

**THE PAST IS PRESENT: GENDERED COLONIAL VIOLENCE IN CONTEMPORARY
CANADIAN THEATRE**

by

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Abstract

Throughout my analysis, I query how gendered colonial violence is addressed in three contemporary Canadian plays: Sharon Pollock's *The Komagata Maru Incident* (1976), Lorena Gale's *Angélique* (2000), and Marie Clements' *The Unnatural and Accidental Women* (2005). In my first chapter, I use historiographic metadrama and Indigenous resurgence as frameworks for analyzing the past and contemporary implications of gendered colonial violence in the events portrayed in each play. Building on my analysis in Chapter One, my second chapter utilizes intersectional feminism as a framework to consider the role that White female characters play in perpetuating racialized and discriminatory practices against People of Colour. In this thesis, I argue that it is important to reveal systems of oppression that contribute to legacies of colonial harm, to help create a more just society for all Canadian citizens.

I investigate gendered colonial violence in my first chapter through the genre of historiographic metadrama in Sharon Pollock's *The Komagata Maru Incident* and Lorena Gale's *Angélique*, and in the case of Marie Clements' *The Unnatural and Accidental Women*, through Indigenous resurgence as a framework. Although conceptually different, historiographic metadrama and Indigenous resurgence both draw connections between the past and present to critique ongoing issues of pervasive and systemic racism in Canadian society. The playwrights in my analysis present tragic and problematic events from Canada's past to critique dominant colonial narratives. In the words of Sharon Pollock, "[until] we recognize our past, we cannot change our future" (107). As I argue throughout my thesis, recognition of past trauma is then essential for a holistic understanding of the impact of ongoing systemic racism that results in state-sanctioned, gendered colonial violence.

Through an intersectional approach, my second chapter queries how White female characters in each play experience contrasting moments of White privilege and gendered violence, based in colonial norms and structures. I critique how this duality grants them some sociopolitical authority over People of Colour, but ultimately, only works to reinforce problematic colonial hierarchies that subjugate them and the characters they abuse.

Lay Summary

This thesis undertakes a study of three Canadian plays: Sharon Pollock's *The Komagata Maru Incident* (1976), Lorena Gale's *Angélique* (2000), and Marie Clements' *The Unnatural and Accidental Women* (2005). I consider how gendered colonial violence is portrayed in these plays that capture three distinct moments from Canadian history; further, I analyze the ways that each author works to disrupt dominant colonial narratives about Canadian history, and thus, work to shatter the image of Canada as a "cultural mosaic." In my second chapter, I examine the role of White female characters who enforce colonial systems that grant them racialized privilege, and I argue that these systems are the source of gendered violence that these same characters experience, too. Acts of gendered colonial violence have irreparably shaped Canada's past and continue to hold significant implications for contemporary people from all backgrounds.

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Dedication

It may take a community to raise a child, but certainly, that community is just as vital when it comes to educating a graduate student. I am very grateful for the help of my committee members, Dr. Virginie Magnat and Dr. Jordan Stouck, as well as the help and guidance of Dr. Allison Hargreaves. And, while the graduate cohort in English may be small, they have played a significant role in my life, too; it has been an honour to have you as friends and colleagues along this journey. Above all, I need to recognize my parents and Arlo, who have seen me at my best—and my worst—and loved me all the same.

Last, I am forever grateful to both of the Lisas in my life. Despite the different roles you have each held, you are both emblematic of kindness, strength, and compassion that is truly uplifting. Thank you is not enough.

Introduction

Drama and theatre have always called to me, from the time I was old enough to act in school plays to the time I took my first university course studying Greek tragedy. It was during my undergraduate degree that I was first introduced to contemporary Canadian drama, and female playwrights, such as Sharon Pollock, whose work I have chosen to write about here. My professor for many of these courses, Dr. Maureen Hawkins, taught passionately about the ways that theatre can function to inspire change within an audience. Her teaching inspired me to think about how literature and theatre can educate, and she influenced many of my own pedagogical practices as I earned my degree in education. Later, I was further influenced by theatre while teaching at Chinook High School: I attended a student-made production focused on the fears and political angst many of the students were feeling in the wake of the school shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, Florida. It was amazing to see how students created a performance that allowed them to address the fear of violence that was prevalent in many school communities at that time and the profound emotional impact this had on the audience members. In this performance, I was reminded of the affect that theatre can wield to address social issues.

As I entered into my studies at UBC Okanagan, my thesis was influenced by many of the courses that I took. While in Dr. Allison Hargreaves' class, "Studies in Indigenous Literature and Criticism," I first explicitly learned about the ways Indigenous women experienced gendered colonial violence. In her book, *Violence Against Indigenous Women*, Hargreaves speaks to the way Indigenous women experience gendered colonial violence, as they are "targeted for violence in ways that are made possible by the colonial state—a violence, statistically speaking, most often carried out by white men" (x). Studies in "Writing as Resistance: Postcolonial Women's

Fiction in the UK” with Dr. Jennifer Gustar and “Reconciliation” with Dr. Lisa Grekul and Dr. Brianna Wells similarly pointed to the impact systemic racism has on People of Colour, narrating how literature can be a form of social intervention by the authors. Throughout these courses, I noticed recurring themes of gendered colonial violence in the writing we studied—I was particularly intrigued by the way this work aligned with and differed from my own experiences of gendered violence, and to learn how colonialism compounded the violence experienced by People of Colour.

With guidance from several of the professors I was studying under, I chose the three plays that have become central to my thesis: Sharon Pollock’s *The Komagata Maru Incident* (1976), Lorena Gale’s *Angélique* (2000), and Marie Clements’ *The Unnatural and Accidental Women* (2005). This thesis considers how each play confronts gendered colonial violence by critiquing unique moments from Canadian history and the ramifications these moments still have in contemporary society. Arguably, the work of Pollock, Gale, and Clements highlights why it is necessary to question colonial history records to instigate sociocultural change. As I will discuss later in the Introduction, the contextual background of the plays in my thesis are vastly different: they span over 250 years of colonial practice in Canadian society; they engage with various levels and types of colonial authority, from legal courts, coroner’s reports, and of course, provincial and federal levels of government; and, they involve people and stories from a variety of cultural backgrounds, including Indigenous, immigrant, and even slave perspectives. Nonetheless, each play uses narratives that divulge instances of gendered violence that are endorsed via hurtful colonial practices and norms. My Introduction functions to discuss the contexts of each play, after which, my first chapter considers how each play explores gendered colonial violence through the genre of historiographic metadrama. Throughout this analysis, I

consider how historiographic metadrama functions to destabilize colonial histories, and subsequently, to re-write and re-imagine the subjectivity of the women in the play who have otherwise been erased or relegated to the margins of colonial history. My second chapter uses intersectional feminism as a framework to analyze the role of White female characters in each play¹. Throughout this work, I posit that the plays I study, and others like them, hold the potential to educate and draw attention to ongoing violence that has been—and continues to be—part of Canadian society.

As I begin, I would like to identify myself as a White, settler writer, living and working on the unceded and ancestral territory of the Syilx People. Here, I would like to follow the direction of Hayden King, an Anishinaabe writer and educator, who encourages non-Indigenous people to think beyond a land acknowledgement, and toward the “obligation” or “commitment” for more substantial sociocultural change (King quoted in Deerchild n.pag.); although I identify as a White, settler writer, I recognize that there is substantial support that can be given to transform structures and systems based in colonial norms, that disproportionately impact Indigenous, Black and People of Colour. As Leey’qsun scholar Rachel Flowers defines it, “‘settler’ is a position of privilege [...] that signifies the settler’s relationship to colonialism” (33-4). Acknowledging the ways that my family has privileged from colonialism, I hope to contribute to decolonial and anti-racist work, and as Flowers suggests, “support the transformation of the colonial relationship” (34). Allison Hargreaves suggests that literature “can help us to do this imaginative work [...] to guide our movements toward social change” (ix). I argue that the plays in this thesis tackle this “imaginative work” of rewriting narratives that White, colonial society has failed to value, and further, they evaluate how White men and women have exacerbated and

¹ While intersectional feminism has definitely influenced this work as a whole, my primary discussion of intersectional feminism happens in Chapter Two, where it is used as the main framework for my analysis.

compounded instances of colonial violence. To this point, prioritizing the voices and scholarship of writers who are Indigenous, Black and People of Colour, has been an essential practice throughout this thesis. Native Feminist scholars Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill challenge “allies who are settlers to become more familiar and more proactive in their critiques of settler colonialism [while recognizing] that becoming an ally will require a long-term commitment to structural change” (19). Researching and writing this thesis has been the beginning of my personal commitment to structural change for a more just and equitable society for people from all positionalities.

There are several limitations in this thesis that I would like to acknowledge. While I discuss the potential theatre holds to instigate change, there is not space to properly describe the details and implications of ongoing anti-racist organizations and movements happening nationally and globally, such as various ongoing initiatives for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG), or Black Lives Matter. Another limitation I have encountered is access to live productions of the plays. I have had limited access viewing the plays online, so the majority of my analysis is based on the scripts, supplemented by criticism and research from other scholars. Similarly, I recognize that many choices can be made by a director to change how a scene is presented and perceived, resulting in a variety of iterations of the same play. My thesis is limited to a literary analysis of the play scripts and the theoretical potential they have to influence an audience. Aside from theatre audiences, one might also consider how these play texts could be applied in a classroom setting: classrooms provide an opportunity for a collective experience, one that is guided by a teacher or professor rather than a director, or, acted by students rather than professionals. I engage with scholars who write about both potential audiences because both types of performance point to the positive change that these plays might

instigate. Akin to Brecht's epic theatre, these plays aim to persuade and teach—rather than simply entertain—their audience. On the whole, throughout my analysis, I theorize how these plays work to mobilize instances of gendered colonial violence to unteach colonial histories and norms. In the sections that follow, I elucidate important details for each of these plays, including key pieces about the production history, and a brief overview of the “historical” moments that the plays recount.

About: *The Komagata Maru Incident*

First staged in 1976, in Vancouver, Pollock's *The Komagata Maru Incident* follows William Hopkinson, the “Head of Intelligence, Department of Immigration” (Pollock 110), after he is tasked with the responsibility of expelling the Komagata Maru—along with the 376 East Asian immigrants aboard it—from Canadian shores. In an interview with the Simon Fraser University Library, Pollock describes how artistic director, Christopher Newton, tasked her with writing a play that confronted this moment in history, with a resident company that did not have any Indo-Canadian actors. Her finished product was a play that foregrounded the action of the play in Hopkinson's character, focused primarily on White Canadian reactions to the Komagata Maru (2:15-2:50). The play was last staged during the 2017 Stratford Festival, in Stratford, Ontario, where it received criticism for lacking “character development or complexity” (Maga par. 5), a sentiment reflected in scholarly criticism from David Salter (1989), and Sherrill Grace and Gabriele Helms² (1998). Prior to the 2017 staging, *The Komagata Maru Incident* was presented as part of The Komagata Maru Project by UBC, commemorating the 100th anniversary

² I engage with each scholar's work more explicitly in Chapter One: The Past is Present: Gendered Colonial Violence in Historiographic Metadrama. I draw attention to the similarities here to note that this is a consistent criticism of *The Komagata Maru Incident*.

of the incident. This performance merged a selection of three plays, including Pollock's *Komagata Maru incident*, with Sadhu Binning and Suhkwant Hundal's *Sumundari Sher nal Takar*, and Ajmer Rode's *Komagata Maru*, to create "a single program that integrated sections of the three plays to explore how and why we remember the Komagata Maru, and how the creative arts augment and enhance the traditional historical archive" (The Komagata Maru Project)³. This revitalized production added necessary East Asian voice and representation to Pollock's original work.

As for the historical event itself, the Komagata Maru incident took place over the summer of 1914: the ship sailed into Vancouver Harbour on May 23, 1914, where passengers were denied the right to disembark from the ship because of the Continuous Journey Regulation of 1908 (*Unmooring the KM* xi). This regulation restricted Indian immigrants' access if they did not sail from their country of origin; the Komagata Maru originally sailed from Hong Kong, and so because the immigrants were Indian, they were denied entry. Of the 376 people aboard the Komagata Maru, only twenty were allowed to leave the ship because they had lived and worked in Canada prior to the voyage. The remaining 356 immigrants waited on the ship until it was forced to depart via armed escort by the SS Rainbow on July 23, 1914 (xi). Their travels to India were long and arduous: the Komagata Maru would only reach the town of Budge Budge on September 29, 1914; from there, British officials ordered the passengers to board a train to Punjab, but, as Pollock describes in the play, many chose to resist, and at least twenty people were shot and killed by colonial authorities (xvi). Authors such as Pollock and Ajmer Rode⁴ sought to bring public attention to the event in the 1970s; in stark contrast, the federal

³ I cite Nandi Bhatia and Anne Murphy in Chapter One for their scholarly work surrounding the 2014 performance.

⁴ Ajmer Rode's *Komagata Maru* premiered in 1979. On his website, Rode claims that "the Komagata Maru was the first full length Punjabi play written in Canada." Like Pollock's work, it was based in archival material; however, Rode's play focused primarily on the Indo-Canadian community (Ajmerrode.com).

government would only recognize and apologize for the xenophobia and trauma that the people aboard the Komagata Maru experienced nearly a century after the event itself. Apologies for this event have been issued on a federal level by the Stephen Harper government in 2008, and again by the Justin Trudeau government in 2016. Harper's apology gained notoriety for taking place at a Sikh community event in Surrey, on the back of a pick-up truck, rather than being held in an official federal capacity at Parliament; in comparison, Trudeau's apology *was* held in Parliament and acknowledged problematic laws that prevented immigration (Bhandar and Dhamoon 14). While Trudeau's apology may have been more official, Bhandar and Dhamoon (2019) contend that both apologies focus too heavily on past issues rather than recognizing the contemporary issues faced by People of Colour today. In particular, Bhandar and Dhamoon describe the contemporary implications of both apologies:

[The] state apologies for the Komagata Maru work to obfuscate the reality of ongoing colonial violence against Indigenous Peoples, Black communities, Arabs and Muslims, and other People of Colour ... The nationalist historiography of the Komagata Maru, focused on how the event is read as a genesis of Canada's progress toward an inclusive multicultural future, necessarily limits understanding that this was not a singular event in Canadian history. (14)

In other words, apologies given by the state are often problematic because they seldom acknowledge the contemporary ways that marginalized groups are still struggling or being exploited through systemic practices and regulations. When official political statements fail, the voices of activists, including authors and artists, form an imperative counternarrative for those people the state has failed. Of note, the plays in my thesis explore instances of colonial violence and the ongoing ramifications experienced by the communities involved.

About: *Angélique*

Before ever being produced in full, an excerpt of Lorena Gale's *Angélique* won the DuMaurier National Playwriting Competition (1995), and continued to "[evolve] through a long sequence of seven different workshop productions, leading to a culminating fully staged production in Alberta Theatre Projects' renowned PlayRites programme" in 1998 (Filewod 280). Despite this "prestigious" history, Alan Filewod found that at his time of writing (2001), *Angélique* had not been staged in Canada since the premiere performance (281); looking ahead, *Angélique* would not be staged in Montreal—where the play is set—until 2017 (by Black Theatre Workshop and Tableau D'Hôte Theatre co-production), and Toronto in the spring of 2019 (by Factory and Obsidian Theatre Company, presenting the Black Theatre Workshop and Tableau D'Hôte Theatre co-production). A review by *The Star*, an Ottawa based newspaper, theorizes that the play might not have been produced earlier because of the substantial scale of the play itself, including a cast of seven actors, mixed forms of dialogue, and various challenging sets (Fricker par. 3). In an argument that emphasises the agency of both author and play, Filewod recognizes that "*Angélique* is a genuinely radical statement that uses the moment of performance to destabilise the narratives that have historically secured Canadian nationhood" (281). Therefore, in addition to costs of production, as described by *The Star*, it must also be recognized that *Angélique*'s late arrival to the Montreal stage can be connected to the way it pushes against dominant narratives about the Canadian social imaginary—a narrative that purposefully excludes past and present traumas associated with slavery and gendered colonial violence.

Described by several critics and historians (Maynard, Cooper, Keleta-Mae, Filewod), Canada's involvement in the transatlantic slave trade is often overlooked and rarely taught within

a formal classroom setting. In her book, *Policing Black Lives* (2017), Robyn Maynard traces the roots of the slave trade to better understand the implications for contemporary Canadian society. Specifically, Maynard speaks to the deeply held prejudice and dehumanization of Black people that were necessary to make the slave trade possible—actions that still have contemporary implications in regards to the way Black people are racialized in contemporary society. For instance, Maynard recounts how punishing Black slaves was not about trying to “modify behaviour,” but instead reinforced a “virulent dehumanization of Blackness” within the institution of slavery (19). Maynard argues that these deeply entrenched beliefs have not simply disappeared and that the “[s]ocial amnesia about slavery, as is common in Canada, makes it impossible to understand anti-Black policing in the current epoch” (19). Additionally, Maynard references the 2016 United Nations’ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) position that “enormous racial inequalities with respect to income, housing, child welfare rates, access to quality education and the application of drug laws” (U.N. qtd in Maynard). These inequities—past and present—are highlighted throughout *Angélique* through the use of anachronistic elements.

The only existing records about Angélique come from court documents that reveal how Angélique’s life came to a painfully short conclusion in 1734, after being convicted on “hearsay and suspicion” (Cooper 286) for burning down part of Montreal. Allegedly, Angélique started a fire in her Mistress’ house during an attempt to escape slavery. Existing documentation from this event is limited to what was recorded in court proceedings, such as transcripts of Angélique’s interrogation and torture, and interviews with people who claim to have witnessed the fire. Angélique was sold into the Francheville household in 1725 and was baptized and renamed by her owner, François Poulin de Francheville, with a Christian name in 1730 (143, 160). Even

though Angélique, personally, left no written record behind, Cooper argues that Angélique's testimony, alongside the witness accounts, speaks to her defiant behaviour, which is then reflected in the play. This is exemplified when Cooper explains, "[Angélique] was a slave, but she had no respect for and fear of her mistress in particular and White society in general. Mentally, she was beyond the control of those who exercised authority over her" (287). Cooper's analysis of these court documents points toward Angélique's strong sense of agency that was not diminished by her position as a slave. Angélique was executed in 1734 because of the sociocultural condemnation, and resultant torture, that led to her confession; however, these voices and perspectives that condemned her in the eyes of White society in 1734 also speak to her rejection and subversion of colonial authority. The existence of her narrative further challenges the idyllic notion that Canada is—and has always been—a diverse and welcoming nation.

About: *The Unnatural and Accidental Women*

The Unnatural and Accidental Women is the most recent play that I analyze, in terms of both its setting and production: it was first staged in 2000 at the Firehall Centre, in Vancouver, and published in 2005. The most recent production occurred in September 2019, at the *National Arts Centre* in Ottawa, where it was part of the Mòshkamo Indigenous Arts Festival, "an all-Indigenous takeover of the NAC's performance and public spaces" (Saxberg para. 16). The play was also adapted into a movie, *Unnatural and Accidental*, in 2006, for which Marie Clements received a Leo Award nomination for best screenplay in 2007; however, the movie differs significantly from the play. Erin Wunker argues that just as the movie title literally removes the subject, "Women," from the title, many techniques in the film nullify female agency that the

Women claim in the play (176). The result is the creation of “a passive viewer who does not need to know anything about the women on screen other than the [clothing] colour they are assigned to identify them” (178). With that being said, *Unnatural and Accidental* will not be included in my analysis because its function varies substantially from the play, and there is not space to properly investigate these differences.

The Unnatural and Accidental Women focuses on the lives and deaths of ten women killed by Gilbert Jordan, also known as the “Boozing Barber,” between 1965-87, in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside. In the life of the real barber, even though three of the women were found dead in his apartment, Jordan was only convicted with one count of manslaughter for the death of Vanessa Buckner; he was sentenced to fifteen years, but ultimately only served six (Hawthorn n.pag.). Frances Neumann, whose sister, Mary Smith John, was killed by Jordan, spoke out at a hearing held in Whitehorse for commissioners looking into missing and murdered Indigenous women, in 2017 (Kane). Neumann poignantly states: “[w]e let them down. We did not protect them because they were weak. Because they were weak, no justice came to their aid” (Neumann qtd. in Kane). Many problematized Jordan’s limited conviction (Hawthorn n.pag.), while Clements took issue with reporting by the *Vancouver Sun* that focused on sensationalizing Jordan’s macabre life, instead of speaking to the humanity of the women who were murdered (Clements qtd. in Harrison 272).

Tragically, the women murdered by Jordan represent only a small fraction of Indigenous women who have experienced systemic violence in Canada, as a result of colonial stigmas and practices. *The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* (2019) describes colonization as “the processes by which Indigenous Peoples were dispossessed of their lands and resources, subjected to external control, and targeted for assimilation and, in some

cases, extermination” (231). In her analysis, Cree scholar and activist Robyn Bourgeois (2018) maps settler colonialism alongside the violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls in Canada (70). In her work, Bourgeois describes how many pre-colonial Indigenous nations used matrilineal descent to organize land, thus giving Indigenous women significant authority over land “possession and usage” (Anderson qtd. in Bourgeois 71). As a result, colonial authorities resorted to “denigrating and violating Indigenous women [...] to [impose] settler colonial notions of patriarchally controlled private property” (71). This violent legacy is part of the ongoing violence experienced by Indigenous women, today. In addition to the violence experienced by Indigenous women and the loss of traditional land, Indigenous cultures were also targets of cultural genocide through the implementation of residential schools (1800s-1996) and increased monitoring and intervention by the child welfare system, both of which involved forcibly removing Indigenous children from their home (73). Although Clements does not explicitly write about the legacies of residential schooling in *The Unnatural and Accidental Women*, Clements draws attention to the relationship between gendered colonial violence experienced by Indigenous women and the loss of traditional land via colonialism and urbanization. Following the apology given for the Komagata Maru, the Harper government also issued an apology to residential school survivors; and yet, scholars such as Flowers argue, “[an] apology is a singular event that addresses a singular event, rather than a commitment to changed behavior in response to recognizing the structures and systems that are predicated on violence and permit it to occur in the first place” (47). And so, change itself must be predicated upon a sustainable commitment to recognize Indigenous sovereignty and end systemic violence against Indigenous Peoples.

Gendered Colonial Violence

I must recognize that the plays used for my thesis take place in this part of Turtle Island, known as Canada. I will purposefully use the name “Canada” when referring to the state to acknowledge that Canada is a colonial construct that must be examined critically. Following work done by Robyn Maynard in *Policing Black Lives* (2017), criticism of the “state” includes federal and provincial levels of government and acknowledges the presence of systemic prejudice in state-run institutions, such as schools, social services, and law enforcement (6).

There are many ways to consider gendered violence, wherein violence might occur between people from a wide variety of positionalities based on pre-existing power dynamics. For the purpose of my analysis, I consider the patterns of discrimination and violence informed by entrenched, gendered colonial norms, to better understand how these norms have been individually weaponized against unique groups of people. Bruckert and Law define gendered violence “as harm rooted in, emanating from, and/or based on an individual’s gender expression or identity [that] can take different forms, including (but not limited to) sexual, physical, psychological, economic, emotional, verbal, and environmental, and can encompass neglect, abuse, harassment, microaggressions, erasure, and exploitation” (11). They continue to argue that violence may occur in “diverse locations and contexts” and as a result of “a range of mechanisms, including [...] discourses, ideologies, social and economic structures, as well as formal [...] and informal [...] regulation” (11). It is essential to recognize that contemporary Canada still retains many strong, colonial ties, where structural “mechanisms,” like those described above, are sanctioned by colonial stigmas and power structures. For this reason, I utilize the term “gendered colonial violence,” to draw critical attention back to, and name, the harm that is created as a result of colonialism. Each of the plays I have chosen critiques various

aspects of Canada's colonial roots, and so, the analysis of these plays helps to reveal the implications these legacies hold in contemporary communities, and to an extent, Canadian society as a whole.

In my first chapter, I consider how the plays in my analyses fit the genre of historiographic metadrama and use this as a means to critique gendered colonial violence in Canada's past and present. My second chapter mobilizes an intersectional approach to consider how White women are both victims and perpetrators of gendered colonial violence, and how these plays represent a need for social change. My purpose is not to paint these White female characters as martyrs—abused by a masculine, authoritative figure and hated by the audience for their racist actions—but to identify how these characters are meant to create discomfort, and ultimately instigate change in the audience.

Witnessing

Witnessing is relevant throughout this study as I tackle ideas of what it means to be complicit in state-sanctioned—often racialized—violence. Caroline Wake (2009), builds on Brecht's description of witnessing in his essay, "The Street Scene" (1979), which suggests that the actor is an "eyewitness" who is recounting their experience so that bystanders can "form an opinion" on the event or accident that the eyewitness recounts (Brecht 121). Brecht uses the example of a car accident and its primary witness in "The Street Scene" as an analogy for epic theatre, where the eyewitness transmits knowledge to other bystanders much like an actor in epic theatre should transmit knowledge to the audience. Although Brecht recognizes the eyewitness as necessary for transmitting information, Wake describes how the bystanders become witnesses themselves and begin to form personal opinions on the content they receive. According to Wake,

an understanding of trauma theory, and the role of primary and secondary witnesses, can better inform theatrical witnessing:

[...] theorists of primary witnessing tell us that we cannot plan to be primary witnesses, that it happens accidentally. Even when we are primary witnesses, we are not always aware of the fact. Indeed, in primary witnessing the event is only imbued with meaning in retrospect. Nevertheless, as theorists of secondary witnessing will attest, *one can intentionally become a witness by consciously deciding to listen to another witness.*

Perhaps it is this mode of intense listening that ought to be our model for future discussions of [theatrical] witnessing. (15)

As Wake points out, audience members are not primary witnesses because it is not an accident that they are in attendance of the event. Her attention to “intense listening” ascribes a sense of purpose that coincides with an attempt at recognition and understanding of another person’s experience. Similarly, Belarie Zatsman (2003) speaks to the significance of witnessing in drama used for education, particularly surrounding the historical trauma of the Holocaust, noting, “We cross boundaries in drama work, both in and out of role, carrying memories from the other: witnessing. With respect to the study of the Holocaust, witnessing is defined as *receiving* the obligation to retell, to re-perform testimony” (35). In other words, witnessing serves as a method for receiving information from—and recognizing—the struggles experienced by someone you perceive as other.

Both Wake and Zatsman talk about the witness as someone who consciously receives the information that they are given by someone who has experienced, or recounts experiences of, trauma. I would argue that it is this recognition of the other and their experience that makes theatre a useful tool for sharing marginalized narratives. With that said, it strikes me that not

everyone will recognize or accept the narrative of the other, and, therefore, not everyone has the capability to be a witness. Witnessing sometimes creates a dichotomy of people: those who choose to recognize and witness the events before them and those people who do not. Those who neglect to recognize what they have witnessed and choose not to react in a compassionate way become complicit observers of the other's trauma. All three of the plays I analyse consider how characters are affected by complicit witnessing, which begs the question, what does it mean to become a complicit witness to trauma? By extension, how does the audience become complicit in witnessing the trauma on stage, and how might this influence them by the end of the play? These are questions I address throughout both chapters in my thesis.

Many of the metadramatic elements that I draw on throughout my analysis originate from Brecht's conceptualization of epic theatre, which refuses to accept the human condition as a reason for audience complacency, but instead utilizes "the force of what is startling" to encourage a stronger emotional reaction from the audience ("Theatre for Pleasure" 71). Just as Brecht's eyewitness in the "street scene" recounts what they saw for a specific purpose, Brecht insists that epic theatre must "have a socially practical significance" ("The Street Scene" 122). Another specific metadramatic technique used in the plays is Brecht's alienation affect (A-affect). Adapted from practices he witnessed in Chinese theatre, this is frequently used in epic theatre to make actor and audience refuse the total "illusion" that classic European theatre depends on. Instead, the A-affect requires that "[the] audience identifies itself with the *actor as being an observer*, and accordingly develops [their] attitude of observing or looking on" ("Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting" 93; emphasis my own). Consequently, the A-affect demands that actor and audience both become witnesses to the story performed on stage. When used in this way, these Brechtian metadramatic techniques point to the artificial construct of the

play itself, often to make viewers more aware of their position in the audience and to engage critically with the action taking place on stage. Elaine Aston (2018) explores how the A-affect can be used to positively enforce social feminism by “[reawakening] critical perceptions blunted or anaesthetised by the ideological and economic forces of neoliberalism—to elicit an urgently needed political sensing that still the world might be otherwise” (302). And so, throughout this analysis, I point to moments where metadramatic techniques, such as those described by Brecht, are used to create discomfort and prompt change—to reawaken the audience’s “critical perceptions.”

All Canadians need to confront gendered colonial violence and the systemic prejudice that enables it in contemporary society. Drama that represents otherwise marginalized narratives and critiques problematic social structures is one method that can effect change. Speaking to her own identity as a Black Canadian woman and playwright, Naila Keleta-Mae admits, “I also never anticipated my visceral anger at my complicity in the precarious state of our world or my palpable fury with the painstakingly slow pace of change within our world. I would argue that we should be furious [...] We need to dramatise, produce and teach our fury so that our anger may help lead us out of this time of war” (“Contemporary Social Justice Theatre” 33). Keleta-Mae views ongoing state violence against Black lives as a form of war, one that demands public attention and fury; in addition, other marginalized groups stand to benefit from confronting complicit acceptance of harmful systemic practices. To live in a comfortable state of complicity vis-à-vis this trauma experienced by marginalized groups is problematic—dramatizing troubling events provides an avenue for change. As Zatsman elaborates, “drama educates by pressing against historical consciousness, connecting the personal with the public, form with content”

(35). Through drama, one might educate about gendered colonial violence in a sensitive manner that promotes empathy and connection in an audience that chooses to witness the event.

1. Gendered Colonial Violence in Historiographic Metadrama

“The present and the 1730s. Then is now. Now is then” (Gale 2). Thus, Lorena Gale sets her play, *Angélique*, comparing Canada’s present with a time before the abolition of slavery. It is not without coincidence that Lorena Gale dedicates her play, *Angélique*, to her own Black Canadian mother, Lillian Madden, “who *slaved* all her life for minimum wage and still managed to house, feed, clothe and educate 5 children” (n.pag.; emphasis my own). *Angélique* then must be seen as a commentary on what it has meant, and what it means today, to be a Black woman in Canada, whether this woman is a slave like the character of Angélique or a woman who must “slave” to care for her family, like Lillian Madden. Gale’s use of the word “slave” in both past and present contexts reveals the colonial trauma that the Black Canadian communities have lived with for generations. Consequently, before the action of *Angélique* begins, Gale has established intergenerational trauma and gendered colonial violence as key topics within her play. Notably, the setting and the dedication are far from the only methods that Gale uses to destabilize past and present: there can be no mistaking that *Angélique* is targeting the socio-political realities of contemporary Canadian society. As with the other plays which my thesis investigates, I argue that *Angélique* can be categorized as historiographic metadrama and that this categorization is helpful for understanding how each play stages gendered colonial violence. The style of the genre demands that we recognize why engaging with past trauma is essential to contemporary issues surrounding Canada’s “multicultural mosaic,” indicting those who remain complicit and silent in a colonial regime that victimizes women of all backgrounds.

I base my definition of historiographic metadrama on the work of Ric Knowles and George Belliveau. Knowles was one of the first to consider historiographic metadrama (1987) by

adapting Linda Hutcheon's "Canadian Historiographic Metafiction" (1984). For Hutcheon, historiographic metafiction hinges on the moment of *enonciation*, "the interaction of textual production and reception," that brings "an awareness of the potential for ideological manipulation of the reader – through rhetoric or through the power of language and of the vision it can create" (n.pag.). This moment of *enonciation* then holds the potential to effect ideological change in the reader. Knowles and Belliveau do not address *enonciation*, but I would argue that the ties between production and reception occur almost simultaneously in theatre. While Roland Barthes contended that the author is dead once a book enters the hands of a reader, the immediacy of live theatre builds a relationship between the author of the text, performers, and audience members. This immediacy of production and reception, in a shared space that invites the audience to witness the events that unfold on stage, may provide an opportunity for the audience to be influenced by ideological change.

For the purpose of my study, it is helpful to define "historiographic metadrama" in terms of Canadian theatre: as Knowles acknowledges, historiography frequently points to the instability of history itself (228). So, first, historiography in drama works to divulge marginalized narratives and thus challenge broad preconceptions of Canadian history by pointing to the instability of dominant narratives. Second, metadrama traditionally features a play within a play, but it can also include any "self-conscious" moment that "draws attention to its own fictional status as a theatrical presence" (Baldick). Considering the term as a whole, historiographic metadrama destabilizes dominant narratives of history, while simultaneously drawing attention to the problematic nature of societal complicity regarding the trauma that unfolds both in our nation and on our nation's theatrical stages. I argue that there is a gap in research and analysis that has been undertaken since historiographic metadrama was first conceived; although they

consider *The Komagata Maru* with a feminist lens, Knowles and Belliveau's work must be extended upon, given the many and diverse forms of feminism in contemporary society⁵. My research considers the contemporary portrayal of gendered colonial violence in Canadian theatre—that is, the way colonial authority negatively treats people based on dominant attitudes toward gendered and racialized identities. Through a comparative analysis of *Angélique*, *The Komagata Maru Incident*, and *The Unnatural and Accidental Women*, I propose that historiographic metadrama can function to reveal the trauma of gendered colonial violence, which is at once deeply rooted in Canada's colonial past and also connected to contemporary issues of violence against women today.

Before continuing with my analysis, I believe it is meaningful to ask, what is at stake during these performances? Why are these scripts and performances significant, and for whom? To answer these questions, one must first think critically about how society considers the past. One might ask: what happens when we perform memory? What if this memory challenges a dominant belief or world view? Or a dominant narrative of history? As Ric Knowles proposes in *How Theatre Means* (2014), "The meaning of a particular work [of theatre] is neither constant nor stable [...] It is produced by cultures and productive of culture" (2). In other words, theatre is a response to culture, and it produces responses within culture itself; thus, theatre works to capture memories of the past and ideas of the present, with the hope of creating change for the future. Indigenous feminist scholar Jo-Ann Episkeneu insists that "[r]eading Indigenous literature helps Indigenous people understand how colonial public policies have affected our relatives in the past and continue to affect us in the present," while simultaneously holding the

⁵ Throughout this thesis, I prioritize the work of Indigenous feminists to discuss the implications of systemic injustice in Canadian society; I also use intersectional feminism explicitly as a framework in my second chapter to dissect the compounding forms of oppression faced by people from different positionalities.

potential to bring “individuals living in isolation” into “a larger community of shared stories” that can validate their own experiences of trauma (16). While this is particularly true for Indigenous Peoples because of the harsh impacts of colonialism, other participatory audiences stand to gain from learning about the ways in which colonial subjugation has been destructive and harmful. Indeed, Episkenew argues that “[t]he settlers cannot be cured from the pathology of colonialism unless they understand the damage that colonialism and colonial policies have wrought and the privileges they enjoy as a result” (155). There are substantial differences in how various participatory audiences engage with a play, and as Episkenew claims, there are substantial benefits when both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities view a play that challenges societal norms and dominant historical narratives.

Professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) asks the question: “[i]s history important for Indigenous Peoples?” (73). Here, she does not limit “Indigenous Peoples” to one continent but instead uses the term to encompass colonized Peoples whose histories have been “subjected to the colonization of their lands and cultures, and the denial of their sovereignty, by a colonizing society that has come to dominate and determine the shape and quality of their lives” (39). By considering Tuhiwai Smith’s description of what it means to be “Indigenous,” it is possible to address the plays in this study—and more specifically the colonized women in each play—in a single conversation about the effects of gendered colonial violence in contemporary Canadian society. There is much to be gained from this comparative analysis of the plays and women, but as Tuhiwai Smith points out, one cannot conflate their cultural backgrounds and histories. These characters are simultaneously subject to the power of colonial history, and also subjects—agential female subjects—in their own right. While historical narratives might influence the perception of these women, it is crucial to recognize that the existing Eurocentric narratives

cannot fully encapsulate each woman's life. *The Komagata Maru Incident*, *Angélique*, and *The Unnatural and Accidental Women* function in two distinct ways: to destabilize histories based in colonial thought, and to re-imagine the stolen subjectivity of the women in each play.

Even though it is important for Indigenous Peoples to “rewrite” and “reright” their history, Tuhiwai Smith argues:

In fact history is mostly about power. It is the story of the powerful and how they became powerful, and then how they use their power to keep them in positions in which they can continue to dominate others [...] a thousand accounts of the ‘truth’ will not alter the ‘fact’ that Indigenous Peoples are still marginal and do not possess the power to transform history into justice. (80-1)

Instead, Tuhiwai Smith argues that “the need to tell our stories remains the powerful imperative of a powerful form of resistance” (82); in other words, storytelling becomes a site of resistance to colonial histories *and* the power structures they work to maintain in the here and now. Theatre allows for a performative and communal form of storytelling, and therefore holds this same potential for resistance to colonial norms and authorities. Episkenew also states that “[t]heatre can be transformative, and Indigenous people have come to recognize theatre as an art form that they can utilize to examine and address the unresolved grief and trauma in [their] communities” (148). I argue that each play in my analysis confronts the effects of gendered colonial violence, both to deconstruct dominant narratives of Canada as a “multicultural mosaic” and to offer a contemporary form of resistance through the performance of a counternarrative. *Angélique*, *The Komagata Maru Incident*, and *The Unnatural and Accidental Women* work to reveal the negative implications of gendered and racialized hierarchies through the use of metadramatic practices that implicate the audience in the action of the play; further, by complicating linear Western

constructs of time, each play reveals how current social injustices are deeply rooted in Canada's colonial past.

The Komagata Maru Incident

I start my analysis with Pollock's play because it has the largest body of research surrounding it and is the oldest of the three plays. Further, it has been used as an exemplary text for Canadian historiographic metadrama by both Knowles and Belliveau. *The Komagata Maru Incident* has been both praised and criticized for the way it reconstructs the government's clash with the Komagata Maru, where 356 East Asian immigrants, all lawful British citizens, were denied access to dock and land in Vancouver Harbour.

Rather than focusing on the people aboard the Komagata Maru, Pollock's protagonist is Inspector William Hopkinson, the "Head of Intelligence, Department of Immigration" (Pollock 110). It is Hopkinson's role to mediate, and effectively refuse, the people aboard the Komagata Maru; the ultimate irony concerning Hopkinson's role as Head of Intelligence is that, while his father was a British officer stationed in India, his mother was likely Indian. As Denis Salter (1989) points out, "Hopkinson has never been able to reconcile this split in his racial identity: hence the destructive forces at work within his moral code" (6). Further, Salter argues that Hopkinson's character dilutes the moral message of the play by "[asking the audience] to think of racism as caused largely by personal neurosis" (7). I agree with Salter's judgement that Hopkinson's racism stems from his feelings of inadequacy, as seen when Hopkinson admits that he left India because "[p]romotion was blocked [for him] in Lahore" (116), likely because of his mixed racial background; however, I would argue that Salter's position on the play's message ignores the other power dynamics at work by focusing too narrowly on the character of

Hopkinson. By considering the role of T.S. and the relationship he holds with the other characters in the play, one can establish how the play fits the genre of historiographic metadrama and consequently deals with the theme of gendered colonial violence.

The play itself is moderated through the character of T.S., whom Pollock (1976⁶) describes as “[t]he Master of Ceremonies, who plays many roles” (Pollock 1). The ambiguity of his name is never addressed in the play, but his initials might reference “The State or subtly refer to the mayor of Vancouver at the time, T.S. Baxter” (Nothof qtd. in Bhatia 34). It is important to note that Belliveau considers T.S. a part of an “outer play,” through which he manipulates the characters of the inner play and breaks the fourth wall to address the audience, thus implicating them in the racist action of the outer play (97). According to Belliveau, the other characters form the “inner play,” which T.S. can stop and start at will. As the “Master of Ceremonies” in the circus act that reimagines the arrival and departure of the Komagata Maru, T.S. is the only character in the outer play and instrumental in manipulating the inner play. Belliveau emphasises that T.S.’s role is to theatrically reconstruct history in a way that destabilizes dominant historical narratives, particularly those that see Hopkinson as a martyr and hero, and his murderer, Mewa Singh, as a terrorist (97).

The implications of T.S.’s control are that much more alarming if he is considered an embodiment of “The State”: he is never called T.S. by any of the other characters and only interacts by impersonating the roles of key historical figures, such as Hopkinson’s nameless superior (simply addressed as “Sir” (114, 19)), the “Department of Immigration” (116), an unnamed speaker in Parliament (121), and a court judge (139)). T.S. then can be considered a

⁶ Here I have used the 1976 edition of the script to cite details included in the character list, made available in the online publication through *Alexander Street*; otherwise, I rely on the script in the 1984 anthology, *On Stage 2*, only because I preferred working from a hard copy of the play.

colonial authority who is a nearly omniscient and omnipotent force within the play: he is never recognized as “T.S.” by any of the characters of the inner play, yet manipulates their every move and even narrates Hopkinson’s murder at the hands of Mewa Singh. By having a colonial authority manipulate the metatheatrical elements of the play, Pollock demonstrates how history is constructed by people in a position of power in a very literal fashion. Moreover, the stage directions suggest that “[the] characters never leave the stage. When not involved in the action, they sit on benches placed on the extreme Stage Right and Stage Left ends of the arc” (110). By positioning the cast on stage for the entirety of the play, the cast itself is made complicit in the racist and discriminatory action of the play through their passive viewing of the play’s action, a technique that is echoed in *Angélique* and *The Unnatural and Accidental Women*.

By having T.S. responsible for the pacing and the retelling of the play, the audience must be aware of the fact that he is constructing the narrative. Belliveau points to the historiographic elements of the play by noting, “[t]he inner play in *The Komagata Maru Incident* reminds the audience how, to a certain extent, history is shaped by whoever is retelling it and that Pollock, via her dramatic characters, is interpreting the circumstances that led Hopkinson (and the Canadian government) to deny entry to the passengers on board the Komagata Maru” (99). From Belliveau’s analysis, it can be seen how the events of the Komagata Maru incident are challenged by the artifice Pollock uses to construct the play: her work does not present the “truth” of the event, but instead challenges what has been constructed as “truth” within a colonial narrative.

Compared to T.S., the Woman is confined in every aspect: she cannot leave her portion of the stage meant to represent the Komagata Maru; she cannot interact with the other characters; and significantly, she is devoid of even a name. We cannot ignore her presence on stage, nor can

the other characters ignore the moral dilemma of not allowing her (and the others aboard the Komagata Maru) to disembark from the ship and seek a home within Canada. As described by Salter, “[w]e are never allowed to forget that this is a highly theatrical, non-illusionistic investigation of a continuing social problem. As both judge and jury, we are in effect being asked to pass judgement on ourselves” (n.pag.) Salter’s analysis points to audience complicity in the racist action of the play: the audience and the cast are both complicit in the racist action on stage, but the audience alone is capable of recognizing and reacting to the trauma that unfolds.

Although the Woman does not have the same authority as T.S., her presence on stage and her growing defiance act as persistent reminders that colonial norms and regulations have been—and continue to be—extraordinarily detrimental to People of Colour. In this way, the Woman also plays an important role in establishing *The Komagata Maru Incident* as historiographic metadrama by reacting to state violence in a layer that is distinct and separate from the other characters in the play.

Because she is separate from the other actors, I argue that the Woman and her son operate in a third layer of the play, notable for its strict confinement and the severe limitations upon the Woman’s agency. Pollock writes in the opening stage directions for the play, that “[t]he *WOMAN* is on a level above and behind the area used by the other characters. An open grill-like frame in front of her gives both the impression of a cage, and of the superstructure of a ship” (Pollock 110). The staging of the Woman then invites multiple interpretations: she is literally contained within the Komagata Maru, and by extension, effectively imprisoned by the Canadian authorities for no crime of her own, as though on display for both the nation and the audience alike. In this space, the Woman is set apart from the other characters of the play, outside of the action of the inner play, and even outside contact with T.S. Of interest, the stage directions insist

that “*T.S. cannot intrude upon the WOMAN’s space, [but] he is free to move anywhere else on the set to observe or speak*” (110). While T.S. seems nearly omnipotent in his ability to view and manipulate many of the characters on stage, he is unable to breach the confines of the Komagata Maru to impact the Woman directly. And so, for all of the limitations that are placed upon the Woman, she is the character who is best able to resist T.S. (and by extension “the state”).

In an argument that focuses on her lack of agency, Salter claims that “[the] Woman is a moving emblem of suffering and endurance but [...] the decision to portray her as a type-character robs her of much of her humanity” (n.pag.). Here, I disagree with Salter’s evaluation of the Woman and argue that as the only Person of Colour on stage⁷ (given that Hopkinson identifies as White, regardless of his matrilineal East Asian heritage), she is a key reminder of the dominant attitudes about gender and race during 1914. Even though the Woman’s namelessness in the play might seem to represent a lack of humanity or agency for the Woman, it is crucial to recall the contexts of the Komagata Maru incident in terms of gendered colonial norms. A collaboration between Simon Fraser University and the Canadian Department for Immigration and Citizenship has created an online database that pulls together historical documents from the Komagata Maru, in an attempt to educate the public on the events leading up to and concluding the incident; in this endeavour, researchers have attempted to compile a master list of passengers aboard the ship, despite admitting that some “documents and manifests have been lost” (“Komagata Maru Journey” n.pag). The researchers involved say that the absences in the documentation are equally necessary to a contemporary understanding of the

⁷ As mentioned in the Introduction, one of the primary limitations of *The Komagata Maru Incident* is the lack of East Asian representation. Aside from having a primarily White company of actors, Pollock also notes in her interview with the SFU Library that she wanted to avoid appropriating an East Asian perspective. Pollock’s characterization of the Woman then is based on her own experiences as a mother, wife, and daughter; she asked for help reviewing this character from members of the Vancouver Sikh community (7:10-8:09).

event: “[t]he silences and gaps in knowledge [...] speak to the processes of history collection and deficiencies in the colonial archive.” As a prime example that relates to the Woman of Pollock’s play, the “Passenger List” for the Komagata Maru lists two women, both of whom are described as “Wife of Above”; one woman also has her name added beside this label, but the other remains nameless in this historical document. Both women are named for their role within a colonial society: “Wife of Above.” It is not a stretch then to speculate that Pollock imitates colonial documents, such as the “Passenger List” of the Komagata Maru. By refusing to name the Woman, Pollock foregrounds the colonial disempowerment of women. This disempowered position of “Wife” and “Woman” is reinforced by Hopkinson, who can only pity the Woman and her child: if they are worth saving, it is only because of their positionality as “the woman” and “child,” and not because their lives (like the other immigrants aboard the boat) are intrinsically valuable (Pollock 123).

Even though this positioning might seem to restrict the Woman to the bounds of gendered colonial norms, she is the only person not directly manipulated by T.S., and the only Person of Colour allowed to speak defiantly against British colonialism: “[w]e go back [to India]. My husband is dead. He died in *their* war. His father is dead. He died when *they* cut back the famine relief. I am a British subject, and my people’s taxes have gone to *their* King. I am not a possession, a thing. I am myself and I will fight for myself and my son and my people. I am strong” (138; emphasis my own). In this statement, the Woman speaks to the tragedies that her family has experienced at the hands of the British, from war to famine. Despite the ongoing trauma the Woman has experienced, she asserts her subjectivity through a promise of defiance. Her speech recognizes the power the British empire holds over herself—and the people of India as a whole—but with the promise, “[she] will fight for myself and [her] son and [her] people,”

ultimately foretelling a time when Indian people will seek independence and reject British control entirely. By having the Woman act as one of the most defiant characters in the play, Pollock breaks with colonial gender norms and asserts the Woman's agency.

In contrast to the Woman, male members of the Vancouver Sikh community are addressed by name in the play, though they are never present on stage: their narrative is controlled entirely by either Hopkinson or T.S. Both the Woman and her male counterparts are disempowered through the lack of name and body, respectively. Both are "othered" by a colonial regime that would control their position within the state and exploit them based on gendered expectations. Notably, most of the male Sikh characters are involved with either the British military (in the case of those aboard the KM) or state intelligence (as with Hopkinson and his men). When the lives of Hopkinson's informants are threatened because of their role in aiding the B.C. government during the Komagata Maru incident, Hopkinson attempts to ask the government for aid, stating: "[t]heir lives are in danger... the community feels that they're traitors, surely they're loyal British subjects, like myself" (138). The government denies aid and Hopkinson's informants are left to fend for themselves; in the final pages of the play, we learn that each one has been murdered for their loyalty to the British, Hopkinson included. Their murder mirrors the treatment of the men aboard the Komagata Maru, who were also British soldiers, and therefore remain British subjects: these men are used and then abandoned after they have served their purpose in the British military. While the Woman experiences more passive forms of colonial violence aboard the *Komagata Maru*, the men in the play actively experience violence for the role they play as "British subjects." Hopkinson's informants are punished and rejected by both the colonial state and members of the Vancouver Sikh community who feel that

they have been betrayed, and most of the men aboard the Komagata Maru are forced to return to India.

As the sole character to represent the Sikh community in the play, the Woman narrates the death of her fellow shipmates when they dock in Budge Budge. Significantly, many passengers are injured or killed at the hands of a colonial regime that would attempt to segregate them from White, British subjects, “[w]e dock at Budge Budge fourteen miles from Calcutta. We are to be herded aboard the trains and returned to Punjab although many of us have not been there for years. We resist. Police, reinforced by soldiers, open fire. Men who shared their rancid flour and brackish water with my son are dead. (*a threat*) We will remember them” (139). I argue that Pollock is criticizing colonial-British subjecthood, via Hopkinson and his informants, as well as the men aboard the Komagata Maru. Though the British are content to utilize male Indian subjects as soldiers, the Woman’s final threat—“[w]e will remember them”—reinforces that all of the men hold more value than the British empire assigns to the racialized “other.” Simultaneously, Pollock subverts gendered colonial norms by having the Woman act as the voice of Indian dissent to British control. The voice of the Woman destabilizes the perception of women as coy and powerless, while the narrative of the men reveals the bodily control the state holds over them. In *The Komagata Maru*, gendered colonial violence impacts both Men and Women of Colour.

As Knowles and Belliveau argue, T.S. and the presence of the outer and inner play make *The Komagata Maru Incident* a provocative example of historiographic metadrama that reimagines the events of the play through the strict control of T.S.; however, I assert that the Woman provides an essential voice as she narrates her experiences of colonial violence at the hands of the British colonial authority, as well as her defiance against it. Not only does the

audience become complicit in the racist action that T.S. instigates through the various authoritative figures he personifies, but the audience also becomes complicit in the racialized injustice that the Woman narrates throughout the play. And so, if the role of the Woman is to draw attention to the ways White Canadians have been—and continue to be—complicit in state-sanctioned, racialized oppression, her final promise to remember those who died aboard the Komagata Maru can be seen as a call to witness, to remember the ways that colonial authorities have used harm against People of Colour to shape the nation.

Recognizing that *The Komagata Maru Incident* is the earliest play in my analysis and that it is among the first works to address the incident, one must also recognize the limitations of the text. Despite the moments when T.S. breaks the fourth wall to address a contemporary audience, the action of the inner play is firmly grounded in 1914. Unlike the other two plays in my analysis, Pollock's work does not speak directly to the intergenerational impact of gendered colonial violence. Although Pollock illustrates the Woman's return to India and Hopkinson's murder at the hands of the colonial state, there is little to no exploration of how this will impact future generations. T.S.'s explicitly racist actions and his interactions with contemporary audience members reinforces the implication that this racist colonial mentality has not disappeared in contemporary society; however, there are no explicit connections that describe how the events surrounding the Komagata Maru impact contemporary Canadians, especially those belonging to the Sikh community. Salter explores Pollock's motivations for the play when he suggests that "... in *The Komagata Maru Incident*, the playwright is using much more direct presentational strategies to engage the audience's attention, to persuade it to take responsibility *now* for the pattern of racial prejudice found throughout our history" (n.pag.). To take his analysis a step further, *The Komagata Maru Incident* is more interested in highlighting injustice

in Canadian history than in looking at the present-day ramifications, or the impacts of intergenerational trauma, that this event created.

Angélique

In contrast, Lorena Gale's *Angélique* is primarily interested in breaking down barriers between past and present in order to investigate legacies of colonial violence and the resulting intergenerational trauma. Fire, hanging, and death are key elements that both open and close *Angélique*, affirming that the play works to encapsulate the colonial violence experienced by Angélique in the sixteenth century and Black Canadians today. Angélique's story begins when she is purchased as a slave by François: she is a gift for Thérèse, who names Angélique for her sister "Marie Joseph," and her deceased daughter, "Angélique" (5). As is the case with the Woman in *The Komagata Maru Incident*, the audience never learns Angélique's true name, likely because it was never recorded in the surviving historical documents (Cooper 160). After being sold to François Poulin de Francheville, Angélique suffers emotional, physical, and sexual abuse at the hand of her "owners," François and his wife, Thérèse de Couagne. When Angélique learns she is to be sold again, she attempts to run away to New England on the same night Montreal is set aflame. Angélique is then accused of starting the fire, tortured until she admits her crimes, and finally hanged at the end of the play.

No work has previously been done on the ways that *Angélique* aligns with historiographic metadrama; however, there has been considerable work about how the play considers historiography and witnessing. *Angélique* certainly deals with issues of gender, class, and race; however, Joan Anim-Addo and Maria Lima (2018) name the play as an example of a neo-slave narrative that works to "re-affirm the historical value of the original slave narrative and to

reclaim the humanity of the enslaved by (re)imagining their subjectivity” (1). Even though Anim-Addo and Lima do not expand on how *Angélique* supports the neo-slave narrative, I would agree that the play attempts to “reclaim the humanity” of Angélique by “re-imagining [her] subjectivity” and complicating the role she played in the 1734 fire of Montreal. In addition, Anim-Addo and Lima argue that: “Neo-slave narratives, whether literary, poetic, performative, or visual, not only demand that we re-evaluate a vexed history of trauma and violence but also urge us to reconsider the modern history of the representation of Black bodies and selves” (3). The definition of the neo-slave narrative reflects a historiographic approach, in that both attempt to destabilize dominant narratives and expose the trauma of colonial violence. By watching or reading the play, the audience must confront the history of violence that Angélique has lived and also consider the repercussions for contemporary Canadian society. Sarah Yiu (2009) also writes about the representation of Black female bodies and argues that “by giving Angélique a story, her voice is made human and rebellious, reclaiming the stories that have been appropriated and silenced” (78). It is essential to recognize that the voice given to Angélique is one of rebellion against past and present oppression.

Yet, *Angélique* does more than destabilize the notion that Canada was free of slavery and its contemporary legacies. Gale writes in the stage directions that “[unless] otherwise stated, the slaves are working in every scene in which they appear, either in a modern or historical context. Although the specifics are not written into the text, what can be explored is the concept of witnessing” (2). Therefore, the actions of each character are watched, weighed, and judged by those characters who remain onstage but not part of the immediate action. In her article “Canadian Theatre and Monuments,” (2003) Joanne Tompkins argues, “[t]he audience, itself complicit, watches someone who watches others on stage: this layered example of witnessing

“documents” the essential complicity that the play continues to develop” (8). Just as the characters on stage fail to intervene in the gendered colonial violence that Angélique experiences, so too is the audience complicit in their silent witnessing. As happens in *The Komagata Maru Incident*, both characters and audience members witness trauma that unfolds on stage and are therefore complicit in the trauma that occurs in the past *and* contemporary Canadian society. Speaking to the ending of the play, where Angélique is found guilty and hanged, Filewod (2001) argues: “[in] the structure of complicity fixed by the returned gaze of the testifying characters and the audience, Angélique must be condemned, as she recognizes at the end of the play. She exists only to be systematically erased” (289). Her erasure from contemporary society must also be recognized as a type of violence: Angélique’s legacy is reduced to court documents that condemn her for her alleged crimes. The erasure of Angélique is also problematic in that it represents an erasure of slavery in Canada’s past. Naila Keleta-Mae (2016) speaks to her own experiences teaching *Angélique* and the lack of knowledge her university-level students have about slavery in Canada:

I have yet to teach a student, educated in Canada, who has not heard of the Underground Railroad [...] but in almost every instance where I teach the historiography of Angélique, students are surprised to learn of her existence and shocked that the transatlantic slave trade took place in Canada [...] I teach *Angélique* because its analysis consistently challenges students to reflect critically on how their understanding of themselves and the nation is affected by what is and is not omitted in prevalent discursive formations—from historical record, to academic scholarship, to public school criteria. (133-4)

And so, the ramifications of historical erasures—like Angélique—extend far beyond the realm of academia and can be seen to influence how current generations understand their identity as

“Canadians.” From work done by Tompkins and Filewod, it can be surmised that witnessing reinforces metadramatic elements in the play to destabilize the foundations of Canadian identity, while simultaneously challenging what it means to be Canadian today. Keleta-Mae extends on their theorization by writing about the erasures she encounters teaching *Angélique* in a classroom setting and the unsettling recognition students face when their beliefs about the history of Canada are challenged.

Arguably, *Angélique* aligns with the genre of historiographic metadrama because of the ways it mobilizes the neo-slave narrative to unsettle preconceived notions about Canadian history, and at the same time, utilizes witnessing through metatheatrical elements. For example, I would argue that Gale creates further friction between the Angélique recorded in history and the Angélique in her play by using distinct and purposeful metadramatic elements. Perhaps the most poignant of these methods is the shift between emotionless, third-person narration that imitates the historical record, and Angélique’s spoken word poems, given in monologue. Akin to Brecht’s alienation affect (A-affect), Gale’s choice creates distance between the Angélique of history and the Angélique who is presented on stage, thus allowing an opportunity for the audience to recognize that they are witnesses to this event—they are welcome to listen to and recognize the experiences of the “other,” and, in doing so, question the authority of historical documents where Angélique is only represented as a slave and a criminal. On a larger scale, alongside Gale’s use of anachronistic elements, this prompts contemporary audiences to question the ongoing racial inequalities experienced by Black people in Canada, today.

In her first appearance on stage, Angélique states her birth and death dates in the third person, referring to herself only as a “Negro Slave”—a subject within history, with no personal subjectivity of her own at this point in the play (Gale 5). This third person narration reflects a

description of Angélique that objectifies her and denies her agency. Other examples include Angélique's narration of her arranged relationship with Cesar, "with whom she had a son, Eustache ... [and] gave birth to twins" (14); the quick deaths of these children are narrated by Cesar, giving only "facts" that have been allowed to survive in a colonial regime that devalues non-White, and frequently non-male, voices. The third-person narration gives direct facts about the lives and deaths of these children, whereas the interactions that follow expose the emotional and psychological toll that these deaths have on Angélique.

Angélique's poetic monologues are an example of the intense emotion that Angélique experiences, providing stark contrast to the third person narrations that are written throughout the play. The acts of violence Angélique experiences in Canada as a Black female slave are traumatic; Gale attempts to move beyond formal language by capturing fragments of Angélique's trauma through spoken word poetry, which Angélique performs in intensely emotional moments. Spoken as a monologue in scene ten, Angélique's poem about "Darkness and Light" occurs just after the birth of Angélique's first child, and immediately before she takes his life. The child represents the sexual violence that has taken place in Angélique's life, both as a victim of rape and in the forced relationship between her and César, a Black slave owned by Ignace Gamelin; Angélique's children are expected to "turn a profit" (16) for the owners, Ignace and François, as her children could be sold as slaves. Officially, the first child is recognized as the son of César, but the child is also described as "awfully fair" (18), implying that he is likely the son of François. At the end of her poem, Angélique recognizes the paternity of her son by describing him as "[s]o light... So powerfully dark" (23): a recognition that despite his White father, he will be bound by the colour of his skin to slavery.

The poem itself is a story meant to describe how the universal concepts of Light and Darkness “became separate entities” (23), where Light was “in the forefront” and Darkness relegated to “the edge/ of everything” (23). At first glance, the story appears to be an allegory for the sociopolitical construction of race and racial hierarchies that push Black people and People of Colour to the margins of society. In the poem, Darkness gives birth to Light, and holds it “[l]ike/ mother/ cradling/ child” (21). Here, individual words in each line emphasize the maternal bond that Darkness feels for her child, a moment that is reflected in Angélique’s actions as she too “*stands, gently swaying, rocking [her] child in her arms*” (20). Unlike Angélique’s son, Light has “a ferocious hunger” and “anger” that is only satiated when it can “[rule]/ every/ thing” (21, 22, 23). The structure used in these lines parallels the structure of the maternal lines, above; however, maternal love is undercut by the patriarchal-type authority that Light wields over its mother and the world they live in. The traits that Light represents are an explicit representation of colonialization, where Light—or White colonizers—take land, resources, and even the bodies of those they colonize, via slavery. Angélique offers hope that eventually the colonial tirade might end, when “Darkness reclaims everything,” but admits that this “day is a long way off” (23). Tragically, the only way for Angélique to end the generational trauma of slavery is for her to take the life of her child, which also ends her possibility of passing on her cultural knowledge outside of this poem. The poem reinforces Angélique’s intentions, notable when she tells her son to “[fly] home and greet the darkness. There are others waiting there. Mama loves you and will join you soon” (23). This loss of life is made all the more tangible as the baby’s heartbeat plays softly in the background of the scene, until Angélique smothers her child and the heartbeat stops at the close of the poem. Devastating though the death is, as Sarah Yiu points out, it is an act of compassion to keep her son from slavery. Yiu argues that by killing her child, Angélique affirms

that he is not the property of François, while simultaneously affirming that her reproductive rights cannot be commodified by the slave trade (77). In contrast to the third person narration that only reveals the child's legal name, birthdate, and date of death, this scene reveals that his death was no accident, but rather, Angélique's method of denying colonial authority over her reproductive rights, and ultimately, her child's life.

In the final poetic monologue of the play, Angélique breaks the fourth wall to address a contemporary Canadian audience about the intergenerational impact of colonial violence experienced by her "brothers and sisters" in the "vista of tomorrow" (Gale 71). Despite the deaths of her children, she sees "this city.../ swarming with ebony" a prophecy meant to assure the audience that Montreal will become home to a significant Black population; however, her prophecy is complicated as Angélique reveals that discrimination and injustice have not ended in contemporary Canadian society. She says:

My brothers and my sisters...

Arrested for their difference.

Their misery

a silent scream,

rising to crescendo

and

Falling on deaf ears. (71)

Angélique condemns those with "deaf ears" who do not acknowledge the struggles of contemporary Black Canadians and therefore become complicit in the violence Black Canadians experience. As argued by Tompkins, it is implied through metadramatic devices that the

audience is complicit in both past and present modes of discrimination (115). Here, Angélique openly criticizes those who watch and do nothing to oppose racialized violence.

Angélique approaches her coming execution calmly, but the message for the audience is much more complicated. With her story told and her voice re-instated, Angélique appears at peace with her death as she echoes the promise she made to her newborn son, stating she is “going home” (Gale 72). Angélique actively participates in the arc of her story by taking the noose from the executioner and placing it around her own neck. Conversely, while Angélique’s story ends here, the audience is not meant to feel comfortable with the final scene, particularly since Angélique recognizes that activism against racialized discrimination will continue. In one of her final lines, she breaks the fourth wall to ask, “[can] you see the fires rise to greet the sunset?” (72). Even as her life comes to an end, the fires of rebellion are still burning. Considering this moment, George E. Clarke explains that: “[Angélique] dies amid ‘The overpowering sound of drums’ (76), a military-cum-multicultural sign of her perpetual ability to ‘light fires of rebellion’” (12). To build on Clarke’s analysis, I would argue that the end of the play aims to use Angélique’s death as a way to break the audience from silent complicity when faced with racist attitudes or actions. Even though Angélique might be at rest, the nature of her death urges audience members from all backgrounds to recognize that there is extensive work to be done toward achieving equity and equality in Canada today. Naila Keleta-Mae emphasizes that “*Angélique* is necessary today because it does what all theatre has the potential to do—productively stage contestations of dominant narratives” (“Performance as Reappearance” 140). Only by recognizing that Canada *did* participate in slavery can contemporary manifestations of violence against Black lives be understood in full, and the narrative of Canada as a tolerant and multicultural nation be questioned.

The play opens and ends with the hanging of Angélique. The cyclical structure of the play, along with the third person narration, reinforces that this is a ‘historical’ event whose outcome cannot be changed. In contrast, by making Angélique the title character and protagonist, Gale’s story deviates from what is recorded in court documents or history books as Angélique’s life is re-imagined in a manner that reflects a historiographic approach to storytelling. Poignantly, Filewod speaks to this duality in Angélique’s character when he describes how “Angélique herself begins and ends the play with a book in hand—the book in which she has been reduced to a minor note and, through the agency of the play, restored” (288). In other words, Angélique is both a subject that history has manipulated and erased, and through the action of the play, a woman who is given her own identity and subjectivity. The significance of Angélique’s erasure is twofold: not only is her identity lost but so is this source of colonial trauma obfuscated within history books and the social fabric of contemporary Canadian society. Gale’s vision of Angélique does important work within the contexts of Canadian history by drawing connections between the transatlantic slave trade and the contemporary impacts of systemic racism.

Resurgence and *The Unnatural and Accidental Women*

Before turning to my next text, I would like to take a step back and address my methodology in this final section. As mentioned in my Introduction, I am interested in the metadramatic features of these texts that subvert dominant notions of race, gender, and class in contemporary Canadian society; even though I am considering the subversive ways that historiographic metadrama works, this methodology is based in White, male voices (Belliveau, Brecht, Knowles). In the first two plays of my analysis, gendered colonial violence is considered

in relation to the genre of historiographic metadrama. While *The Unnatural and Accidental Women* certainly critiques gendered colonial violence, and may qualify as historiographic metadrama, I must also recognize an Indigenous framework that is essential for the decolonial work that Clements does within this play. Native Feminist theorists, Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill say that “feminists must recognize Indigenous Peoples as the authors of important theories about the world we all live in” (21); and so, for the final section of this chapter, I turn to concepts of Indigenous resurgence as a framework to inform my analysis. Floyd Favel, a theatre and dance director and playwright from the Poundmaker First Nation, argues that Indigenous theatre must exist outside of the “existing Canadian theatre system,” and above all, “that the future of Aboriginal theatre lies in [the] quiet, rich interactions between the past and the present” (35). Indigenous feminist scholar, Leanne Betasamoake Simpson, similarly articulates the cultural relevance of the relationship between past and present in her description of Indigenous resurgence (2011, 2018). Consequently, in this final section, I will utilize Simpson’s theories of resurgence as an Indigenous framework for my analysis, acknowledging that resurgence also works to subvert colonial norms, but with an emphasis on invigorating Indigenous cultures and world views.

In her work, Simpson describes resurgence as a tool for Indigenous communities that can be used to “draw upon the intelligence of our Ancestors in a self-reflective and sometimes critical way and embody that intelligence on individual and collective levels as a mechanism for transforming our future relationships with the state” (“Centering Resurgence” 215). Resurgence then is firmly grounded in a return to traditional Indigenous knowledge to create positive change for future generations. Similar to historiographic metadrama, resurgence is also interested in identifying harmful legacies and systemic injustice; however, resurgence reinforces positive

cultural practices as a way forward into a better future for Indigenous communities (219). Simpson explains that “[r]esurgence is about both land and bodies. We need to build communities and nations where gender violence is not tolerated [...] and we need to hold the state accountable for the myriad of ways it uses gender violence to control, dispossess, erase, dehumanize, shame, and oppress Indigenous Peoples” (219). As a framework, resurgence works to reveal and problematize systemic instruments of gendered colonial violence, and the destructive impacts these have on Indigenous communities.

Unlike the other two plays, *The Unnatural and Accidental Women* occurs in the recent past, and yet, it traces the legacy of colonial violence against Indigenous women and the resulting intergenerational trauma experienced by Indigenous communities beyond the setting of the play. Throughout the script, Clements paints a broad picture that critiques how colonial influences have disrupted Indigenous connections to the land and ways of life, ultimately leading to the isolation experienced by each of the women in the play. Similar to Gale and Pollock’s condemnation of colonial authority, Clements draws specific connections between colonial violence and the contemporary impact it has on marginalized Indigenous Peoples in contemporary Canadian society. Witnessing is represented through metadramatic elements in the play to reveal gendered colonial violence and intergenerational trauma. Throughout *The Unnatural and Accidental Women*, witnessing draws attention back to the lives—and afterlives—of the women in the play, to recognize their strength and resilience in the face of colonial violence. Like Gale’s *Angélique*, intergenerational trauma is portrayed through the disruption of mother-child bonds; however, throughout the play, Clements breaks Western boundaries of life and death to show that cultural knowledge can still be transmitted from mother to daughter in the form of resurgence.

Episkenew discusses how theatre allows communities (both settler and Indigenous) to heal together from colonial violence through shared witnessing of performed events, drawing attention to the “healing power of stories ... [to] cure the colonial contagion by healing the communities that these policies have injured” (2). The “colonial contagion” can only be healed if it is first revealed to those who carry and pass it on. Following this same argument, Michelle La Flamme (2008) contends that *The Unnatural and Accidental Women* “use[s] the power of drama to document the lives of real and murdered Aboriginal women. In this respect, [it] commemorate[s] these lives and, consequently, [has] the potential to heal communities” (113). Drama then has a place as a form of communal storytelling and witnessing for both characters and audience members alike. This idea is considered further by Erin Wunker (2010) who addresses witnessing and recognition both as elements of healing in Clements’ play. As Wunker writes: “Clements’ play hinges on this question of care, creating a community of witnessing between characters themselves and the audience as witnesses” (166). I agree with Wunker’s position that witnessing functions in multiple ways in Clements’ play, and suggest that witnessing is mobilized through various metadramatic techniques that attempt to shatter colonial norms and boundaries. As described by Sarah Banting (2007), “[i]f theatre cannot restore public access to individuals who have already died alone and ignored, it can call its audience members’ attention to their own blind spots” (83). Here, Banting explicitly describes *The Unnatural and Accidental Women*, but her claim can also be aptly applied to the ways that Gale and Pollock attempt to educate and create change within their work.

The Unnatural and Accidental Women examines the lives and deaths of women murdered by Gilbert Paul Jordan, a barber in Vancouver’s Downtown East Side (DTES), beginning in 1965 with Rose’s murder and ending in the play’s unnamed present with the death of the Barber.

The coroner's reports described signs of assault with some women but, as described by Clements in the introduction, "the cause of death for many of the women [was listed] as 'unnatural and accidental'" (n.pag.). When the murders were finally connected to Jordan, a major newspaper article by the *Vancouver Sun* focused on him and not the women he had killed. In an interview, Clements describes how the purpose of her play is to shift the focus away from the murderer and return humanity to the women who were murdered by focusing the plot on who they were, both in life and in death (Clements qtd. in Harrison 272). In the opening notes for the play, Clements also includes excerpts from the 1988 *Vancouver Sun* article, "Death by Alcohol," which was the main news release about the women who were killed; excerpts from the article include some small details about the nature of their deaths, such as how they were found, their blood alcohol levels, and notably that the various coroners concluded "no evidence of foul play": the deaths were deemed "unnatural and accidental" (*Vancouver Sun*, qtd. in Clements). Each of the women's names from the original article has been crossed-out, and the names of the coroners are purposefully included. The women's names in the play are all fictional, despite being based on all too real events. This move allows Clements to tell the story of the "unnatural and accidental women" without appropriating their identities, while still speaking to the struggles which with they were faced.

During the action of the play, Clements' stage directions call for projections that mimic the newspaper articles and coroner's reports that describe each woman's death, arguably as a call to witness the lives of the Women in all the depth and complexity that the projections cannot portray. These projections mirror the newspaper article's lack of detail and only include the woman's name, age, day of death, blood alcohol content, and the occasional sparse comment from the coroner (or lack of comment given). The choice to include these projections as a

metadramatic feature reinforces the stark difference between the “official” accounts of the women and the complicated lives they lived; the article and the projections alike represent the colonial erasure of the victims’ identities. Much like the court documents that tell a one-sided story of Angélique’s life, the coroner’s reports also reflect a colonial erasure of identity and lived experience for each of the Women. By focusing her play on the lives of the Women, before and after their deaths, Clements calls on the audience to bear witness to the struggles they faced as a result of systemic racism.

Clements’ opening to the play can be read as a critique of the intergenerational effects of colonialism, as Rebecca and Aunt Shadie—the protagonist and her deceased mother—tell the story of how the forest became “skid row” (Clements 9) in Vancouver’s DTES. In her analysis of the play, Wunker contends that the opening scene is a commentary on the corruption of the consumerist nature of western society. The play, she argues, “suggests that consumerism performs its identity: it infects everything in its path to such an extent that no one is capable of seeing the root of the problem” (Wunker 169). I agree that the critique of consumptive greed appears as a major theme throughout the play; however, it is essential to recall that the setting is a part of Rebecca and Aunt Shadie’s shared memory of the land, even though they appear to be separated by life and death. Mother and daughter tell the story of the land collectively and describe their lived experience as Indigenous women, trying to “make sense of all the losses and find one thing [to] hold on to” (Clements 13). For Rebecca, the “one thing” she is trying to make sense of is her mother’s disappearance when Rebecca was a child; and yet, searching for her mother brings about Rebecca’s own experience of resurgence as she confronts past traumas, and ultimately connects back with tradition. In the opening scene, women are described as part of the land itself: the forest is personified as Indigenous women, cut down by loggers to make room for

“a row of hotels” (10). The shared opening establishes a legacy of intergenerational trauma, on the body of land and the bodies of Indigenous women, reinforced by the fact that this narrative is shared by mother and daughter. Boundaries in time and space, life and death are blurred to tell the story of “skid row,” and the impact it has had on the people living there, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike. It also must be noted that the play opens with the imbalance of a broken family: the logger cannot hear a word they say, we learn that Aunt Shadie is dead, and Rebecca admits “[her] world has gone to shit” (13). While the play situates the role of the father in past tense, importantly, it works toward reconciling mother and daughter by recalling traditional Indigenous knowledge into Aunt Shadie’s experience of the afterlife, and as a result, into Rebecca’s life as she investigates her mother’s disappearance.

Throughout the play, urban isolation contrasts with the connection between characters. When recounting why she left her family, Aunt Shadie explains that she “was afraid [Rebecca] would begin to see me the way [my husband] saw me, the way White people look up and down without seeing you—like you are not worthy of seeing” (82). This moment reveals how Aunt Shadie felt racialized in her marriage to a White logger, and that she feared becoming isolated from her daughter as a result of the same colonial norms. Clements does not describe what happens to Aunt Shadie between this moment and her death, but we do learn about the ways that Aunt Shadie reconnects with tradition and community after she dies. In the afterlife, Aunt Shadie recalls and shares culture-based memories from her childhood, thus enacting her own form of resurgence. For example, Aunt Shadie remembers walking the traplines as a child during a conversation with Rose in Act One, and again with Rebecca when they confront the Barber. Although Rose first dismisses hunting on the trapline as “barbaric,” Aunt Shadie describes how urban grocery shopping—and the resultant alienation from “what [we] are eating”—is all the

more disturbing (39). Aunt Shadie's description underscores how urban living isolates her from both traditional knowledge and connections to the land. As a hunter, Aunt Shadie reinforces that the kill needs to be quick and clean so that the animal does not suffer. By the conclusion of the play, this same traditional knowledge will influence how Rebecca and her mother shift from Gilbert's prey to empowered hunters.

In the moments before Jordan's murder, Rebecca and Aunt Shadie tell the story of walking the trapline in unison (124-5). Similar to the introduction of the play, Euro-Western binaries of past/ present, life/ death, and concrete/ spiritual are blurred, but unlike the introduction—which recounted their shared trauma—, mother and daughter cross these boundaries to reunite through shared tradition. Just as Rebecca witnesses the accounts of the Women by collecting their stories (64-5), the Women witness and then aid Rebecca in both telling the trapping story and accomplishing justice through the death of Jordan. Michelle La Flamme has written extensively about *The Unnatural and Accidental Women*, and in her 2016 chapter, “(Re)Animating the (Un)Dead,” insists that this moment in the play reveals how “Clements wants audiences to consider the notion that redress for the missing and murdered Aboriginal women in Canada may be assisted by traditional knowledge, the power of matriarchal community, and perhaps even the spirit world” (244). There is a strong connection between Clements' work and Indigenous resurgence: healing holds intrinsic connections to the land and traditional knowledge.

There is power in revisiting the past, and especially in becoming a witness to the systemic atrocities that have been committed through the state's misuse of power. When a person chooses to become a witness to these colonial traumas, rather than a complicit—often silent—observer, they are choosing to acknowledge the harm that has been committed by the state. Witnessing

then becomes an effective way to disavow the erasures often found in colonial histories. Each of the plays in my analysis go beyond simple entertainment by demanding sociopolitical change in contemporary Canadian society. Although the stories told by each author span vastly different times and experiences, they focus on the negative impacts of gendered colonial violence experienced by various groups who have been disempowered via systemic colonial norms. In this analysis, historiographic metadrama and resurgence draw attention to marginalized narratives while portraying consequences of gendered violence in these communities, both past and present. Metadramatic features of the plays frequently call attention to the disparities between dominant historical narratives and the lived experiences of those people marginalized within them, and historiographic narratives work to expose harmful colonial norms and the erasures they propagate. The stories about a nation's history construct how people imagine that nation—Canada is often presented as a welcoming “cultural mosaic.” Yet, when voices of marginalized Peoples are incorporated into the construction of the nation, the problematic complexities of the Canadian nation state can be recognized and the cracks within dominant Canadian narratives exposed. Only then is change possible.

2. “McWitch to You Too!”: Recognizing White Privilege and Learning to Listen

Early in my project, I was intrigued that each play incorporated White women as supporting characters. None are main characters and, of the four central, White female characters, only Rose and Thérèse are not entirely fictional. On the surface, these plays—and these four White characters—do not seem to have much in common. Upon further evaluation, these characters are significant because of their interactions and reactions to People of Colour. I argue that Evy and Sophie (*The Komagata Maru Incident*), Rose (*The Unnatural and Accidental Women*) and Thérèse (*Angélique*) are crucial to a holistic analysis of the plays because they mobilize problematic interactions with People of Colour in each play; in other words, these characters serve as foils to People of Colour in the plays and help to highlight instances of gendered violence against racialized characters. As I reasoned in my previous chapter, historiographic metadrama holds the potential to prompt change within various participatory audiences; to build on this argument, representations of White women then hold the potential to encourage recognition of the ways we adhere to patriarchal and colonial norms, and how this harms women from all backgrounds. The White women in each play function in precarious roles, balanced between the White privilege they experience, the challenges and sexism they face as women, and for Evy, Sophie, and Rose, the limitations they confront as a result of their socioeconomic status. There is no single lens through which one can deconstruct prejudice in Canada. For this reason, I mobilize an intersectional feminist approach to consider how White female characters in these plays are victims of gendered violence, and equally capable of enacting violence against Women of Colour. This chapter unpacks the precarious duality that Evy, Sophie, Rose and Thérèse each portray, and considers the ways that their experiences

positively and negatively impact their relationships with People of Colour. I argue that negative relationships among characters are reinforced by problematic colonial hierarchies, whereas positive relationships can only occur if these hierarchies are broken down.

Understanding the various forms of privilege and prejudice that the characters experience can help speak to the complex relationships that are portrayed in the plays. In her book, *Living a Feminist Life* (2018), Sara Ahmed suggests that a woman can “receive some benefits by adapting [herself] to a system that is, at another level, compromising [her] capacity to inhabit a world on more equal terms” (36). In the contexts of my analyses, these White female characters exploit their racialized privilege while simultaneously experiencing violence as a result of gender. I ask how the women I analyse can both benefit and be harmed by adapting themselves to the various hierarchical systems at play. *The Komagata Maru Incident*, *Angélique*, and *The Unnatural and Accidental Women* each consider how White women are uniquely positioned to either help or hinder Women of Colour.

White Privilege, Intersectionality, and a “Feminist Community”

To better understand the complex relationships between various female characters in each play, one must first understand the divisions that have been socially and politically constructed throughout the different waves of feminism. Literary theorist Robert Dale Parker connects First-wave feminism to “[Mary] Wollstonecraft’s arguments for women’s education, focused on establishing women’s rights” through the 19th and early 20th century (149). Comparatively, Second-wave feminism developed in the 1960s and “often focused on a sense of sisterhood and shared identity” (150); however, Parker points out that many women found this view too narrow—that it essentialized all feminist struggles into those experienced primarily by White

women while ignoring the struggles experienced by Women of Colour. This has been exemplified by Black feminists, such as bell hooks (1981), who criticized the role White women held, historically, in the American suffrage movement, saying White women reinforced white supremacist thinking because these women “entered the movement erasing and denying difference, not playing race alongside gender, but eliminating race from the picture” (56). Even further, Chris Bruckert and Tuulia Law (2018), state that it was not unusual for early suffragettes—and here they specifically name Emily Murphy—to use “explicitly racist arguments and tropes to further their cause [of equality]” for White females, exclusively (4). Suffragettes, like Murphy, are often celebrated for their work toward gender equality even though the means by which they achieved this work are often overlooked⁸.

In her ground-breaking 1989 article, “Demarginalizing the Intersections of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,” Kimberlé Crenshaw challenges legal courts as well as feminist and civil rights thinkers to consider how Black women must deal with compounded issues of racialized and sexist prejudice, or, as she named them, intersectional experiences. Since that time, the concept of intersectionality has broadened in scope to consider inequities “where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects” (Crenshaw 2017, n.pag.). Intersectionality then becomes a “lens” through which power structures can be critiqued to better understand the various forms of prejudice that might impact a person, whether this is based on gendered, racialized, or class identities. Of significance to my analysis, Bruckert and Law speak to the ways intersectionality can be used to deconstruct gendered violence: “[i]ntersectionality allows for nuanced analyses

⁸ For example, the Person’s Case Scholarship celebrates the work done by the ‘Famous Five’—including Murphy—“who fought and won the right for *some* women in Canada to be considered ‘Persons’” (Alberta Student Aid; emphasis my own). This scholarship looks to celebrate these women but does not divulge in the complicated lives they lived.

and sheds light on the complex interplay between social and structural factors that condition women's individual and collective experience of, and vulnerability to, violence" (6). Using intersectionality as the main methodological framework for this chapter allows me to consider the relationship between systems of colonial power and gendered violence.

Native Feminist theorists, Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill make a call to challenge "settler colonialism and its intersections" to "reveal that a key aspect of the relentlessness of settler colonialism is the consistency and thus naturalization of heteropatriarchy and heteropaternalism" (14). These intersections are particularly important to my analysis since they recognize the ways that systemic colonial practices endorse and make invisible instances of gendered colonial violence. Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill primarily speak about the experiences of Indigenous women, using the lens of Native Feminist theory, however, they also mention that other groups could benefit from making the intersections between colonialism and heteropatriarchy visible, with the potential to "produce liberatory scholarship and activism for Indigenous women, non-Indigenous women, and ultimately, all peoples" (17). For the purpose of this analysis, I include socioeconomic status as another intersection that is relevant to the characters in these plays⁹. Throughout this chapter, I consider how women of all backgrounds are disproportionately impacted by gendered, socioeconomic, and racialized hierarchies, and thus experience various forms of gendered colonial violence.

Although it is specific to her analyses of *The Komagata Maru Incident*, Nandi Bhatia (2015) poignantly contends that theatre creates a unique space where marginalized voices can come together and "[suggest] the need for alliances across disempowered groups" (37). In other

⁹ Socioeconomic status is certainly connected to settler colonial practices and the exploitation of land and natural resources for financial gain; however, I talk about it as a distinct intersection in this chapter to underscore how people who lack monetary wealth are also subjugated to problematic hierarchies.

words, recognizing power structures that create social hierarchies is the first step toward dismantling these structures, to the benefit of each disempowered group involved. hooks argues that representation is key to strengthening interracial relationships by asserting that “[i]ndividual White women and Women of Colour who have worked through difficulties to make the space where bonds of love and political solidarity can emerge need to share the methods and strategies that we have successfully employed” (59). I would like to recognize that each play portrays spaces where women attempt to form “bonds of love and political solidarity” across disempowered groups—I have named these instances, “feminist communities.”¹⁰ While not every instance of the feminist community is successful, arguably, it is important to understand instances where these communities fail as a result of blind, White privilege. Both successful and failed representations hold the possibility of instigating change within White, or otherwise privileged, participatory audiences.

All of the women in these plays experience physical, emotional, and/ or sexual violence as a result of gendered and colonial norms that fail to value female voices and experiences; however, it must be noted that the White female characters encounter fewer barriers as a result of White privilege. I argue that only by doing away with their own preconceived ideas regarding racialized and gendered hierarchies can the women have the potential to overcome their prejudice and connect with other marginalized people in a meaningful way. As hooks believes, it is essential to represent positive relationships in order to demonstrate to audiences how women might come together from a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Even though some of the White female characters successfully recognize the ways they have participated in and reinforced the marginalization of People of Colour—and therefore can enact meaningful changes in their

¹⁰ I use this term to encompass groups that reinforce female solidarity, regardless of the positionality of each member.

behaviour—, others fail to recognize and come to terms with their unconscious prejudice. Be that as it may, critical analysis must not shy away from negative representations of White women—it is equally powerful to create a sense of discomfort that might inspire change in an audience.

The Unnatural and Accidental Women

I open this chapter with an analysis of Clements' play because, at its heart, this play is the most optimistic when it comes to examining how relationships between people of different positionalities can begin to recognize—and heal from—colonial stigmas. This analysis allows me to unpack the relationships that Rose develops with the Indigenous women, as Aunt Shadie helps her to unlearn harmful colonial stereotypes. Métis scholar, Jo-Ann Episkenew, argues for the sociocultural importance of Indigenous narratives that may function to “change society by educating the settler readers about Indigenous perspectives of Canadian society,” thus forcing settler readers to “examine their position of privilege and their complicity in the continued oppression of Indigenous People” (17). I argue that Rose's relationships with Aunt Shadie and the other Indigenous women allow Rose to hear their stories, and as a result, begin to recognize her own problematic views and her complicity in racialized violence, based in colonial norms.

Described as a “bitch” (Clements 23), an “*English immigrant*,” and “*a switchboard operator with a soft heart, but thorny*” (n.pag.), Rose seems to be the last person one would expect to be described as “not White” (82) by Aunt Shadie; even Rose argues “I'm pretty sure I'm White. I'm English” (82). Through Rose's interaction with Aunt Shadie, Clements complicates the interpretation of Whiteness by linking it to colonial power structures, wherein the ‘other’ is powerless. Aunt Shadie says that “White is blindness—it has nothing to do with the

colour of your skin” and that “White people look up and down without seeing you—like you are not worthy of seeing. Extinct, like a ghost... being invisible can kill you” (82). Here, Aunt Shadie describes how colonialism creates a binary of bodies that can be seen and bodies that cannot—bodies that hold societal value and bodies that go unnoticed. It is particularly important to remember that Aunt Shadie was murdered, and her case unsolved, because her Indigenous identity is not valued in settler-colonial society. In an analysis of this same scene, Sharon Sullivan (2013) maintains that “‘White’ is never a description of a person’s colour or ethnicity, or lack of colour or ethnicity. ‘White’ is coded, pointing to race as constructed rather than natural” (70). Instead, because both Rose and Aunt Shadie’s deaths were categorized as “unnatural and accidental,” both exist on the edge of a society that does not acknowledge the abuse they experience nor the violence surrounding their deaths; poignantly, it is their recognition of shared alienation and mistreatment that allows the women to bond and form an unlikely friendship.

In a similar argument that emphasizes the role of Aunt Shadie, Erin Wunker states, “it is Aunt Shadie who truly gives Rose the gift of death through her recognition and acknowledgement of Rose’s bruises [...]. [B]y recognizing and giving voice to Rose’s injuries, Aunt Shadie assumes the responsibility of bearing witness to the life (or death) of another” (174). That is to say, by choosing to recognize and witness Rose’s trauma, Aunt Shadie helps Rose to overcome the isolation imposed by her death and her role as a switchboard operator. Shortly after her conversation with Aunt Shadie, Rose chooses to connect with another person rather than impose isolation that would negatively impact them both. Rose agrees to help Mavis connect to her sister, even though she is concerned it is not “house policy” and she might get in trouble with the switchboard’s “management” (Clements 22-3). Sullivan points out that Rose “and the

Indigenous women experience similar desires and adversities” (69). More specifically, all of the women experience isolation and a desire for connection: these traits make them vulnerable to the influences of the Barber, Gilbert Paul Jordan. However, the same toxic desire for connection that drives each woman to Jordan and binge drinking is the same desire that brings the Women together in the afterlife. I extend Sullivan’s argument to consider how Rose is both perpetrator and victim of gendered colonial violence but, more importantly, how she can move away from both of these positions through the establishment of a feminist community.

In the context of the play, Rose is the only non-Indigenous woman to fall victim to the Barber, and, Clements identifies Rose as his first victim, who dies in 1965 (18). The projection that displays her age at her time of death and the year in which she was killed describes Rose’s body as “found nude on her bed [with] recent bruises on her scalp, nose, lips, and chin. There was no evidence of violence, or suspicion of foul play” (18-9). The projected description matches almost perfectly the first excerpt from *The Vancouver Sun*, included in the front matter of the play, suggesting that Clements made few edits to the pieces she included in her text, aside from changing the names of the Women. Even in the most analytic of tones, these injuries, both real and fictitious, must be read as the result of violence and trauma. In addition, the fact that Rose was “found nude” but admits to Aunt Shadie she has never seen anyone nude “up front” (15), implies that Rose was likely also sexually assaulted. Many scholars exclude Rose from their analysis, while others (Sullivan, Wunker) draw attention to Aunt Shadie’s recognition of the “*black eye and bruises*” (15). Rose’s trauma is signified through the injuries she still carries, even in death; presumably, her role as switchboard operator has effectively hidden both injuries and trauma until the moment Aunt Shadie breaks Rose’s isolation. Like Aunt Shadie, the story of Rose’s life leading up to her death is largely left untold, but both women share an experience of

violence, and, both women are able to extend kindness by recognizing the trauma that the other has experienced. Understanding how Rose experiences violence is essential for recognizing that she also suffers at the hand of gendered colonial violence, even though her body is not racialized in the same way as the Indigenous women.

In her position as switchboard operator, Rose, Wunker argues, adheres to “colonial mythologies” that reveal the “implicit history of embedded racism and (White) cultural assumptions about the capacities of Aboriginal intelligence” (173). Despite the fact that Rose is not physically violent toward Aunt Shadie and Mavis, as Wunker confirms, Rose initially supports harmful colonial stereotypes that would cast the other women as inferior. The entrenched colonial racism Rose exhibits is harmful, but she is able to move away from this and establish meaningful connections with the women she comes to know. It is her relationship with Aunt Shadie and Mavis that teaches Rose her assumptions about colonial mythologies are wrong, as she begins to learn more about each woman and their cultural beliefs.

In her role as switchboard operator, Rose functions as a kind of interlocuter, giving her the authority to allow or deny connections from her unearthly platform. Rose’s constructed authority in this position substantiates her own problematic colonial perspectives in her initial interactions with Aunt Shadie and Mavis. Given in a soliloquy, Rose breaks away from decorum and the constraints of her position to describe how she loves the ability to connect others in her role as switchboard operator:

No matter where I am, I am in between people connecting [...] I wait for the cry like a mother listening, hoping to slot the right thing into its void—hoping to be the one to bring about the pure answer. Again, the pure gentle darkness that says I have listened and you were lovely, no matter how loud your beeping cry becomes, *no matter how many times I*

wanted to help but couldn't. There is something maternal about it, the wanting to help, the trying, going through the motions on the switchboard, *but in the end just being there always it seems just listening to voices looking for connection, an eternal connection between women's voices and worlds.* (Clements 19; emphasis my own)

Here Rose reinforces that she values her ability to create “connection[s] between women’s voices and worlds,” regardless of the isolation she experiences while operating the switchboard. Her repeated sentiment that the light must “go through” her might seem to be a grab at power and control over those who reach out to the switchboard; however, I maintain that the switchboard makes Rose feel as though she is a part of a broader community of “women’s voices” that spans “worlds,” of both the living and dead. She insists that “it’s a tricky thing,” pretending not to have heard another person’s conversation, reinforcing that she does not use her position to secure information and power over others but to drive connections across boundaries that would otherwise be impermeable. In this soliloquy, Rose demonstrates how her desire to provide distinctly “maternal” care is an opportunity for her to make meaningful connections despite her physical isolation—a moment that shows she is capable of participating in a feminist community.

Misunderstanding is not exclusive to Rose, as Wunker claims (174), but it is perhaps the most crucial for Rose to overcome because her misunderstanding is also closely tied to colonial stigmas. For Rose to understand the other Women, she must overcome her own internalized colonial beliefs. This transition is first exemplified when a relationship starts to form between Mavis and Rose, making an unlikely connection between the realm of the living and the dead, via a phone call. Initially, their conversations start quite heated: Mavis blatantly calls Rose names, such as “bitch” and “Big Nose” (Clements 23, 32) and Rose is self-righteous in her role

as operator, as she is reluctant to help Mavis connect to people who matter to her. Nonetheless, both share a sense of isolation that they have each experienced “a million times a day” (34-5). Although both women seem to be telling their own stories here, the gaps and silences of their respective stories are filled with the other woman’s story of loneliness. This shared sense of isolation starts to create a kinship between the women, despite having only met over the phone.

When Rose and Mavis next speak, Rose encourages Mavis to reach out to her sister, Laverne; further, Rose chooses to ignore the “rules” which “Management” (23) has put in place and offers to connect Mavis and Laverne. Rose’s actions can be seen as her stepping away from colonial authority (in this instance, “management”), to encourage connection. Mavis responds by saying, “Meegweetch,” but then must teach Rose that “it means ‘Thank You’” (44).

Unsurprisingly, Rose misunderstands “Meegweetch,” and initially believes Mavis has called her “McWitch.” Rather than allowing the relationship to shatter, Mavis uses this moment to teach Rose about her language, reinforcing feelings of reciprocity and community between the two women.

Returning to hooks, positive interracial relationships are negotiated as Rose and the other women struggle to overcome their own biases, and it becomes possible for Rose and the other Women to form a feminist community. The scenes with Rose are significant for a settler audience because Clements draws attention to the colonial signifiers Rose enacts, giving the other Women a chance to speak out against Rose’s implied racism, and thus, allowing her to learn and change. In this way, Clements draws attention to colonial prejudice and simultaneously presents positive relationship building for both White and Indigenous audiences.

Sullivan contends that “[when] the women are able to see each other, solidarity becomes a possibility” (70), proven by the relationship that forms between Rose, Mavis, Aunt Shadie, and

Violet; however, the opposite is also true—when Aunt Shadie chastises the other women for being late to tea with Rose, Valerie argues that Rose can “take her Red Rose manifest destiny and shove it up her ass” (Clements 87). “Red Rose” references both the popular British black tea and colonial intent. The offer of tea and the formation of a few relationships are not enough to earn Valerie’s trust, which could represent to a settler audience that relationships between Indigenous and settler societies require work, one relationship at a time. There is no single way to “fix” a relationship that has long been marred by colonial subjugation. Nevertheless, building relationships across disempowered groups fosters a sense of community that can begin to disarm harmful colonial systems.

Angélique

Unlike Rose, Gale depicts Thérèse as a woman who recognizes and emphasizes colonial norms and the sociocultural hierarchy that these norms legitimize. White and wealthy, Thérèse is the wife to François Poulin de Francheville and becomes Angélique’s owner after his death. While *Angélique* may be set in 1734, Gale’s blurring of time through anachronistic references makes Thérèse equally relevant to contemporary audiences. Unlike the other White female characters in my analysis, Thérèse holds substantial socioeconomic status, and she does not experience the same physical or sexual violence as other women in the plays. With respect to Thérèse’s different experiences, I contend that—just as Rose in *The Unnatural and Accidental Women* will establish and portray a positive relationship with the other Women—it is also valuable to represent problematic relationships between characters from various disempowered positions. Thérèse exemplifies problematic relationships and demonstrates the dangers of being complicit in socioeconomic, gendered, and racialized hierarchies. Participating in and reinforcing

problematic hierarchies subjugates all people who do not sit at the top of the hierarchy; so, while Thérèse is privileged in many ways, she ultimately suffers because of the hierarchies that she also reinforces.

Despite her position as a slave owner, there are brief moments when the audience can sympathize with Thérèse. In Act 1, Scene 3, Thérèse attempts to explain that she has named Angélique for her deceased daughter; yet, Gale comments in the stage directions that Thérèse is “[unable] to speak the name of her dead daughter, [so] she turns away” (5). This moment shows that she has not come to terms with the death of her daughter, and, in a literal sense, cannot even face this reality. Following this moment, Thérèse’s next line is: “[property] of François Poulin de Francheville. 427 rue St. Paul,” (5) an ambiguous statement that could apply to either Angélique’s position as a slave or Thérèse’s position as François’ wife. Thérèse runs the household, but must defer to what François wants, a critical point that is exemplified when Thérèse argues that they do not need a slave, and François affirms that Angélique will stay because it is what he wants. Filewod points out that even though Angélique is supposed to be a gift for his wife, “Angélique is in fact François’ gift to himself” (283). Building on Filewod’s point, Thérèse is unable to convince her husband to “get rid” of Angélique, showing her ultimate lack of power in their relationship (Gale 25). After the death of Angélique’s first son, Thérèse confronts François because she suspects he is the father of the child; significantly, Thérèse does not condemn François for the acts of rape he has committed, but instead for the “embarrassment of [Angélique’s] bastard running around the streets” (24). This conversation reveals that Thérèse is complicit in the sexual abuse that Angélique experiences and, worse, Thérèse is more concerned about maintaining patriarchal gender norms via her position as François’ wife.

Regardless of the struggles that Thérèse experiences, she is unable to see beyond the confines of gendered, colonial norms, but is instead controlled by these ideals throughout the play.

At the beginning of the play, Thérèse treats Angélique like any other servant. Only after Angélique's baby is born does Thérèse's treatment of her change as Thérèse begins to feel threatened by Angélique's relationship to François; after all, Thérèse holds almost no power outside of the slaves and servants she commands. Violence first ensues when Thérèse happens upon Angélique and Manon—a Huron slave, owned by Francheville's neighbor, Ignace—singing in each of their first languages; Thérèse berates both women for their “savage behaviour” and threatens to “have [them] both whipped” (26). Not only does Thérèse shatter any possibility of friendship between the two women, but she also belittles and condemns their cultural practices. Here, Thérèse's condemnation of Manon and Angélique reinforces colonial hierarchies and the perspective that their cultural identities are valued even less than their positions as slaves. And so, while Angélique will continue to rebel against Thérèse, Manon refuses to engage with Angélique for the remainder of the play. As an apparent reaction to Thérèse's threat, Manon attempts to separate herself from Angélique by creating hierarchical space between them. Manon argues, “[we] are not the same. I serve. I do not slave,” and points to “the blackness of [Angélique's] skin” as a sign of her own superiority within a colonial system (55). In doing so, Manon is not only complicit with the patriarchal and colonial norms that Thérèse imposes, but she too becomes an enforcer of these norms in an attempt to better her position in colonial settler society.

Thérèse's second act of violence follows immediately after this interaction, as Thérèse beats a carpet and “*Angélique responds as if she herself is being struck—first with pain, then with growing endurance and compressed rage*” (27). The reasons Thérèse beats Angélique begin

with mundane tasks that Thérèse finds fault in; however, as the beating continues, it becomes increasingly clear that Thérèse is motivated by her husband's affair:

Because the bread didn't rise. (*smack*)

Because he went to you again last night. (*smack*)

Because you burnt the edges of the waffles. (*smack*)

Because he is my husband and I love him. (*smack*)

.....

Because I have to pretend this isn't happening. (*smack*)

.....

Because there is nothing else I can do. (*smack*) (27)

Clarke argues that Thérèse's anger comes from her "relative impotence as a White wife in a slave society in which African and Aboriginal women may be kept as concubines" (11). In other words, Thérèse sees herself as powerless to change her husband's mind and exerts power the only way she can—by abusing Angélique. The patriarchal society they all participate in reinforces the shame Thérèse feels knowing that François keeps Angélique for his own sexual desire. Unable to confront her husband, Thérèse remains complicit in the sexual violence Angélique experiences and reacts violently toward Angélique since she believes "there is nothing else [she] can do" about her husband's infidelity. Later, Thérèse witnesses François rape Angélique; as she "watches from the shadows" (31) her complicit position is dramatized. The fact that Thérèse chooses to witness the rape, rather than intervene, reinforces both her own "vulnerable position" as François' wife, and simultaneously implicates the audience in the action of witnessing (Tompkins 115). Here, audience members cannot escape the discomfort created by Thérèse's inaction as they are also forced to witness the rape, and to an extent, become complicit

in the harm that Angélique experiences. This discomfort is later amplified when Thérèse blames Angélique—and not François—for the rape, reinforcing that Thérèse is so entrenched in patriarchal colonial thought, that she cannot bring herself to condemn her then-deceased husband.

After the death of her husband, Thérèse has the opportunity to change; in her grief, she confronts Angélique, only for both women to express how they have been manipulated by patriarchal control. Thérèse demands, “Why didn’t you come to me?” and, “You could have stopped him” (39), even though both of these responses depend on her and Angélique being empowered in a system where they are powerless. Up until this point, both characters are deeply entrenched in patriarchal views and are unable to see the suffering of the other, nevertheless, a fragile peace comes from this argument when Angélique acknowledges Thérèse’s grief, allowing an opportunity for a feminist community. Ultimately, this possibility is denied, likely because the women do not come to terms with, or even name patriarchal, colonial society as the source of their problems. Without this recognition, they cannot escape the roles they have been enacting since Angélique joined the household. In addition, Thérèse chooses to fight with Ignace to maintain her share of François’ company. By asserting herself into the company, Thérèse makes a bid for control and authority in a realm that regularly denies women either. It is no surprise that the relationship between Thérèse and Angélique fails; Thérèse decides to sell Angélique to Monsieur Cugnet, the man who would have bought her share of the company, and, in doing so, Thérèse literally sells the body of her slave to maintain her position of authority within the company. Thus, Thérèse is ultimately complicit in the systems at play, as she denies Angélique’s humanity for her own economic gain.

Despite this, Clarke asserts that there is a potential change in Thérèse, among other characters, which comes in the second-to-last scene of the play. Dressed in contemporary clothing, François, Claude, César, Manon, Ignace and Thérèse take turns reciting notes from Angélique's torture at the hands of the Montreal authorities—notes contained in some of the surviving documents from the trial in 1734 (Cooper 19). Significantly, the final four lines shift to first-person narration, which can be read as an admittance of guilt for the fire, and resultantly, guilt for Angélique's torture and execution. For example, Thérèse's final line of the play is “[hang] me. It's me” (Gale 70); here, Clarke argues that Thérèse “recognizes that she herself is—metaphorically—responsible for the fire [...] Angélique is her scapegoat” (12). In comparison, Tompkins suggests that by having each character accept blame for the fire, a contemporary audience must “[recognize]—today—the flimsy evidence on which Angélique was convicted; it also continues to spread the responsibility associated with witnessing beyond Angélique, from the actors to the audience” (115). Considering Clarke's and Tompkins' claims, I suggest that because of the anachronistic use of contemporary clothing in the scene, it is hard to read these lines as Thérèse's “confession”; rather, the lines should be viewed as an acknowledgement of her complicity in the discrimination and suffering that Angélique experiences. The costume choice suggests that a contemporary audience is equally complicit in the continued existence of these power hierarchies. It can be no surprise that only Claude, Manon, and César join Thérèse in this acknowledgement, narrated in the first person; after all, these are the characters who have been complicit in the violence Angélique experiences and marginalized by intersecting systems of gendered, racial, and socioeconomic inequality.

The Komagata Maru Incident

This brings me to an analysis of Evy and Sophie, from *The Komagata Maru Incident*. Evy is the proprietor of a Vancouver-based brothel and Sophie one of the prostitutes who work there. Interestingly, just as Rose (*The Unnatural and Accidental Women*) represents positive relationship building, and Thérèse (*Angélique*), ultimately negative, Evy and Sophie take on similar roles within *The Komagata Maru Incident*, respectively. Evy begins to recognize and confront problematic ways of thinking, whereas Sophie exhibits the same negligent and prejudiced self-interest as Thérèse (although she is portrayed with less dimension than Thérèse). Similar to the overarching argument I have been developing in this chapter, Anne Murphy (2015) theorizes that “the insertion of a White voice critical of the White racist actions of state actors provides a place that a White audience of today might inhabit in relation to the story of the Komagata Maru, an alternative that failed to prevail in its time but might be possible today” (59). The importance of theatre, particularly for a white, settler audience, is to create a space that challenges problematic norms and hierarchies; like the other plays in this analysis, *The Komagata Maru Incident* deals with women confined by gendered, colonial norms, and works to critique hierarchical systems of power relating to gender, racialized identity, and socioeconomic status.

Perhaps because Sophie’s character is easiest to summarize, she is most often dismissed in critical analyses of the play. For example, Grace and Helm (1989) give Sophie one of the more in-depth deliberations but still refer to her as, “little more than a silly, shallow woman, out for number one” who can only “[parrot] the dominant views of society” (95). While I do not disagree with their analysis, I argue that there is a more nuanced significance to her character. Undoubtedly, Sophie does not question the problematic legal systems at play – she even

represents the contradiction of such systems through her romantic relations with Georg, a newly arrived German immigrant, while condemning the immigrants aboard the Komagata Maru (Pollock 123). Similarly, we learn throughout the play that Evy's family recently immigrated, as did Hopkinson himself (130-1). If Sophie is representative of larger societal views, then her affair with Georg, and her acceptance of Evy and Hopkinson, suggests the prevalence of racism rather than xenophobia in Canadian society. Even after headlines announce that "the enemy's the Kraut!" and "[t]he Sikh's on our side!" Sophie emphasizes that she will stay with Georg (138). Georg's Whiteness allows him to pass in Canadian society, and Georg himself boasts that he will be "[of] use to your department [of Immigration]" (138) as an informant in the looming war against Germany.

Just as she does not question her own racist perceptions, Sophie does not question the gendered or socioeconomic systems that confine her. She sees prostitution as an escape from her previous life and marriage to George as an escape from prostitution. In each instance, Sophie is willing to use her body to improve her socioeconomic position. Despite the fact that the brothel allows Evy and Sophie to work and make an independent living, Grace and Helms criticize the space of the brothel as a failed metaphor for the patriarchal system (95), a space that exploits female bodies for financial gain. Tellingly, early in the play, Hopkinson declares, "I'll do just as I please in your house! It's me that keeps you open, and don't you forget it!" (Pollock 113). So, even though Evy might run the brothel, her position and power are based entirely on Hopkinson's own patriarchal authority, just as Sophie relies on Georg. As a result, neither woman is successful at forming any type of feminist community in the play because both are denied agency due to their gender and socioeconomic status.

It is equally important to note the complexities of Evy's character: while some scholars (Murphy, Bhatia) credit Evy as being a conscientious character, one who is "compassionate and empathetic" (Bhatia 37), other scholars (Salter, Grace & Helms) pay her character little attention except to criticize her as a one-dimensional "whore with a heart of gold" (Grace & Helms 87, 95). I agree most strongly with Murphy and Bhatia's interpretation: arguably, Evy's character functions as a complicated moral figure in the play as she begins to condemn government systems, rather than Hopkinson himself. From the start of the play, Evy openly despises Hopkinson using the brothel as a meeting place for his informants and specifically says that she does not approve of Hopkinson's "brown rats," that is, his Sikh informants (Pollock 113). Although Evy's words are problematic, her condemnation also extends to Hopkinson's intention to employ Georg as a "rat." Consequently, even if Evy appears indifferent to the actual people aboard the *Komagata Maru* from the start of the play, she firmly establishes an anti-government stance early on.

Only after Evy witnesses a group assault on a Sikh man in a "queue for employment" (120), does she shift away from passive aggression regarding Hopkinson's work to open disdain that borders on subversive. As she enters the brothel, Evy expresses her guilt and frustration about being complicit in the racialized violence she witnesses: Evy is upset because she feels that she "should have done something" and expresses guilt that she only "sat on the goddamn tram and came home" (120). In other words, Evy is not merely upset by the act of violence but her own lack of action. This scene then problematizes White people who instigate racist violence, as well as people who witness such violence and do nothing. As with *Angélique* and *The Unnatural and Accidental Women*, the audience becomes complicit in witnessing Evy's inaction. Murphy summarizes the larger societal implications of witnessing by stating, "[it] is all too easy to let

ourselves, no matter who we are, off the hook: for Whites to deny personal involvements in racism but then not to stand up against the forms of racism and exclusion that persist in our society, to let themselves, as it were, ‘sit on the tram’ and let it pass” (69). Although Evy is complicit in this moment, after witnessing the attack on the Sikh man, she begins to advocate for the people aboard the *Komagata Maru*. In addition, Evy begins to challenge the social norms that isolate disenfranchised people, seen clearly when she demands Hopkinson recognize her position and answer the question, “[w]ho’s second rate when you run out of brown people?” (121). Here, Evy astutely recognizes her own positionality within the class structure that makes her a second-class citizen, only above the People of Colour in her community. Her recognition of these systems enables Evy to critique the ways that they harm her and People of Colour in the play; by extension, audience members should also begin to recognize the dramatized portrayal of these systems and the plethora of ways they are problematic.

From this point onward, Evy challenges Hopkinson’s blind loyalty to a government that will fail to protect him and his Sikh informants. Evy’s subversion starts with her holding back information from Hopkinson that was given by his informants, but it soon escalates to open confrontation. First, Evy criticizes his work with the government, which she finds “offensive” (123); next, she reveals Hopkinson’s plan to incriminate Georg with the immigrants aboard the *Komagata Maru* (128); and, finally, Evy accuses Hopkinson of having “a thing about race” (130). Each of these moments leads to Hopkinson emotionally and physically abusing Evy, underscoring the precarious position she occupies as a prostitute and lower-class woman. Alone, Evy is not able to successfully initiate change mainly because she has been disempowered via gender and socioeconomic hierarchies; as a result, her character undergoes another change. By choosing to stay with Hopkinson despite his abuse, Evy’s character can be analysed in two ways.

Evy's choice can be viewed as undermining the "agency and independence" she established earlier in the play (Grace & Helms 95); or alternatively, it can be read as an attempt to convince Hopkinson to leave his position and abandon his role in the Immigration Department. This second reading of Evy's choice suggests that Evy recognizes the ways in which Hopkinson is also disenfranchised and used by the Canadian government. By this point, Evy has learned that Hopkinson's mother was Indian and that he intentionally hides this part of his identity so as not to be racialized. On two separate occasions, Evy pleads for Hopkinson to abandon his government position, initially before the *Komagata Maru* sails (135), and in her final lines of the play when she begs Hopkinson to "go away" with her (140). As the moral voice of the play, Evy recognizes that many of his immoral choices come from trying to please government officials and politicians in an attempt to advance within societal hierarchies derived from colonial authority.

Throughout this analysis, intersectionality has provided a lens to critique the relationship between colonial and patriarchal authorities, as represented through the characters in each play. The women in these plays hold precarious positions, disenfranchised because of gender, and for Evy, Sophie, and Rose, socioeconomic status. Occupying a position of White womanhood poses some challenges, but also many advantages that are denied to the People of Colour in the plays. Only by recognizing how they have internalized racist ways of thinking can these characters begin to see how People of Colour are negatively impacted by racialized, colonial norms. Rose and Evy, from *The Unnatural and Accidental Women* and *The Komagata Maru Incident*, respectively, both begin to identify ways that colonial norms devalue People of Colour. For Rose, this happens when she develops meaningful relationships with the other "unnatural and accidental women," as they overcome shared experiences of isolation and heal from the trauma

they experienced before death. Evy, on the other hand, only begins to resist Hopkinson's authority after seeing a Sikh man assaulted—from this moment she questions state authorities that demean and vilify East Asian people. In contrast, Sophie and Thérèse, from *The Komagata Maru Incident* and *Angélique*, choose to remain ignorant of the harm experienced by People of Colour, and instead, both actively reinforce racialized hierarchies. Sophie and Thérèse both benefit from reinforcing racialized hierarchies, but ultimately, both women are also dependent on patriarchal authority figures for their own power in these settings. Therefore, Sophie and Thérèse represent problematic relationships, while Rose and Evy begin to demonstrate how women and other marginalized people could work together to identify and overcome problematic patriarchal gender norms. In this way, theatre creates a unique space to explore the connections between systemic colonial authority and gendered violence, and the implications of these systems for people from diverse positionalities. As seen through the relationships portrayed in each play, recognition of these systems and the power hierarchies that they impose, is an important step to identifying White privilege and creating more equitable relationships.

Conclusion

What does it mean to become a complicit witness to trauma? Throughout this thesis, I argue that all people who witness trauma have the potential to become an active witness, that is, they may choose to recognize the trauma experienced by another. In contrast, a complicit witness will refuse to acknowledge this harm, or may even silence the person altogether, preventing anyone else from becoming a witness to their trauma—this silencing is exacerbated when the complicit witness occupies a position of power or authority. Becoming complicit to trauma can have negative implications for the individual who has been silenced, but it can also lead to the erasure of harm that is experienced by marginalized communities. Specific to the experience of Black Canadians, Robyn Maynard describes the present-day ramifications for the erasure of slavery in Canada:

Social amnesia about slavery, as is common in Canada, makes it impossible to understand the anti-Black policing in the current epoch. It is only in recovering this original brutality by engaging with the *making* of the perceived relationship between Black bodies, inferiority and pathology that we may more thoroughly understand the contemporary disenfranchisement of Black life through policing and other state institutions. (19)

And so, it is vitally important that this history of violence is remembered, and the contemporary implications of state-sanctioned violence are recognized, to avoid further erasure of the Black experiences in Canada.

Speaking to the ways settlers can support Indigenous activists, Indigenous feminist scholar, Rachel Flowers, notes that “[t]here has and continues to be space offered by Indigenous peoples for settlers to align themselves with our struggles to support the transformation of the

colonial relationship and constructing alternatives to it” (34). Instead of becoming complicit to state-sanctioned violence, Flowers reflects on the necessity for non-Indigenous Canadians to acknowledge the trauma experienced by Indigenous peoples and align with Indigenous activists to amplify their voices¹¹. In conjunction, the messages from Maynard and Flowers both speak to the ways that complicity toward state-sanctioned violence can be dangerous, and authentic allyship requires people outside of the effected communities to bear witness to their stories. To circle back to the work of Jo-Ann Episkenew, arguably, witnessing these stories can assist settlers in unlearning a mindset founded in “the colonial contagion” (2).

Throughout these plays, complicity to state-sanctioned violence has perpetuated the social amnesia that allows the Canadian nation state to be viewed as a “cultural mosaic,” while simultaneously reinforcing the erasure of individual experiences of trauma. In addition to allowing a critique of historical Canadian narratives more generally, theatre also provides space for individuals to describe their personal experiences of harm. Physical, emotional, and/ or sexual violence is experienced by all the female characters in these plays, as a result of gendered and colonial norms; however, the harm experienced by People of Colour in the plays tends to be more severe because it intersects with racialized discrimination. Throughout my thesis, I consider the ways that White female characters use their privilege to remain complicit to the violence experienced by Women of Colour; in particular, this is relevant as a critique of White feminism, which has historically excluded issues that are relevant to People of Colour.

In my first chapter, I ask why these plays are significant, and for whom? In part, Sharon Pollock’s *The Komagata Maru*, Lorena Gale’s *Angélique*, and Marie Clements’ *The Unnatural*

¹¹ Here, it is important to note that non-Indigenous people should take care in how they wield their privilege, less they overshadow the struggles experienced by Indigenous communities. As Flowers argues, settlers must not co-opt messages or erase differences experienced by Indigenous Peoples (35).

and Accidental Women all investigate instances of historical and ongoing gendered colonial violence that impact all people living in Canada, regardless of their background or positionality. Further, each play considers the harmful ways in which colonial authority and norms are reinforced at the personal and state levels. While the plays are less likely to create change within the state, or state-run institutions, they have the opportunity to educate the audience/ reader about problematic histories and critique dominant narratives surrounding these events; indeed, Gale's *Angélique* and Clements' *The Unnatural and Accidental Women* use metadramatic techniques to suggest that the central issues of the plays have resulted in intergenerational trauma and that they continue to impact Canadian society today. In this way, the plays point to instances of gendered colonial violence that are rarely mentioned in dominant narratives about Canadian society.

Historiographic metadrama is used as a tool to consider the theoretical implications of these plays in my first chapter; this genre is particularly effective because it troubles the relationship between past events and contemporary inequalities. Knowles and Belliveau first considered Sharon Pollock's *The Komagata Maru* as a feminist approach to historiographic metadrama—their argument is compelling, but it focuses primarily on how *The Komagata Maru* fits the genre of historiographic metadrama. Belliveau suggests that historiographic metadrama is meant to “highlight the subjectivity of recorded history, encouraging the audience to question the historical records” (96). My work builds on this position to consider how historiographic metadrama could be mobilized to critique instances of gendered colonial violence that have been normalized, or made invisible, within Canadian society. I elaborate on the ways each author responds to instances of gendered colonial violence and, by extension, the negative impacts of colonial authority that are well-established in contemporary Canadian society.

The Komagata Maru Incident worked as a jumping-off point for me to investigate *Angélique* and *The Unnatural and Accidental Women*, both of which were first staged in the early 2000s. Each play disrupts dominant colonial narratives through the implementation of metadramatic techniques, effectively demonstrating the key elements of historiographic metadrama. I build off of Belliveau's argument that *The Komagata Maru* has two distinct layers and argue that the Woman aboard the Komagata Maru occupies a third layer that both limits and allows her dissent to the Canadian government. In addition, I point to the disembodied representation of East Asian men in Vancouver and aboard the ship who also experience violence as a result of failed intervention from the Canadian government. In *Angélique* I consider how Gale dissociates the Angélique recorded in the court documents from the Angélique of her play by switching between third-person and first-person narration, respectively. And last, I employed theories on Indigenous resurgence as a framework to analyze how metadramatic features are used in *The Unnatural and Accidental Women* to critique systemic colonial practices. Clements' work draws attention to the way that Canadian authorities and news outlets failed to represent the Women who were murdered by Jordan. By focusing on stories of people who have been disenfranchised by the state, these plays encourage the audience to bear witness to these events, while condemning characters who remain complicit in the trauma that is being staged. To make acts of witnessing impactful, each play draws attention to marginalized people who have been disempowered via colonial authority. Audience members are encouraged to recognize and condemn acts of complicity in the plays, and perhaps, begin to trouble other problematic narratives they encounter in Canadian society.

The second chapter in my analysis utilizes an intersectional approach to dissect power dynamics between characters allows me to examine the function of White female characters, as

White women are the one disenfranchised group consistently represented in all of the plays. This chapter advances the argument that White women occupy ambivalent positions: privileged by their whiteness, yet, at the same time, disempowered by their gender and, in many instances, their socioeconomic status. Aunt Shadie explains that Whiteness means being blind to the harm experienced by People of Colour; Evy reveals—with growing discomfort—that she “sat on the tram” and did nothing to help the Sikh man who was attacked in the streets of Vancouver, and in sharp contrast, Thérèse blames Angélique, and not François, for his repeated rape of Angélique. Here, moments of colonial violence are made visible and uncomfortable as White female characters are made to face their own complicity to racialized violence. These instances—and many like them throughout the plays in my analysis—portray the connection between Whiteness and privilege, where White characters can choose to be complicit or resistant to the harm experienced by People of Colour. One can theorize how these plays might encourage White or otherwise privileged audiences to reconsider their reactions when witnessing gendered colonial violence.

The plays in my analysis re-enact racist and violent trauma from Canada’s history, contributing to an archive of narratives about, or written by, marginalized peoples seeking to dismantle systems of authority that have attempted to erase their experiences and stories. It is meaningful to retell these stories and reframe the narratives in a manner that condemns colonial authority, making the state responsible for past and ongoing traumas. These plays create a counter-narrative about Canadian history that speaks about the atrocities committed and witnessed at the hands of the Canadian government, including the blatant racialization of immigrants, the recognition that Canada participated in the slave trade, and negligence to protect Indigenous women and girls, as a result of systemic racism. It is essential to stage and re-stage

these narratives so that they are not forgotten in the Canadian social imaginary. Additionally, each of these plays mixes past and present, calling attention to the ways that atrocities from Canada's past continue to impact contemporary society. Murphy argues that "[the] imaginative act of calling the past into the present [...] is productive of many different pasts, and many different presents, through which the definition of Canada itself is formed" (68). Just as there is no singular Canadian narrative, there is no single definition of what it means to be Canadian today. Giving value to marginalized voices, as these plays do, reinforces that there is still a lot of work to be done to make Canada a better, and safer, nation for everyone.

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