My interest lies in the implications of her critique for rethinking how we understand the scale of world literature and within it, the place of decolonizing experimentation. How much space does the category of world literature allow for diversity? World literature, as a re-

newed category of literary study, developed in response to globalizing processes and in many of its manifestations continues to employ the nested model of scales critiqued by Tsing. Tanoukhi expresses concern with this situation, arguing that "'world literature' threatens to become a hardened (albeit enlarged) image of the old literary history, where *geography* evokes a figurative solidity that assumes the guise of materiality" (600; emphasis in original). A recognition of process geographies and the constructed nature of scales and scalar relations would require closer attention to the circumstances through which scale, as a relation of difference, is constructed, especially in terms of time/space relations.

I argue that writing coming out of decolonizing situations requires the kind of rethinking of scale called for by Tsing and Tanoukhi. This is not to suggest that all writing in decolonizing contexts is nonscalable but rather to warn against two of the dangers often associated with postcolonial reading strategies: scaling up too quickly in conformity with dominant modes of understanding and, conversely, insisting too quickly that everything generated within postcolonial contexts is automatically nonscalable. For example, some postcolonial texts have been labelled magic realist so as to scale them up to a normalized dominant understanding that downplays the alternative frameworks within which they operate, often exoticizing them in the process. In other instances, critics aware of that danger sometimes over-react, insisting that everything in a non-Western text should be seen as radically incommensurable with Western meaning-making systems. This essay sees the need for balancing these two impulses, each of which is unable to operate within an "ecology of knowledges" approach (Santos, Nunes, and Meneses xiv-lxxii). Through discussing the production of non-nested modalities of scale and textual relations of scalability as performed in a range of diverse texts, I hope to contribute to rethinking the ways in which literary experimentation negotiates scale.

At stake in this negotiation is the question of how decolonizing experimentation attempts to generate new forms of cognitive justice. With Roy Miki, as cited in the epigraph above, I investigate the experimental function of ethical calls to otherness across scales of relation. With Tsing, I value the "vitality of nonscalable worlds" and the

necessity of rethinking scalar relations to better understand them ("On Nonscalability" 516). With R. M. Berry (as cited in the third epigraph), I wonder about the audience for literary experimentation. Unlike Berry, this paper questions the need for an appeal to a "broad public" (another way of denoting scalability), advocating instead the value of multiple, overlapping, and contending publics for keeping experimentation alive and thus enabling its potential for illuminating the links between social and cognitive justice. Negotiating within and across the creative expressions of such publics, attentive not just to frictions (in the sense advocated by Tsing in her book of that title) but also to what remains untranslatable, may require alternative forms of framing knowledge, defining understanding, and imagining community in ways open to difference. At stake in currently hegemonic definitions of scientific and literary experimentation alike is the potential loss of attention for postcolonial critique and affirmatively alternative forms of experimental creativity. A common sense view might see all forms of experimentation as inherently alternative, yet as Arjun Appadurai (in postcolonial contexts) and feminist theorists (such as Sandra Harding) more generally argue, this is far from the case. Furthermore, decolonizing critique often challenges hegemonic notions of avant-garde leadership in experimentation, privileging instead forms of creativity emerging from the folk or a specific community.

The following questions underlie my argument. At a time when commodification threatens to become the dominant mode of social relations, what kinds of creative forms can model viable alternatives to the scalar logic of the marketplace? Is literary experimentation what escapes the system (as suggested by Gayatri Spivak in *Death of a Discipline*) or is it rather the most successful example of the ways in which capitalism effectively renews itself? Or, more likely, can it perhaps be both, depending on the circumstances of its production and reception? If literary experimentation once seemed dependent on shared communal understandings among a global elite, as Berry argues, how do the global dissemination of English and the global circulation of writing in English change how writers and readers within different communities understand and practice experimentation? The three citations that head

this paper raise three dimensions of experimentation that this paper examines. Each raises distinct contexts in which experimentation occurs and links it to a specific community of practice—contemporary poets attuned to the ethical call of otherness; modern scientists and social scientists in search of verifiable truths; a modern artistic avant-garde and its critics. Where and how do these concurrent approaches to experimentation come together when readers read across borders in the postcolonial moment? In exploring these questions, I argue for expanding understandings of literary experimentation beyond their conflation with ideas of an avant-garde or the command immortalized by Ezra Pound to "make it new." In making this argument, I take my cue from Charles Bernstein, who cautions that innovation itself needs to be redefined so it can be thought "in a modest and local way, as responses to historical and contemporary particulars—as situation, not universal" ("Invention Follies" 34; 36). This paper asks how such a prescription might be activated in interpretational practice and suggests that decolonizing literary experimentation can budge dominant frames, challenging their implicit presentism and elitism, in ways that lead readers and critics into new pathways of relation.

II. "The Music of Living Landscapes"

In writing out of the music of living landscapes, Wilson Harris takes his readers beyond conventional humanist frames, creating an audience attuned to the phenomenological sensibilities and South American perspectivalism explored in his works. Literary history is replete with stories of experimental writers whose texts only found publishers after many rejections (such as Wright's *Carpentaria*) or, if published, seemed so far ahead of their times as to attract minimal notice. Wilson Harris may be one such writer. Despite enjoying a canonical status within postcolonial studies, his work only now seems to be resonating with readers beyond the specialists. In their special issue of the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, Lorna Burns and Wendy Knepper read Harris through the lens of Appadurai's global 'scapes (from *Modernity at Large*) and argue that "much work remains to be done in terms of considering how the interrogation of multiple, intersecting spatialities and disjunctive tempo-

ralities in Harris's writings enable a rethinking of worldly dynamics and cultural expression" (127–28). Their phrasing suggests another way of thinking about scalar relations in time and space.

In "The Music of Living Landscapes" Harris argues against the view of seeing landscapes and riverscapes as passive, claiming instead that the "landscape possessed a life" (40). He continues: "There are Amerindian legends which tell of sleeping yet, on occasion, singing rocks that witness to the traffic of history" (41). This land surveyor's insight resonates with quantum physicist Karen Barad's suggestion in her book title that thinkers meet "the universe halfway," a phrase borrowed from a poem by Alice Fulton (39). It is also consonant with Waanyi writer Alexis Wright's depictions of a living landscape in her novels *Carpentaria* and *The Swan Book*, and with Stó:lō writer Lee Maracle's fictional lifeworlds in novels such as *Ravensong*, *Daughters are Forever*, and *Celia's Song*. Harris' living land and riverscapes make more sense within an emergent critical imaginary that re-evaluates the agency of objects once thought to be inert.[2] Barad cites Donna Haraway: "What counts as an object is precisely what world history turns out to be about" (qtd. in Barad 42). Whereas subjectivity under humanism was once seen as the proper subject of world history, an emergent posthumanism is turning the tables to focus instead on the agency of objects. This insight marks a current shift in thinking away from human-centred worlds toward emergent posthuman and non-anthropocentric imaginaries. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak signals this shift in her evocative call to think beyond globalization toward a planetarity that dwarfs the human scale and humbles its imagination. Importantly, however, Spivak's planetarity turns to the pre-capitalist cultures of the world rather than to any explicitly posthuman imaginaries for its inspiration. Discussions of planetarity often seem to proceed in isolation from one another, with little attempt at dialogue across ecocritical, new materialist, and postcolonial spheres. Spivak uses the term in a counter-intuitive way, challenging its association with both distanced space-age imaginaries (the globe as seen from outer space) and immanent ecocritical views (in which humans are custodians of the earth). What Spivak seems to signal through her use of planetarity is a scalar relation in which humanity dwindles in the face of the nonhuman.

N. Katharine Hayles suggests that "part of the contemporary turn toward the nonhuman is the realization that an object need not be alive or conscious in order to function as a cognitive agent" (216). The other side of such an assertion is the questioning of the sovereign individual and the nineteenth-century realism that consolidated such a character. Harris' well-known distinction between the novels of "*fulfilment*" and those of "*consolidation*" (140; emphasis in original) in "Tradition and the West Indian Novel" can be linked to contemporary posthumanist rejections of what he refers to in this essay as "the sovereign individual" (143), whose character is consolidated, often at the expense of others, in what Harris labels the novel of consolidation. This novel assumes the universality of its consolidated sovereign form of individuality, a model that can be expanded to a global scale as a universal condition of and for membership within the category of the fully human. Those defined by Europeans as deficient in such conditions were thereby doomed to die out or deemed objects of a justifiable genocide. This history of the terrible terms meted out for membership in the universally human illustrates the link between cognitive injustice and social injustice. In contrast to consolidation, Harris offers his experimental novel of fulfilment. His discussion of scale corresponds to Tsing's embrace of the nonscalable imagination when he links it to "the visionary character of fulfilment," which, he continues, "can never be intellectually imposed on the material; it can only be realized in experiment instinctive to the native life and passion of persons known and unknown in a structure of time and space" ("Tradition" 144).

At the same time, Harris does not reject a model of scaling up that can redefine universality as a form of diversality or pluriversality (as more widely disseminated by theorists such as Enrique Dussel [the subject of a study by Linda Martin Alcoff and Eduardo Mendieta], Walter Mignolo, and Boaventura de Sousa Santos).[3] Harris writes of his "sensation of profound necessity in the life of the imagination to visualize links between technology and living landscapes in continuously new ways that took nothing for granted in an increasingly violent and materialistic world" ("Living Landscapes" 43). Harris' embrace of archetype and myth has struck some as inappropriately universalist, yet his insistence

on challenging "the hubris of one-sided tradition" suggests that he seeks a different kind of rethinking of all the terms of these debates ("Living Landscapes" 44). His thinking seems closer to Sousa Santos' "ecology of knowledges" approach. Harris' "music of living landscapes" is neither what has been called animism nor what emerges in conceptions of Mel Y. Chen's "animacies" or Jane Bennett's "vibrant matter."

Inheriting what he calls a "conquistadorial formula" of knowing, Harris writes in "Letter from Francisco Bone to W. H." that "it may seem inevitable or convenient to submit to one frame or name but, in so doing, cultures begin to imprison themselves, involuntarily perhaps, in conquistadorial formula that kills alternatives, kills memory" (51). Like Tsing, then, he advocates budging the frame. Both his criticism and his fictions explore alternatives to that conquistadorial formula and the historical judgements to which it gives rise. Of those historians who see the West Indies as "a mere adjunct of imperialism" (Harris, "History, Fable and Myth" 158), he writes: "They have no criteria for arts of originality springing out of an age of limbo and the history they write is without an inner time" (159). Rejecting the scalar relation of adjunct, Harris starts with an alternative scalar relation. How might historians and other writers attune themselves to the rhythms of an "inner time"? The revalidation of the creative arts of the folk, especially dance, and an openness to the rhythms of inner time and the dynamics of place characterize the ways in which Harris attends to everyday life to budge the frames that eclipse the imagination in the Caribbean and Guyana.

Here his work relates to that of Wright in Australia, who suggests that in *The Swan Book*, "[i]t's not a simple thing like going out into the backyard and seeing a hornet's nest—it's describing the hornet's nest of the world" (Wright and Zable). In other words, she is very aware that her work challenges conventional scalar relations of local and global. Her backyard is entangled, literally and metaphorically, in a complex of global relations. Wright see the violence and danger of these entanglements, capturing them in the image of the hornet's nest. The buzzing nest of a world in which symbols and myths have travelled far from their origins needs to be approached with care. Australia's outback, Wright's backyard, is not exempt from global warming and capitalist expansion.

As people and ideas travel, Wright imagines the spirits of many places converging and contending in each local place, buzzing together as an angry hornet's nest might. *The Swan Book*, for example, brings the swans of many places—along with all their legends—together in her futuristic Australia. Bakhtin's image of knots to be untangled through narrative comes alive as a knot of angry hornets and through the convergences of swans from all the regions of the world. Like Wright's earlier, eventual international success, *Carpentaria*, *The Swan Book* has received considerable praise, yet it remains a more uncompromising and less accessible book. This is not a novel of consolidation, in Harris' terms, nor can it be described as a novel of fulfilment. This is a novel of the living landscape that answers Harris' prediction that "[i]n an age of crisis the marriage of consonance and dissonance—transmuted into unpredictable and original art that challenges the hubris of one-sided tradition—is an important factor, I think, in the re-sensitizing of technology to the life of the planet" ("Living Landscapes" 44). I see that re-sensitizing as the mission of *The Swan Book*, a fiction that imagines a future that might be averted through exploring alternative routes toward re-connecting with eclipsed selves and re-rooting immigrant imaginaries within the living landscapes of Australia.

III. "Rubbing Together Different Rationalities to Spark Meaning"

Whereas the above section of this essay investigates scales of landscape and deep time, this section turns to scales of subjectivity and cognitive schemas of rationality and affect. Harris' writing draws on both his scientific training as a land surveyor trained in scalar forms of measurement and his yearning for "a new dialogue with reality in all its guises of recovered and revisionary tradition" ("Living Landscape" 43), a dialogue that finds inspiration in African and Amerindian myth, in Dante and T. S. Eliot. For Harris, "there is no economic solution to the ills of the world until the arts of originality—arts that are driven by mysterious strangeness—open the partialities and biases of tradition in ways that address the very core of our pre-possessions" ("Unfinished Genesis" 251). Erna Brodber's essay "Fiction in the Scientific Procedure" explains the experimental strategies of her novels, *Jane and Louisa Will*

Soon Come Home, *Myal*, and *Louisiana*, as part of her non-mainstream "sociological method" and "activist intentions" (164). Seeing herself as an "*intellectual worker*" (168; emphasis in original) rather than an avant-garde writer, she has produced some of the more experimental fiction of her times. Shalini Puri describes Brodber's "double vocation in the social sciences and the arts" as "one instance of the rubbing together different rationalities to spark meaning" (145). This "rubbing together different rationalities" is the kind of literary experimentation this paper finds in the fictions it discusses. Through such a process we can begin to grasp the claim made by Sousa Santos and his team that "there is no global social justice without global cognitive justice" (xv). If the call of otherness is to be ethically met, then multiple rationalities must be given their due.

As this paper argues, the dominant experimental model privileges the rationality of the scientist/artist conducting the experiment, who sets the framework through which the experimentation proceeds and decides what is extraneous to the inquiry. This framework privileges the autonomy of the writer and of literature, the idea that the work can separate itself from the contexts of its production and reception to inhabit the same kind of ideal vacuum as a scientist's test-tube experiment. Literary experimentation is usually, but not always, cast in a positive light. Experimentation "makes it new," as Pound commanded. Australian novelist Patrick White, however, reminds readers of the darker side of experimentation, casting his artist figure in *The Vivisector* as akin to those nineteenth-century surgeons who conducted their experiments by cutting into the flesh of living animals. For White, the novelist's craft necessitates the cruel practice of dissecting human relations in all their vulnerability.

Today, this paper suggests, the novelist as heroic vivisector is yielding to alternative models. Christian Bök describes his ongoing experiment *The Xenotext* as a "literary exercise that explores the aesthetic potential of genetics in the modern milieu" (Voyce and Bök #58). For Bök, *The Xenotext* will be "a beautiful, anomalous poem, whose 'alien words' might subsist, like a harmless parasite, inside the cell of another life-form" (Voyce and Bök #59). The ethics of interfering with another life

form can seem problematic for some and a willingness to yield to the call of otherness for others.[4] Bök explains in an interview with Stephen Ross, how he has written and then translated a short poem "into a sequence of genetic nucleotides," and then implanted the gene into the genome of a bacterium. He explains, "when translated into this genetic sequence, my text actually causes the organism to interpret it as a set of meaningful, genetic instructions for producing a protein, which, according to my original, chemical cipher, is itself yet another meaningful poem." To this extent, the experiment depends for its future on the artist's surrender of control to his material or at least his willingness to collaborate with it. Bök writes, in the same interview, "I'm trying to treat poetry itself as . . . a kind of top-secret research facility, where we can reverse-engineer the alien technology of language itself. I believe poetry must think of itself as a kind of R&D, setting out to foment new discoveries or create new inventions" (Ross). R. M. Berry claims that "[t]he history of experimental writing from Romanticism to the present is the writing subject's progressive discovery of the conditions of its continuing participation within the materiality of writing's medium" (216). In such experimental writing, Berry explains, "[n]othing is being represented, but something quite materially is taking its course" (216). This is literally the case with Bök's poem. Bök invests his human aspirations to survive through time within the structure of a new form of poetry, *The Xenotext*, in which the artist must ultimately trust his material. The materiality of writing's medium has changed. Art's quest for immortality has not. It is no longer William Butler Yeats' quest for "the artifice of eternity" as immortalized in his poem, "Sailing to Byzantium" (poetryfoundation.org/poem/172063). Instead, Bök literally ties his search for poetic immortality to a form of genetic sequencing similar to that which drives Yeats' "dying generations." Bök is both making life new in the most literal way while also creating something to survive, through mutation, the ravages of time. For Adam Dickinson, this poem-in-progress performs Bernstein's correction of Pound's injunction "to make it new," revising it into a call to "make it live" (Dickinson 135).[5] This is a virtuoso experiment, a new form of collaboration between an author and a living organism.

A very different form of virtuosity has been identified in Brand's work by Simona Bertacco, who follows Dominic LaCapra in suggesting that "virtuosity is one of the main tools of survival for people dealing with experiences of trauma" (1). While praising Brand's virtuosity as an inheritor of the trauma of the Middle Passage, Bertacco expresses disappointment in Brand's claim in *A Map to the Door of No Return* that for members of the African diaspora, "our cognitive schema is captivity" (qtd. in Bertacco 5). In making such a claim, Bertacco argues, Brand "absolutizes absence" and casts the door of no return in mythic rather than historical terms (6). In opposing myth to history in her judgement, Bertacco fails to see how Brand is rescaling their relations in her use of the door. Bertacco is "left wondering what possibilities for the future can be envisioned out of the probing of that mythical Door" and concludes that for Brand's "travellers the compass only points to dislocation" (6). Yet the moment is more complex. Brand makes it clear that she is referring to the actual Door of No Return, the door through which slaves passed on their way from Africa to the Americas. But she is using that door and that historical reference point to face the originary historical trauma of captivity and relocate it within traditions of way-finding that can do it justice without being determined by it. Working through the alternative cognitive structures of dreams, Brand concludes: "Captured in one's own body, in one's thoughts, to be out of possession of one's mind, our cognitive schema is captivity" (29). She returns to this idea to rephrase the same statement a few pages later as a question: "What if the cognitive schema is captivity?" (34). After several pages of exploring this "what if," Brand moves on to suggest that "[t]o reclaim the Black body from that domesticated, captive, open space is the creative project always underway" (43). In other words, the cognitive schema of captivity, derived from a historical experience that still reverberates today, needs to be worked through to find other routes out of that schema toward "way-finding" (44). The Door functions as an Absolute, against which the black body and the black diaspora are measured. Distance from the Door is the scalar relation in which the descendants of the Black Atlantic are trapped.

Brand sees that narrative of the Door, as a determining trauma, as a "calcified" narrative (70) that she rejects in favour of celebrating "the real look of things" (100). Despite her moment of camaraderie with the parking lot attendant who comes "from one of the oldest cities in the world" to disparage the idea of equating civilization with a parking lot (102), Brand recognizes her position as different: "I do not come from any old city. My civilization is the parking lot. . . . I am the citizen of the parking lot" (109–110). This is only partly a lament. To claim citizenship is to claim responsibility and a form of belonging. To be "parked" is not necessarily to be dislocated. By the end of Brand's text, the reader can see that books, friends, and such passing experiences have shaped the narrator's ever evolving cognitive schema beyond captivity. She imagines herself one of a community of readers, each choosing "a different paragraph of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, a different line now perhaps interrupted, intercut by how we chose to live our lives, how we chose to interpret Lawrence" (Brand 189). Brand cites Harris: "It is not a question of rootlessness but of the miracle of roots, the miracle of a dialogue with eclipsed selves which appearances may deny us or into which they may lead us" (qtd. in Brand 219). In other words, far from absolutizing absence or remaining trapped in dislocation, Brand's text embraces "the miracle of a dialogue with eclipsed selves" and the mysteries into which they lead. Brand's dialogue is episodic, fractured, and fluid. She has written a book subtitled "Notes to Belonging" but not out of loss or desire to belong. Rather, the book fractures the word itself into its component parts, held in productive tension, so as to "be" in a state of permanent "longing" for a better world that stretches current limits of the imagination. As Brand claims in an imagined address to Eduardo Galeano, "I am not nostalgic. Belonging does not interest me. I once thought that it did. Until I examined the underpinnings" (85). Brand's book examines those underpinnings in the "cognitive schema of captivity" from many different angles, dramatizing a dialogue with the writer's eclipsed selves and those she observes around her.

Similarly, Wright's *The Swan Book* probes a different cognitive schema of captivity that may seem less hopeful in its shaping due to its intertwining of the ongoing trauma of colonization, exemplified in the Northern

Territory Intervention, with the looming threat of climate change and the loss among many of deeply sustaining connections to the land. As Wright explains, her challenge in writing *Carpentaria* was "to write a novel where all stories come alive" ("Where to Point the Spears?" 38). She explains: "I like the idea of exploring ideas that can build new links or branches from our own traditions . . . and not seeing tradition as a limiting force" (40–41). Her method proceeds through "entwining all stories together, just like a lyrebird is capable of singing several songs at once" (41). But whereas *Carpentaria*'s entwined stories record an apartheid world of separated and clashing indigenous and settler worlds, *The Swan Book* imagines a future in which they have become dangerously entangled. In this novel, an indigenous Prime Minister ignores his roots except where he can use his special indigenous knowledge against itself, not for his community nor for the land for which he is responsible, but for his personal gain. The novel embodies a world in which few care for country anymore. It begins with two literal images of captivity: a violated young aboriginal girl trapped and hiding in the trunk of a tree and a witnessing worm trapped in her head. In linking the experience of her own aboriginal peoples to that of asylum-seekers currently imprisoned in Australian-run detention camps, Wright explores a cognitive schema of "detention" that, like Brand's work, links colonialism to globalization: "Aboriginal people are no strangers to detention camps. We had missions, we had reserves. . . . In a way, we're still living in that world. . . . Those walls around the Indigenous world are still very much in place with the intervention policies" (Wright and Zable).

The Swan Book can be read as an extended response to Kerry O'Brien's question to Wright in an interview published in *Hecate*. O'Brien quotes some of Wright's words back to her in a question about reconciliation. She reminds Wright: "You wrote, 'I've often thought about how the spirits of other countries have followed their people to Australia, and how those spirits might be reconciled with the ancestral spirits that belong here. I wonder if it is at this level of thinking that a lasting form of reconciliation between people might begin, and if not, how our spirits will react'" (219). In response to O'Brien putting her own words back into a question, Wright elaborates that she sees "great efforts on our side to try

to reconcile the spirits" but little reciprocity on the part of others (219). In insisting that reconciliation involves more stakeholders than human individuals and communities alone, she introduces an important and often neglected element into current settler colonial reconciliation debates. Wright knows she is talking at cross-purposes to those politicians who hope that reconciliation will put an end to the past. Her worry about "how our spirits will react" is written out in the apocalyptic chaos and fragmented narratives, the global hornet's nest, of *The Swan Book.*

Wright asks difficult questions about reconciliation and the resolution of historical injustices. Oblivia Ethylene, *The Swan Book*'s central character, has been gang-raped and retreats to hiding in a tree trunk, echoing perhaps Prospero's entrapment of Ariel in *The Tempest*. Her name suggests forgetfulness, a desire for oblivion (given her history), or perhaps a reflection of the ways in which colonial society sought to condemn her to oblivion and render her a permanently childlike character, unable, as Wright suggests, "to grow up" (Wright and Zable). Wright explains: "It's a reflection on Aboriginal communities—unable to grow up if we keep on being shackled by policy and by other people's ideas of how we should be" (Wright and Zable). In other words, somewhat like Brand, Wright experiments with the idea of what it means to be trapped in a cognitive schema of captivity, which takes both psychic and institutional forms of detention and paternalistic intervention. She works through that schema in search of ways to "unshackle" the mind and she finds a model in "Aboriginal law" (Wright and Zable).[6]

IV. Unshackling the Mind

This article begins with questions: Can literary experimentation offer routes toward forms of understanding beyond commodification? How can readers recognize such potentially enabling forms? Marta Dvorak and I begin *Crosstalk: Canadian and Global Imaginaries in Dialogue* by asking: "How do readers negotiate meaning in contexts where norms of understanding diverge?" (1). Our collaboratively produced collection suggests that these questions of audience, community, and meaning-making across different scales of engagement and relations to epistemic violence require closer attention. Each reading context of engagement

produces its own scales of relation. Epistemic violence results from contending scales. As this essay has demonstrated, scale is not given, it is produced. Different scales of engagement are created by different epistemic communities operating within different frames of understanding generated by relations of closeness and distance from the norms engaged by a literary text. What makes a Caribbean island small and the United Kingdom big? What makes Caribbean idiom unfamiliar and the English idioms of England normalized? What makes certain forms of intertextuality recognizable and others invisible—and to whom? These are scales of relation based on power politics, history, and contemporary economic relations that have developed out of these. Scale naturalizes forms of translation that divide the universal from the particular, what matters on the global scale and what matters on the local, but scale is not the same as translation.

"Crosstalk" is our metaphor for the complex forms of interference that can energize and frustrate communication across different scales of engagement, where the nonscalable, culturally and in relations of unequal power, can seem either unintelligible or, more problematically, too easily translatable to those accustomed to the norms dictated by the rules of nestable and expansionist scalability. Haraway cites Helen Verran to pose the opposite side of this dilemma: "How can general knowledge be nurtured in postcolonial worlds committed to taking difference seriously?" (7). I argue here it can only be nurtured, very cautiously, by first attending more carefully to the prevailing scalar relations and the vitality of the nonscalable.

Canadian Cree novelist Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* is full of such crosstalking and interference-charged moments, which can be comic, tragic, or both simultaneously. A misheard prayer is rendered nonsensical (Highway 11). Jokes fall flat. It seems as though "a chasm as unbridgeable as hell separates Cree from English" (Highway 190). When the character Jeremiah asks "How do you say 'university' in Cree?" his brother Gabriel answers "'*Semen*-airy' . . . the closest he could get, in his native tongue" (191), a playful pun that nonetheless carries the ambivalent taste of the sexual abuse that marks their stay in the residential school: "The word flooded his palate like a surge of honey"

(191). "Honey" becomes the repeated signifier of resurgent trauma and the ambivalent emotions it evokes, including guilty pleasure, in each of the brothers.

Is it helpful to describe Highway's novel as experimental? I suggest that it can be—and not just for non-Cree readers unfamiliar with Cree modes of meaning-making and the language itself, which continually interrupts the story to draw attention to scalar relations. Highway's novel, like Wright's fictions, makes its meaning through pluriversal modes that challenge all "monocultures of the mind" (Spivak, *An Aesthetic Education* 25).[7] It sets up a dialogue between Cree story-telling and the conventions of the English novel, the sounds and meanings of Cree and English, and their hybrid forms, drawing attention to the huge scalar gaps separating the North where the brothers were born from the regional Canadian cities where they move and, eventually, the cosmopolitan global circles in which Gabriel travels. In its references to the rhythms of classical Western music and its Italian instructions, its bawdy mix of camp and Cree humour, and its confident invocations of the Joycean model for relocating the classic Greek story of Odysseus from the Aegean to the streets of his city, *Kiss of the Fur Queen* moves up and down the scales of local and global in ways that challenge inherited hierarchies of value. Jeremiah writes a play called "Ulysses Thunderchild," explaining, "if James Joyce can do 'one day in the life of an Irishman in Dublin, 1903,' why can't I do 'one day in the life of a Cree man in Toronto, 1984?'" (277). Highway writes with a similar boldness. In his depiction of the residential school system and its legacy, he deliberately changes the scale on which the conventional residential school novel exists, reducing it to an interlude within a much larger story, which begins and ends with Cree in the ascendance. By starting with the father's mythic journey across vast Northern distances, followed by the cosmic Cree story of the journey of each child from the heavens down to earth, and ending with Gabriel's journey into death accompanied by the Fur Queen, Highway presents the residential school story as an interruption in a much larger journey, thus refusing the cognitive schema of captivity that the residential school had sought to establish. Just as Brand repurposes the Door of No Return, so Highway audaciously

imagines routes beyond the cognitive injustices of the Canadian settler colonial system.

Jennifer Henderson suggests Highway's employment of gothic motifs takes advantage of the gothic's conventional employment of Catholicism "as something of a laboratory for the exploration of same-sex desire" in ways that render the "novel's hybridities . . . difficult . . . vexed" and "multiple" (179), She concludes that to think of the book as an experiment in bridging cultures and opening new venues of cross-cultural understanding for its readers would be to deny its sexually "scandalous" nature (189). Making the novel "function as the ethical disruption of postcolonial discourse" would require, she believes, First Nations culture "to be clearly and cleanly 'other' to settler culture" (188). After five hundred years of contact, such clarity is not possible and Highway does not attempt it. Nonetheless, room remains for reading the novel's method as a series of ethical interruptions of many forms of received wisdom within and across various cultures in contact.

Highway sets feminist and decolonizing critique in dialogue with indigenous knowledge, especially through his deeply immersive understanding of Cree as in part an untranslatable (in Emily Apter's terms). This is not to deny the novel's engagements with ambivalent sexualities but to see these within the frames set up by the novel's epigraphs and its prefatory "Note on the Trickster." Henderson is justly wary of employing indigenous texts to revive postcolonial imaginaries, and neither should they be instrumentalized in aid of settler colonial imaginaries, which are not the same thing. But Highway's text, like Wright's, invites a reciprocal dialogue without at all suggesting that it will be easy. Highway's depiction of contemporary Cree lived realities and their rootedness in the past and the land in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* develops its own map and history that are not readily assimilated into universalist modes of meaning-making derived from Eurocentric knowledge formations nor from any of the better known postcolonial imaginaries, such as those derived from the black Atlantic, South Asian, or Pacific experiences.

Kiss of the Fur Queen, *Carpentaria*, and *The Swan Book* speak to alternative logics of time/space that work through chronotopes that are formally transformative in ways theorized by Bakhtin. Bakhtin describes

how the chronotope operates "as a formally constituted category of literature" (84), understood as "the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied" and where "Time" becomes "palpable and visible" (250). *Kiss of the Fur Queen* takes as its second epigraph Chief Seattle of the Squamish's powerful statement that "the dead are not powerless" and proves the truth of this statement through moments that erupt through the narrative that follows. The prelude to Champion/Jeremiah's birth is marked by the moaning and whispering of the ancestors, including his grandmother's voice among them, despite her death twenty-one years earlier, shortly after her daughter Mariesis' marriage to Champion/Jeremiah's father (19). When the Okimasis brothers return home from residential school, they hear a lone wolf's howl "touching off a vague shudder that brushed the surface of their hearts, in perfect unison, like the ice-cold hand of someone waking after five hundred years of sleep" (Highway 90). This occurs on the island where Father Thibodeau's men had caught Chachagathou, a woman who the brothers are told was evil because she held a frightening dream power. As the narrative progresses, she becomes linked in Dancer/Gabriel's mind to the winking white fox who appears at key moments to throw the text's realism slightly off-balance (196), and as they learn more about her defiance of the church, the brothers' interest in her grows (197). Through her power that transcends the grave, Chachagathou testifies to other modes of knowing and forms of authority alternative to the Church and residential school. In these ways, Highway transforms both conventional gothic and indigenous modes of thinking the ghost to challenge readers' assumptions about the divisions separating the real and the imagined, the living and the dead. He ties and unties these knots of narrative to unravel the cognitive schemas of colonialism. He reveals how the knots entangle the persecution of witches in Europe with genocide in the Americas and unmasks the Weetigo behind the garb of the priest, while freeing the joys of music and dance for celebration, survival, and resurgence.

In *Carpentaria*, time becomes "palpable and visible" through clocks, invisible nets, and ghostly figures of ancient women and lost tribes who melt out of the landscape and back into it so as to disturb the dividing

line between waking and dreaming. Wright explains the temporal logic behind the telling of her text: "The idea struck me that if I were to tell a story to our people, I would also be telling a story to our ancestors" ("On Writing" 85). That expanded sense of audience that moves backward and forward through time, refusing a linear development, necessitated a story, in her words, that was "written like a long song, following ancient tradition, reaching back as much as it reached forward, to tell a contemporary story to our ground" (85). Here is another version of Harris' music of living landscapes.

V. Rethinking Globalization through Decolonizing Scalar Relations

This paper argues that globalization is challenging accepted norms across a range of practices once thought to be stable with a force that postcolonial critique never quite managed. As people and ideas travel, both physically and virtually through digital media, the global flows that Appadurai celebrated in *Modernity at Large* are increasingly understood in connection with the kinds of friction later identified by Tsing. Walter Mignolo has memorably identified the "cracks" now appearing in long dominant imaginaries, opening spaces for decolonial modes of understanding the past and reimagining the future (23). Working in a similar vein of analysis, Sousa Santos seizes upon openings for creative rethinking of the connections between politics, culture, and knowledge in a series of books devoted to rearticulating relations between what he and his collaborators call "global cognitive justice" and "global social justice." Global cognitive justice challenges the epistemic violence that accompanied colonialism's physical forms of violence and that continues today through surviving forms of epistemic violence and the limits they place on imagining otherwise. Such violence can be both enacted through and challenged by literary experimentation. In this thinking, the global is not necessarily a totalizing structure imposed from above but rather carries potential for a new form of pluriversality that works through a multitude of scalar relations rather than nested scales alone.

Wendy Knepper points out that "[p]recisely because of its mobilities, intertwined histories, and intersecting cultures, the Caribbean is

an important testing ground for theories and close readings that explore genre's transgressions, unpredictable movements, and creolizing processes" (1432). Far from being on the margins of empire, the Caribbean can be seen as the centre of modernity's experimental laboratory. In this paper, I began with Caribbean-identified writers Harris and Brand (each of whom left the Caribbean at a young age but continue to wrestle with that inheritance in new environments in ways that complicate exile and belonging and are intimately tied to dimensions of scale). I then suggested that indigenous fictions from Canada and Australia can play a similar role, both in exploring living landscapes and seeking routes out of cognitive schemas of captivity. Both Highway and Wright compose fictions that emerge from their ancestral territories to set up dialogues with the cultural traditions of many other times and places. They read the world through Cree and Waanyi eyes, from the respective norths of their two great continents. In this concluding section, I return to the Caribbean to consider briefly how a small island place can function as a testing ground for imagining ways of living without being "owned by someone else" (Mootoo, *Valmiki's Daughter* 387).

In many ways, Shani Mootoo's third novel, *Valmiki's Daughter*, takes up a classic nineteenth-century realist problem in its account of characters who live their lives "bearing up under the burden of too much knowing" (391) with no release for their unsanctioned desires. Yet their small place exists in a globalizing world, where alternative destinies can be imagined, even if it takes considerable courage to realize them. Within such contexts, the book can be seen as a quietly experimental fiction that pushes the boundaries of what can be imagined—or openly acknowledged-- within the contours of a small Caribbean place. Of her second novel, *He Drown She in the Sea*, Mootoo writes that "[i]n creating Harry, I wanted to paint the picture of a straight man through this queer person's eyes, one whom I would feel comfortable, happy, and safe to be in the same world with" ("Writer Notes" 203). The creation of Harry, then, was a kind of thought-experiment that challenged the dominance of narrowly prescribed heterosexual gender roles, their various class permutations, and national differences from beyond a frame in which heterosexual coupledom was the norm. Patricia Saunders

notes that this novel "seems committed to destabilizing the authority of boundaries: national, ethnic, class and gender" (65).

Those destabilizations continue in *Valmiki's Daughter*, where a range of characters find themselves trapped in a heterosexist matrix that governs and distorts their relations with one another and understanding of themselves. Nayan laments the influence of "[t]his small, small place" and the way it makes him feel like "a small man" in front of his cosmopolitan French wife, Anick (320). Valmiki, who as a young man had abandoned his male lover to enter a conventional heterosexual marriage, warns his daughter Viveka: "This is a small place. It is not a kind place. . . . This place is too small for you. . . . Take a deep breath, and leave this behind" (354). Mootoo's novels can be seen as responses to the challenge of imagining freedom within such a place and the apparent necessity of leaving these places behind to find freedom even as they also document the inappropriateness of global categories for describing the complexity of the local place.

In its direct address to an imagined tourist reader, *Valmiki's Daughter* also deliberately responds to Jamaica Kincaid's well known polemic, *A Small Place* (and, perhaps, to Graham Huggan's characterization of the reader of postcolonial texts as often a tourist reader). Like Highway and Wright, Mootoo plays with the elasticity of time. Her book begins with a Prologue, subtitled "24 Seconds" (1–4), which is revisited in an Epilogue, subtitled "24 Months" (393–95). Here is the precise measurement of time as a scalar frame of reference to which Tsing objects in her article on the vitality of nonscalable worlds. These measurements cannot do justice to the vitality revealed in *Valmiki's Daughter*. The twenty-four seconds refer to the "specific sliver of time" when Valmiki first realized who his daughter really was and when, he now thinks, he should have told her "his own story so that she might create a different one" (4). That moment was lost, and is now regretted. The twenty-four months refer to how long his daughter Viveka thinks that her marriage of convenience is likely to last. She and her lover Anick had dreamt of fleeing the island together until Anick's pregnancy made such dreams seem impossible. Now Viveka has agreed to marry Trevor, who is being pressured by his own family to enter into a heterosexual marriage. Both

seem to believe their marriage is doomed from the start yet neither sees any alternatives. Their desires are lost in the gap that separates twenty-four seconds from twenty-four months. They need a new scale for expressing their desires.

The novel tells the events between these bookending frames, in which a heterosexual marriage marks a definitive end and beginning—yet another "cognitive schema of captivity," to return to Brand's evocative phrasing. The story following this Prologue begins with an address to the reader titled "Your Journey, Part One," which orients the view as "you" imagine yourself "a tourist" (7). Like Kincaid's tourist, if more gently, you are told what "[y]ou might or might not have noticed" (10); you are commanded to "[r]aise your eyes" and "[l]ook behind you" (13); you are finally told you will need "to move right into the homes, into the private and public dealings—into the minds, even—of some of its citizens" (25). "Your Journey, Part Two" takes the reader into the city's suburbs and class divisions and "Part Three" deeper into the heart of the country and its plantation history, with its "gulf between the cacao Indian and the sugar Indian" (263). The novel moves toward its concluding sections with "Your Journey Home" (363). In this final section, the referent for "you" begins to blur the initial distinctions between the reader and Viveka.

What the novel reveals through these journeys is this society's domestic tyrannies and hypocrisies, described as a "clockwork life" (69) and linked to the "oppression of communal family living" (149) that Viveka finds in V. S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr Biswas*. Viveka's lover, Anick, articulates what most of the characters feel, complaining: "Is like a prison living in this country" (177). The metaphorical prison created by the scale of the small country, which barely figures within the global imaginary, is different from the prison generated by the heritage of slavery, which operates within a different system of scalar relations. Parts Two and Three look at the class divisions that make the country unsafe for the privileged while continuing to elaborate the homophobia that marks country and city, rich and poor. Anick's French father sees the history of Nayan's estate as the history of his island and "part of the story of the rise and decline of empire" (215), but that larger perspective seems

denied to those born in this small place. Nayan expresses a Naipaulian sensibility, telling Viveka "[w]e are not properly Indian, and don't know how to be Trinidadian. We are nothing" (307). Viveka learns through the course of the novel that "[s]he had to leave" (360). "Your Journey Home," a section ostensibly addressed to the reader, also seems to speak for her: "In any case, as the saying goes, wherever you go, there you are. There you are" (363). The ambiguity of the "you" at this point implicates the reader in Viveka's story in a very different way to that effected by Kincaid's address in *A Small Place.*

In telling a generational story of the societal refusal to make space for same-sex desire, for Anick and Valmiki as well as for his daughter, *Valmiki's Daughte*r employs realism to tell a story that can also be described as experimental in its broaching of alternative epistemologies, its exposure of the subtleties of epistemic violence within this culture, and its experimentation with queer temporalities. In the case of this novel, the issue of assessing literary experimentation is prompted less by the author's choice between conventional realism and other genres than by the ways in which the novel draws attention to the power relations that work through designations of scale. In fact, without explicitly referring to Tsing, Alison Donnell reads this novel as exemplary of what Tsing describes as "the vitality of nonscalable worlds." Donnell argues that "Mootoo's novel catches a Caribbean queerness that maps a new meeting point between place and the possible" (214). For Donnell, "the acute geo-specificity of the narrative… refuses to elevate the global as the proper plane of investigation" (216). Instead, for Donnell, the novel "validates the local" (216). While I do not disagree with this interpretation, I try to complicate it here, through a reading that focusses on the ways in which the novel documents the interplay between the tyrannies of the scalar imagination (especially those that operate through nested scales of interpretation) and alternative models of the scalar, including those of queer temporalities and spatialities that arise from local histories of engagement.

Experimental writers create with the hope, as voiced by Wright, that "[i]t is possible to imagine difference, and it is possible to live the op-

posite of being shackled" ("Where to Point the Spears" 41). Following Wright, this article has unravelled the knots of its argument in search of locating signs of the "unshackled" imagination. There are many different "cognitive schemas of captivity," and the effort to move beyond them may produce what Brodber calls, in the title of her *Small Axe* article on her writing, "my head-hurting fiction." Wright's honesty about the challenge faced by settler colonial societies, and by those indigenous peoples surviving within them, is daunting: "These are the problems of unresolved guilt and debt. The debt is huge. Sometimes I feel that forgiveness is almost unimaginable" ("Politics of Writing" 15). That bleakness shapes her work yet is counter-balanced, if precariously, by her faith in "the power of words" and "the hope of writing. Believing the unbelievable" (20). Such a faith can spur literary experimentation, and that experimentation, in turn, can enable imagining otherwise.

Like Miki, Bernstein offers poetics as "the foundation for a realm of value that is neither scientist nor moralistic," arguing that "poetics is the ethical engagement with the shifting conditions of everyday life" ("Practice of Poetics" 78). Such engagements require a renewed attention to nonscalable worlds, their distinctiveness, and their entanglements in more complex relations of scale than those of nested models alone. Literary experimentation can document the cognitive schemas of captivity that shackle the imagination, rub different rationalities together to create the frictions and energies of renewal, and free the imagination to envision social justice, a task that will take different forms within different social settings. I have argued that decolonizing contexts offer unstable models of shifting scalar relations, many of which arise from the need to escape cognitive schemas of captivity.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1 These concepts, borrowed from Sousa Santos et al., are explained later in this paper. See also Brydon, "Globalization and Higher Education."

2 See for example, books by Bennett and Chen, neither of whom, however, reference indigenous or postcolonial theorists for their theorizations of "vibrant matter" (Bennett) or animacy (Chen). Chen places stones at the lowest end of the animacy hierarchical scale (5), but this may be because they operate within a longer timeframe than observing humans are able to perceive. The animate, agential rock that intervenes to save Will Phantom in *Carpentaria* prompts this observation. I am grateful to Libe Garcia Zarranz and the critical posthumanism reading group she organized in 2015 for insights into the work of these theorists.

3 For a brief summary of these concepts, see Costa, who suggests that "[i]f universalism can give way to pluriversalism, not only cognitive justice but also social justice can come closer to being realized" (249). For a more wide-ranging synthesis, see Oliveira Andreotti.

4 For a fuller discussion of this poem in the contexts of ecocriticism and pataphysics, see Dickinson (140–1, 144–45).

5 Dickinson cites Bernstein as writing, in "the Task of Poetics, the Fate of Innovation, and the Aesthetics of Criticism" (47), that "[t]he motto shouldn't be to make it new but make it live."

6 In two important essays on this novel, Honni van Rijswijk analyzes its experimental form as both "anti-elegy" and "counter-imaginary," both forms of experimentation that budge the frame through which the law is understood.

7 See Spivak's *An Aesthetic Education* (25) and my essay "Mobile Localities" for explanations of this term. Vandana Shiva first introduced the concept.

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