

LIVING, WRITING AND STAGING RACIAL HYBRIDITY

by

LISA MICHELLE LA FLAMME

B.A. Hons., Simon Fraser University, 1988

M.A., Simon Fraser University, 1993

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary Canadian literature and drama that features racial hybridity represents the racially hybrid soma text as a unique form of embodiment and pays particular attention to the power of the racialized gaze. The soma text is the central concept I have developed in order to identify, address, and interrogate the signifying qualities of the racially hybrid body. Throughout my dissertation, I use the concept of the body as a text in order to draw attention to the different visual “readings” that are stimulated by this form of embodiment. In each chapter, I identify the centrality of racially hybrid embodiment and investigate the power of the racialized gaze involved in the interpellation of these racially hybrid bodies.

I have chosen to divide my study into discrete chapters and to use specific texts to illuminate my central concepts and to identify the strategies that can be used to express agency over the process of interpellation. In Chapter One I explain my methodology, define the terminology and outline the theories that are central to my analysis. In Chapter Two, I consider the experiences of mixed race people expressing agency by self-defining in the genre of autobiography. In Chapter Three, I explore the notion of racial drag as represented in fiction. In Chapter Four, I consider the ways in which the performative aspects of racial hybridity are represented by theatrical means and through performance.

My analysis of the soma text and racialized gaze in these three genres offers critical terms that can be used to analyze representations of racial hybridity. By framing my analysis by way of the construction of the autobiographical voice I suggest that

insight into the narrative uses of racial hybridity can be deepened and informed by a thorough analysis of the representation of the lived experience of racial hybridity in a given context. My crossgeneric and crossracial methodology implicitly asserts the importance of the inclusion of different types of racial hybridity in order to understand the power of the racially hybrid body as a signifier in contemporary Canadian literature and drama.

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Lastly, this dissertation is dedicated to my sweet nieces and nephews and to all other racially hybrid people who have had to struggle to find themselves reflected in Canadian society and literature. My intention in writing this dissertation is to provide insight that will enable other racially hybrid Canadians to understand and appreciate the unique somatextual varieties of racial hybridity in ways that will allow them to embrace the totality of their racial hybridity. In addition, I have applied the skills I have developed as a literary analyst to the text of the racially hybrid body in order to provide a map and a methodology for analyzing new narratives that feature racial hybridity to other scholars who are interested in exploring this emerging body of work.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“ I Am What I Am and I Am Here!”

It is contradictory racialised perceptions of physical differences that frequently determine and undermine the lived experience of those who, as active agents, identify as, and/or are socially designated as 'mixed race'.
(Ifekwunigwe, *Rethinking*, 46)

The hackneyed notion of 'pure blood' always rests on the possibility and the reality of 'mixed blood'— although violent cleansing may be deemed necessary to constitute 'purity'.
(Sollors, *Neither*, 4)

Maria Root has even declared a 'bill of rights' for multiracial people, in which she exhorts 'mixed race' people to assert the identities which they have chosen for themselves, however uncomfortable or confused they make others.
(Parker & Song, *Rethinking*, 4)

Mrs. Taylor alternated in her self and family identification between claiming African blood and Indian culture as central family attributes. She never put forth a synthetic identity in which these two elements were expressed as 'mixed' or 'ethnogenetic' biological or cultural expression.
(Brooks, *Confounding*, 4)

Besides you're only as much Swede as I am Chinese, one-quarter, twenty-five percent, a waning moon, a shinplaster, a blind alley, a semi-final, less than half a cup of honey.
(Wah, *Diamond*, 133)

In the last decade biracial autobiographies, plays, novels and films dealing with racial hybridity in Canada have become more common. This growing interest in narrative uses of racial hybridity coincides with the trend in progressive North American universities such as Stanford, Yale, New York University, University of California at Berkeley, and the University of San Francisco in the United States, all of which have recently offered courses in mixed race literature and hybridity theories such as Gloria Anzaldúa's articulation of *mestiza consciousness* (1987). The reading lists from courses at these institutions cover a range of racially mixed literary figures from the "tragic mulatta" in Nella Larsen's *Passing* (1929) to the representation of the voice of the Métis nation in Maria Campbell's *Half-breed* (1973) to Monique Mojica's representation of transcultural and panethnic hybridity (1991).

In this dissertation I ask the following two-part question: What does it mean to be biracial or multiracial in Canada today and what do our literature and culture tell us about these identities? Contemporary Canadian narratives that feature racial hybridity are informed by these North American racially hybrid literary figures. However, Canadian representations of racially hybrid figures signify different aspects of racial hybridity that are specific to the Canadian nation. Canadian representations of racial hybridity offer Métis configurations of a racially hybrid identity, represent the racially hybrid individual in monoracial white Canadian communities and use the hyphen to represent cultural and/or racial hybridity. In this dissertation I generate new insights into the lived experience of racial hybridity as represented in autobiographies, into the narrative uses of racial hybridity in Canadian fiction and into the performative aspects of racial hybridity

in drama. Certain features of biracial autobiography are also present in contemporary Canadian fiction and drama; therefore, I employ a **crossgeneric methodology** in order to map the narrative use of racial hybridity in Canadian texts and also to explore the role of genre in representing racial hybridity.

The term “mixed race” literature has been used in literary contexts with increasing frequency. Although the concept of “race” as a biological category has been proven scientifically invalid, the category of “mixed race” literature continues to employ the notion of “race” to refer to this growing body of work.¹ One may question the utility of this term because it is not evident in the way the term “mixed race” writing is deployed, whether or not the work *itself* has to feature racial hybridity or if the writer must *identify* as racially hybrid. For the purposes of this dissertation, I use the term “mixed race” literature to refer to writing by self-identified racially mixed writers that presents biracial or multiracial characters, themes and/or subtexts.²

The primary texts in the body of work that I analyze are selected from contemporary Canadian Native and non-Native autobiographies, novels and plays that feature racial hybridity. My interest is in analyzing this body of work by engaging in close readings of sample representations of racial hybridity across these genres and across racial divisions. I wish to place this Canadian work in relation to theoretical approaches to racial hybridity. For each genre I have chosen just a few examples on the basis of their representative characteristics; this is especially the case for my chapter on autobiography where Lawrence Hill’s autobiography *Black Berry, Sweet Juice* (2001) provides my major case study. Generally speaking, my research (1) describes and interprets the ways

in which racial hybridity represents an embodiment of the “real” and (2) maps the ways in which racial hybridity functions as a trope in Canadian literature. My central argument is that contemporary Canadian “mixed race” narratives form a unique canon due to the centrality of embodiment, the ways in which embodiment and blood signify a number of third-space paradigms and the ideological ramifications involved in the use of the biracial autobiographical voice and the biracial body in performance.

While there is a growing body of work that features racial hybridity, critical analysis of the narrative use of racial hybridity is only recently emerging in Canada. The University of British Columbia, the University of Alberta and the University of Saskatchewan have recently started to teach mixed race literature and explore this work critically.³ Critical approaches to mixed race literature are, in some ways, a subset of earlier questions about race and representation in literature that stem from postcolonial approaches to minority literature. This dissertation contributes to the emerging rubric of critical mixed race studies and recent scholarship that addresses the discursive and ideological aspects of race and representation within contemporary Canadian literature.⁴

I engage with this body of work initially by mapping the experience of racial hybridity in Canada in biracial autobiography with a focus on *Black Berry, Sweet Juice*. Then I chart the rhetorical and dramatic uses of racial hybridity across selected genres and racial divisions. Because I am advocating and employing a **crossgeneric** methodology, I preface each chapter of this dissertation with a brief exploration of the generic conventions in order to identify some of the constraints and possibilities that specific genres impose on the representation of racial hybridity.

In addition to this crossgeneric methodology, another unique aspect to this research is the **crossracial** methodology that I employ in order to address racial hybridity within Canadian Native and non-Native “mixed race” texts. In an earlier phase of my research, I began to note similarities in the construction of racial hybridity within Chinese-Canadian, African-Canadian, African-American, Métis, “mixed blood” Native and “tragic mulatto” narratives. However, when racial hybridity is given critical attention it is often examined by scholars and critics within specific racial categories rather than **across** racial groups. Current examples of this racial paradigm are Louis Owens’ *MixedBlood Messages* (2001) which, like Gerald Vizenor’s *Fugitive Poses* (1998), addresses the narrative uses of “mixedblood” and/or “crossblood” identity within the larger spectrum of Native identity.⁵ These insights into the experiences of racialization are still framed within *distinct* monoracial identities. Because these theorists and writers have not engaged in crossracial analyses of racial hybridity, the similarities among these narratives have not been examined. Given this lack of critical attention into the ways in which racial hybridity functions as a narrative device across different racial groups, my dissertation proposes a more encompassing study of racial hybridity through a crossracial methodology.

By analyzing contemporary Canadian literature with this crossracial and crossgeneric methodology, it is possible for me to demonstrate two crucial points. The first is that embodiment is central to the articulation of narratives that are based on the construction of the biracial autobiographical voice in contemporary Canadian literature. In general, the distinctiveness of the biracial voice and the experience of biraciality are

grounded in the experience of the multiply-coded biracial body. I use the concept of the **soma text** to identify the central trope by which biracial Canadian writers express themselves. In fact, one might argue that corporeality is an over-determined trope in these narratives. The second point that I argue throughout these chapters is that the soma text is read in different sites by way of the racialized gaze. My work considers how the soma text and racialized gaze are represented in ways that suggest a particular hybrid experience of the nation, signified by the racially hybrid body.

In order to address what I am calling the process of racialization, I have developed a working definition of the word *race* based on the definition offered in *Black Canadians* by Canadian theorist Joseph Mensah. Mensah defines race as “a human population distinguished on the basis of socially perceived physical traits such as skin pigmentation, hair texture, facial features and the like” (13). Even though Mensah acknowledges that race is a construct, he suggests that “individual” and “systemic racism” operate in such an intricate way that these two aspects must be considered in tandem (16). I expand Mensah’s definition by adding a third element to my analysis of the process of racialization, namely the **monoracial hegemony** that configures racial identity in terms of purity and blood-quantum.⁶

In addition to this general working definition of race, this project is informed by hybridity theorists who attempt to situate the experience of multiraciality within the discourse around race and representation. According to mixed race theorists David Parker and Miri Song, the distinct experiences and unique patterns of identity formation for racially hybrid people suggest that they are “subject to exceptional forms of

discrimination that cannot be addressed within existing conceptions of race" (7).

Monoracial identity is hegemonic and such a term stems from singular notions of identity encoded in such phrases as "I am African" or "I am Chinese." Monoracial identification does *not* necessitate a mathematical breakdown of the constituent parts of one's identity based on blood-quantum because the assumption is that monoracially people are complete. This description is based on the logic that if individuals who are monoracially identified consider themselves in singular, unified terms that suggest one is pure, e.g., one is European, African or Japanese. This is quite distinct from the articulation of a racialized identity from a position of biracial identity, which can be understood by the identity that is suggested within the phrase "I am Caucasian *and* African" or "I am *a* mixed race woman." In these two expressions of biraciality, a doubleness is signified in the former and a complex third space paradigm for identity is reflected in the latter. The contemporary Canadian literature and drama that I analyse throughout this dissertation often represents racial hybridity as a unique form of embodiment that signifies complex, multiple, and, at times, fluid constructions of racial identity.

My notion of a third-space paradigm is informed by Homi Bhabha's articulation in *The Location of Culture* (1994) that suggests "[i]t is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity[. . .]" (37). Biracial identity or multiracial identity differs from monoracial identity in its complexity, its ambiguity and the excess that stems from a multiply-sited identity. One of the ways in

which this identity is represented in contemporary Canadian literature is by way of third space paradigms or metaphors.

I make the distinction between **monoracially-identified** people and **biracially-identified** people in order to draw attention to the process of racialization and to indicate that even when people are racially mixed, they may not identify as such. In the United States one of the most prolific mixed race theorists is Maria Root. In *The Multiracial Experience* she suggests that the term monoracial “refers to people who claim a single racial heritage. It is also a system of racial classification that only recognizes one racial designation per person” (x). According to Root, the term “[m]ultiracial refers to people who are of two or more racial heritages. It is the most inclusive term to refer to people across all racial mixes. Thus it also includes biracial people” (xi).⁷

The word biracial has been recently used to refer to racially hybrid people. Root claims that the term

[b]iracial refers to a person whose parents are of two different socially designated racial groups, for example, black mother, and white father. In a less commonly used, but perfectly accurate meaning, biracial can also refer to someone who has parents of the same socially designated race, when one or both parents are biracial or there is racial mixing in the family history that is important to the individual. This use of biracial moves us away from requiring equal ‘fractions of blood’ to recognize the prevalence of racial blending throughout American history.

However, the social and psychological experience of the person who uses the

term this way may be different from someone who is a 'first-generation' biracial.

(ix-x)

I am employing Root's definition of biraciality in this dissertation. I am also informed by her notion of monoracial identity and I make the distinction between monoracial and multiracial people in order to draw attention to different forms of racial identity that distinguish the subjective experience of racially hybrid Canadians from those of monoracial individuals.

I use the term **racial hybridity** to refer to people who are racially mixed or have been understood as belonging to more than one racial group. One of my research interests is in documenting the way in which an individual understands, articulates, represents and performs racial hybridity in contemporary Canadian literature and drama. Although at times I use the term biracial or half-breed, the term racially hybrid allows me to include biracial and multiracial individuals, Native and non-Native, within the larger spectrum of racial hybridity.

The construction of a biracial or monoracial identity is based on a number of factors including, but not limited to, any one of the following: **blood-quantum** determined by one's genealogy; **somatic signifiers** that are commonly referred to as indicators of one's race; one's lived experience of racial identity, which may or may not reinforce one's sense of racial identity; social and cultural folk readings of racial identity; and familial and cultural readings of racial identity. I will be examining the ways in which race is constructed within language and, therefore, how race is **represented** within autobiography, fiction and drama.

I have developed the term **soma text** to refer to the racially hybrid body in order to draw attention to the physical markers of race such as skin tone, eye contour and corporeality. These features are racialized or given specific ideological value. I consider the racially hybrid body to be a complex signifier and am particularly interested in the dynamic, complex, and conflicted ways in which these soma texts are read. Mixed Race theorists David Parker and Miri Song draw attention to the **somatextual signifiers** in “mixed race” writing. In the introduction to *Rethinking ‘Mixed Race’*, they state that,

[m]uch of the writing on ‘mixed race’ has highlighted a distinctive form of ‘mixed race’ embodiment characterized by an intimate relationship between racialisation and facialisation. Facialisation refers to the designation of a limited set of facial types, how these are taken as metonyms for the racialised body, and are associated with character traits. In the case of ‘mixed race’ people, their experiences tell of how the face gets figured as the repository of racial truths and suggestive of where you ‘really’ come from. (14)

Although these theorists identify the relationship between “facialisation” and “racialization” in instructive ways, I prefer to use the term *soma text* to draw attention to the range of visual clues that are based on the whole body of the mixed race person. I use the Greek word *soma* to draw attention to the somatic signifiers that are associated with different racial phenotypes and to identify the centrality of the embodiment of racial hybridity. Together these two words signify the ways in which the ambiguous signifiers of a racially hybrid body are “read,” like a text, given specific ideological value and acquire different meaning in diverse sites.⁸

As a subtext to this research I ask myself: How has the Canadian nation informed the way(s) in which racially hybrid bodies are read? To address this question I turn to theorist Jayne O. Ifekwunigwe who uses the term “mixed race” to describe individuals who “according to popular folk concepts of ‘race’ and by known birth parentage, embody two or more world views or, in genealogical terms, descent groups. These individuals may have physical characteristics that reflect some sort of ‘intermediate’ status *vis-à-vis* their birth parents” (46).⁹ In addition to these complex forms of embodiment, Ifekwunigwe clearly identifies the socio-cultural process of racialization for biracial people when she states: “More than likely, at some stage, they will have to reconcile multiple cultural influences. The degree of agency afforded a ‘mixed race’ individual is contingent in part upon local folk ‘readings of their phenotype’ in relation to systems of categorization and classification that may reinforce eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ‘race’ science fiction” (46). These “folk readings” of the raced body are often the foundational elements in biracial identity formation and consistently appear as thematic issues at the narrative centre of the primary texts that I analyze in the following chapters.

This research is case specific as it includes writing by contemporary Canadians who reflect on the soma text and racialized gaze in specific readings of particular racially hybrid soma texts. The racially hybrid body is represented in these works as a cluster of identities and racialized roles that are predicated upon how one’s body is read. As a result of the specificity of how this body is read, these insights are not necessarily transferable to other locations, racial identities, or decades because folk readings of race are culturally specific and historically conditioned. As an example, according to Ifekwunigwe, “In

Britain, the social and political category Black has been used to incorporate South Asian, Chinese and in certain instances Irish communities” (47), whereas “in the USA, Black refers primarily to individuals of African descent” (48).

For another example of the social and political specificities associated with folk readings of race I turn to the autobiographical novel *Sugar and Slate* (2002). In this work, the biracial Welsh writer, Charlotte Williams, identifies how her soma text does not fit within the construction of a Welsh identity which is most often coded as white.

Consequently, despite being born in Wales, she is continually read as an immigrant because of her hypervisible soma text or phenotype.¹⁰ Ifekwunigwe explains biracial corporeality as a phenotype: “By phenotype, I mean the visible physical markers of genetically inherited traits such as skin colour, hair texture and colour, eye shape and colour, general facial features and body structure” (46). Throughout my research, I refer to these phenotypes as **soma texts** and consider the impact that folk readings have on how this body, as text, is read. Ifekwunigwe refers to four elements that are central to my study of racial hybridity in the same essay cited above: the process of racialization, the third space of hybridity as a synthesis of dualisms, genealogical and epistemological ramifications of racial hybridity, and the centrality of the racially hybrid soma text.

Beliefs about race, attitudes towards interracial relationships and the notion of blood as a signifier of race condition the ways in which the racially hybrid soma text is interpreted or read. Autobiography theorist Leigh Gilmore describes the complex ways in which embodiment can signify a number of different ideologies about race, blood, and genes. She argues that “[t]he body, in its construction, can’t keep a secret: ‘Blood will

tell.’ Although the fallacy of this reading of the body can be readily demonstrated, its persistence allows ‘sex’ to cling to tangible bodies through the ‘fact’ of sexual difference and ‘race’ to cling to nonwhite bodies through the ‘fact’ of racial difference”

(*Autobiographics* 132-33). Cultural beliefs about blood and blood quantum often inform legal prohibitions to interracial marriage. When read in this way, the racially mixed body in North American contexts always-already signifies racial transgressions and, specifically, sex between two people of different races. For example, the anti-miscegenation laws in the United States were based on the premise that “one drop” of Black blood makes one Black and the epistemology that “blood will tell” what one’s racial genealogy is.¹¹ These beliefs about blood and belonging are always a part of the signifying power of racially hybrid bodies in North America. The soma text of the racially hybrid individual is thus saturated and overdetermined by beliefs about blood, as invisible markers of race and legal and historical views of interraciality framed as transgressive sexuality.

The historical association of biraciality with sexual transgression and degeneracy has had an enduring impact on the contemporary signifying nature of racially hybrid soma texts in the United States and Canada. In addition, cultural representations of interraciality affect the way in which the racially hybrid body is read. Parker and Song argue that, “[m]ixed race’ populations have often emerged through the deeply felt historical violations of imperial sexual conquest and enslavement. ‘Mixed race’ bodies can bear the burden of these legacies, deep-seated traumas inscribed on people’s skin, and this should not be evaded” (13). Maria Root suggests that the multiracial person’s

experience of corporeality is affected by images such as “slave masters raping black women, U.S. military men carrying on sexually illicit relationships with Asian women during wars along the Pacific rim and rebels and curiosity seekers having casual sex” (*The Multiracial Experience* 7). Specific histories of interraciality as well as persistent and scientifically unfounded ideologies around blood and purity inform many racially hybrid people’s experience of their own bodies. I hope to demonstrate how Canadian beliefs about racial amalgamation inform the ways in which racially mixed bodies are read.¹²

When addressing the signifying power of the soma text an important question to ask is: How do colonial discourses get mapped on the body of the racially hybrid subject? It is useful to think of the ways in which the soma texts of racially hybrid people signify postcoloniality such that *contact* is given a sexual connotation. As an example of this reading of the racially hybrid body I cite an anecdote written by biracial Canadian writer Michele Paulse who claims that “[t]he shame I sometimes experience is shame learned from people who hate the idea of a black person fucking a white person; a Malay fucking a German, an African a Scot, an Indian a German” (Camper 49). Her racially hybrid soma text is read as a signifier of interracial and postcolonial sexual transgression. Paulse puts it bluntly: “The colour of my skin shows that the line was crossed. Someone fucked someone who[m] they should not have fucked. When people ask what is my mixture, they are trying to find out who the persons were. My origins do not haunt me. Attitudes about my origins do” (Camper 49). Here the soma text of the racially hybrid body clearly represents postcolonial illicit sex. The complex and conflicted or ambiguous nature of the

racially hybrid soma text creates crises of interpretation and indicates the complex signifying power of the body itself. In this dissertation I am attentive to the different ways in which racially mixed soma texts are read and how racially mixed people represent and understand their own soma texts within the larger framework of postcolonial Canada.

Canadian biracial people often represent their identity by way of direct references to blood-quantum in a process that I refer to as **racial mathematics**, e.g. “I am **half** Japanese and **half** African.” In the American context, racial hybridity is implied by the use of terms such as “mulatto,” which is used to refer to people who have one black and one white parent, or terms such as **quadroon** and **octoroon**, which were used to refer to people who had successively less “black blood.” A similar set of racial mathematics exists within different racial groups such as Native communities, whereby someone who has one Native and one non-Native parent may be said to be a “**halfblood**,” “**half-breed**,” or “**crossblood**.”¹³ In each case, the term is used to denote the percentage of blood that is “of colour,” and such terminology reinforces the ideology that whiteness is the privileged norm. Although these terms have had a specific ideological history in the pseudo-science of the nineteenth century, they remain as qualifiers of racial identity according to blood-quantum ideologies.

I analyze the primary works in each chapter in order to elucidate the ways in which writers invoke such metaphors to represent racially hybrid somatextuality in order to substantiate two of my central claims. The first claim is that corporeal fragmentation is often the site of **trauma** for racially hybrid individuals. The second claim is that when an individual understands his or her corporeality as fragmented he or she does not tend to

utilize a paradigm of wholeness to represent the soma text. I note the sites where racially hybrid individuals adopt terms that denote fragmentation, and the sites where individuals refer to themselves as “people of colour” or use other metaphors, such as “brown,” to signify their mixedness.

As I develop my analysis of racial hybridity in select contemporary Canadian literary and dramatic works, I will use a set of terms that I believe highlight key aspects of racial hybridity. Although one’s genealogy or use of specific terminology to identify blood quantum may provide insight into the percentage of what is understood as “white” and “non-white blood,” the soma text of a mixed race individual is often the sign that is read to determine if a person is biracial, multiracial, or monoracial. In this case, the exterior becomes more of a determinant for racial assignment than any specific genetic encoding in the blood of the individual. For these reasons, I introduce the useful idea of the racially hybrid body as a soma text and begin to elaborate on the discursive conditions within which this body is read through a complex set of looking relations that I refer to as the **racialized gaze**.

The racialized gaze is a term I use to refer to the ways in which a person views the biracial or multiracial body in order to calculate or guess the racial mix of a given individual. The racialized gaze is the mechanism by which a body is viewed and given signification according to the gaze of the onlooker. The visual interpretation of the soma text involves the racialized gaze and is often recorded as a moment of **interpellation**.¹⁴ The representation of racial hybridity by way of interpellation is a common thematic concern in each of the works that I analyze. Such representations emphasize the

performative nature of racial identity. As biracial Canadian writer and theorist Fred Wah suggests, “Until Mary McKnutter calls me a chink, I am not one [. . .] Later, I don’t have to be because I don’t look like one” (*Diamond Grill* 98). This is an example of the very phenomenon of racial interpellation that Fanon identified in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1965), except that the situation Wah refers to involves decoding a racialized body that is *also* ambiguous because it is a racially hybrid body.

As a result of this early traumatic experience of being interpellated, Wah, like many other racially hybrid Canadians, decides to “become as white as I can, which, considering I’m mostly Scandinavian, is pretty easy for me. Not for my dad and some of my cousins though. They’re stuck, I think, with how they look. I only have the name to contend with” (*Diamond Grill* 98). In this passage, Fred Jr., Wah’s semi-autobiographical character, recognizes that he is able to perform racial drag by passing as white because of his light-skinned privilege. This passage also indicates Fred Jr.’s recognition that this privilege does not extend to his relatives because their soma texts conform to more phenotypically Chinese racial identities. Such self-conscious attention to the power of the racialized gaze is consistently referred to in each of the works that I examine. This anecdote suggests a hypersensitivity to the signifying nature of the racially hybrid body, the visual encounters that result in one’s self-awareness of this multiply-coded body and different strategies that one may develop in response to being interpellated.

The **racialized gaze** attempts to decode the ambiguous signifiers of the **soma text** in order to assign a racial designation due to complex and culturally specific racial mathematics. This process of assigning a racial designation I refer to as **interpellation**. The lifelong process of responding to moments of interpellation I refer to as a foundational aspect in the **process of racialization**. The process of racialization is central to the experience of biraciality, particularly in cases where the somatic markers of race are ambiguous, complex, or contradictory. For many biracial Canadians the experience of people perpetually decoding their soma texts is represented in their writing as an exhausting and, at times, traumatic experience.

In the genres of autobiography, fiction and drama many biracial writers explore these traumatic moment(s) of interpellation and the racialization of racially hybrid bodies. These repeated representations of the impact of the racialized gaze draw attention to the hypervisibility of race, the signifying nature of the racially hybrid soma text and the consequences of this process for the individual whose body is given meaning according to the way he or she is race(d). Autobiographical reflections on racial hybridity contain a number of different, complex looking relations such as: 1) looking relations within interracial family systems; 2) looking relations from outside of the family system; 3) looking relations between racially mixed individuals that enable one to identify other racially mixed people (mirroring), and 4) the ways in which the racially mixed person sees him/herself.

These complex looking relations are often presented, deconstructed or reinvented in different genres that feature racial hybridity. The looking relations identified in the first

three categories affect the latter category. Canadian demographics are such that most biracial individuals live primarily within monoracial communities. Canadian narratives on racial hybridity suggest that within these monoracial communities, biracial or multiracial individuals experience a continual evaluation of their racial identity based on how they look. When the policing of race through the gaze becomes a fetish, it can easily give rise to a racially driven **scopophobia**. **Scopophobia** is a term I use to identify a racially mixed person's fear of the gaze and the fear of being interpellated and assessed for signs of purity. This fear is documented in biracial narratives that detail numerous negative experiences of being mis-recognized because of the complex, multiple, or ambiguous signifiers of their racially hybrid soma texts.

I would like to take a moment here to address what I mean by competing signs within this racially hybrid soma text and the crisis of interpellation that gives rise to scopophilic interest in decoding these signs. A somatic signifier that is coded with ambiguity is one in which the social and cultural notions of racial phenotypes are continually disrupted by the presence of two or more competing systems of racial signification. An ambiguous soma text may prompt others to ask for verification in order to support the assumptions that have been made about a given person's racial genealogy based on the racialized gaze. When a racially hybrid body is marked by ambiguous signifiers or when a racially hybrid character performs racial drag, in a given text there is a narrative crisis because of the instability of the somatext as a marker of identity.

Most biracial and multiracial individuals who are asked throughout their lives, “Where are you from?” or, “What are you?” become acutely aware of the hypervisibility of their ambiguously coded soma texts. Root notes the power of the racialized gaze and suggests that, “[a]t a personal level, race is very much in the eye of the beholder; at a political level, race is in the service of economic and social privilege” (*Racially Mixed People in America* 4). This hypervisibility is consistently referred to in biracial narratives. Many biracial Canadians refer to the **scopophobia** that they develop over time, or they refer more neutrally to the socio-cultural forces that condition people to assign a racial identity based on racialized and visual **somatextual cues**.

The competing systems of identity that are inherent in the soma text of the biracial or multiracial individual in North American contexts become the point of an intense amount of scopophilic interest. Root suggests that “[t]he ‘racial ecology’ is complex in a phenotypically heterogeneous society that has imbued physical differences with significant meaning in a convention that benefits selective members of society” (*Racially Mixed People in America* 4). In a society such as North America where bodies are continually racialized, we can refer to this practice as scopophilic. The historical conditions in North America whereby racialized bodies have been policed for blood quantum due to legislation such as the Fugitive Slave Act (1850) and the Indian Act (1876), create conditions that suggest it is accurate to speak of a historical fetish to decode blood-quantum. It is plausible that biracial bodies are read differently in the American context where there is a longer history of biracial bodies being policed for signs of racial admixture. This fetish to decode racial admixture was due, in part, to the

conditions of slavery and the impact of the Fugitive Slave Act. In societies where multiraciality is more prevalent and accepted, the existence of this fetish is less pronounced and results in less scopophilic attachment to decoding the ambiguous signifiers of the racially hybrid body.

A somatic signifier that is coded with ambiguity is the norm for many racially mixed people. As a consequence of this ambiguous signifying soma text, many biracial individuals negotiate their racial identity daily and must respond to numerous questions about who they are, what they are, and where they are from. This repetitive questioning and negotiation suggests that racial identity becomes something performative, shifting, contradictory and dynamic. The effect of these complex relations of looking has certain epistemological and ontological ramifications, and I refer to these effects as part of the **embodied epistemology** of the racially hybrid person.

While it is true that over time scopophilic societies may condition racially hybrid individuals to become scopophobic, it is equally true that racially hybrid individuals have also been charting their own experiences of *agency* over the process of racialization. As well as charting how the process of interpellation is represented in these texts, I am equally interested in the numerous ways in which biracial Canadians understand their soma texts as providing them with a special vantage point or frame of reference. For example, biracial Canadian writer Sheila Batacharya writes that her soma text has been read as “Spanish, Italian, South American, Mayan” and “white with a tan” (Camper 39). This anecdote suggests that Batacharya’s body is read as a signifier of different racial identities. People who are racially mixed can also *utilize* the ambiguity of their soma texts

in ingenious ways by deciding which of these racial identities they will claim. I refer to the ability of biracial people to declare and perform different racial identities, as **racial drag**.¹⁵

Engaging in racial drag is one way of strategically engaging with the complex politics around racial identity and the process of racialization that racially mixed people face. Root suggests that “attempts by racially mixed people to move back and forth between color lines have been viewed pejoratively rather than as creative strategies in a multiracial reality” (*Racially Mixed People in America* 6). Root and other mixed race theorists document the sites where racially mixed people create strategies to respond to this unique position by “faking it” (Wah), “passing,” or performing a variety of racial identities.¹⁶ Hybridity theorist Minelle Mahtani refers to biracial and multiracial identity as an advantageous “mobile paradoxical space.”¹⁷ As an example of this flexible use of the markers of race, Canadian mixed race writer Leslie Lee Kam states that she adopts multiple racial identities and claims to be “from Burma,” or to be “Filipina,” “Latin American,” “Chinese,” “[s]ome kind of Indian,” and “Micmac” (Camper 38). Kam’s anecdote supports the idea that a biracial individual’s soma text is read differently according to the racial ideologies that are in circulation, but it *also* suggests that she has some agency over the process of racialization due to the very ambiguity that her soma text signifies.

Racial drag seems to be a strategy that is employed primarily by racially mixed people who are *not* within communities of colour. For example, Kam suggests that her experience of growing up in Trinidad, “where I was surrounded by people who looked

like me, also gave me a sense of 'self,' and so it does not bother me when people ask me where I am from" (Camper 39). Kam goes on to suggest that women who are biracial but born in Canada in a "predominantly white society" are more disturbed by the "Where are you from" question "because it is sort of getting to the core of who you are" (Camper 39). Biracial Canadians who find themselves in mostly white spaces may perform racial identities in order to "fake it" and fit in as monoracial. Wah's notion of "faking it" will be introduced in Chapter Three, where I argue that racial drag is one method by which racially hybrid characters express agency and mobility by faking it in order to pass for different racial identities that more closely approximate a hegemonic and monoracial identity.

Racially hybrid individuals who experience isolation and the primary trauma of dis-identification within their families, and then experience dis-identification in their communities, may find themselves at ease within a loose coalition of other biracial people. Canadian biracial writer Gitanjali Saxena suggests that "mixed race is not a community. It is not a cultural community and it's not a racial community" but rather a "situational [mixed race] community" (Camper 40). Given the ever-shifting nature of biracial identity, one could easily conclude that even the strategic essentialism that is invoked to conceive of a "situational community" of mixed race people is inherently problematic because any notion of a racially mixed community is subject to roving racial identity within its membership. For many racially hybrid people in Canada who do not see others who mirror their identity, a racially hybrid community may be said to exist only in the imagination.

Now that I have identified my own points of entry for this research, presented my methodology and rationale, and outlined some of the keys terms that are germane to my analysis, I want to draw my readers' attention to the larger critical discourse that has informed this research. Primary texts that document the experience of racial hybridity in Canada can be understood within a number of different theoretical frames. I employ hybridity theories, theories on mixed race literature and theoretical approaches to autobiography in order to analyze racial hybridity in contemporary Canadian literature and drama. Hybridity Theory, a subset of postcolonial theory, will be most applicable to my own research initiatives.¹⁸ Within the context of a Western Anglophone notion of hybridity, I chart Canadian paradigms for racial hybridity that suggest unique aspects of the Canadian socio-cultural context and specific literary uses of racial hybridity.¹⁹

Homi Bhabha's work has been instrumental to me in outlining a theoretical approach to the "third space" of racial hybridity.²⁰ In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha suggests that "it is the 'inter'—the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between* space—that carries the burden of meaning in culture" (38). Throughout my dissertation, I extend Bhabha's notions of a "third space" from the context of culture and enunciation to the racially hybrid body as a soma text that at once signifies and articulates this "in-betweenness." In each chapter, I consider the utility and ideological ramifications of "third-space" paradigms in terms of the ways in which they are used to represent racial hybridity in contemporary Canadian literature and drama.

Contemporary postcolonial theory, hybridity theories and critical mixed race studies employ a number of terms that are commonly referred to as “third-space” paradigms. Terms such as hybridity, liminality, interstitial zones and syncretism have shaped academic discourse on the subject of hybridity. Research methodologies and literary aesthetics have also been affected by these new paradigms. In Canada, third space theories and hybrid aesthetics have been established by a number of different scholars. Some notable Canadian intellectuals who have offered spatializations on racial hybridity include Sneja Gunew who uses the concept of transculturalisms to draw attention to métissage and hybrid identities as represented in art and performance.²¹ Fred Wah develops an “aesthetics of the hyphen” that is both a postmodern literary strategy and a means of articulating the multiplicity of a hyphenated identity (*Faking It*). A recent articulation of a Canadian hybridity theory was offered by Nova Scotian Africadian scholar, poet and playwright George Elliot Clarke. Clarke announced the concept of “zebra poetics” in his essay “Canadian Biraciality and Its Zebra Poetics,” and he uses the metaphor of the zebra to “challenge puerile categorizations of [racially hybrid writers’] complex selves” (232).²²

Each of these Canadian theorists and writers draw attention to the ways in which racially hybrid identity is in a state of flux and involves the negotiation of both spaces and hyphens. Their theories also draw attention to the unique experience of racial hybridity. In general, the idea of a third space is used to signify a space that is beyond the neither-nor paradigms that are the subtext for monoracial designations. In this way, the concept of a third space opens the possibility of challenging racial binaries by suggesting

a new way of understanding racially hybrid identity as a place of resistance to monoracial hegemony. In the ensuing pages I will both elaborate upon and problematize such constructions through a detailed analysis of how these third-space metaphors are used to represent a unified racial identity.

I must take a moment here to identify some of the theoretical obstacles that arise when a scholar wishes to utilize the core texts in critical mixed race studies for literary analysis. Within the field, groundbreaking studies on racial hybridity include Root (1992, 1996), Zack (1993, 1995) and Song and Parker (2001). These accounts and analyses of racial hybridity are placed within sociological or psychological frameworks rather than literary contexts; therefore, while these theoretical formulations suggest new ways of understanding racial hybridity, they do not deal with the *narrative uses* of racial hybridity. My dissertation utilizes these socio-cultural studies only to the extent that they serve to support my literary analysis and provide a context for the primary texts.

A second theoretical obstacle exists when one wishes to apply critical mixed race studies to literary analyses. None of the critical mixed race theorists mentioned above examines “mixedblood” identity within Native or Métis frameworks. I am conscious of the fact that the dominant discourse on racial hybridity has taken place in American contexts and has also not included the constructions of racial hybridity that are found in Métis communities. I use these theories to the extent that they provide insight into the representations of racial hybridity found in Native and non-Native Canadian narratives that feature racial hybridity. My own theoretical approach is based on the assumption that any survey of racial hybridity in Canada must include Métis, Native “crossblood” and

“half-breed” paradigms. In order to address this critical omission, I will include representations of Métis and “mixedblood” Native identity from autobiography, fiction, and drama within the chapters of my dissertation that are devoted to each of these specific genres.

There are an increasing number of personal narratives, journals, and anecdotes about racially mixed people being published in Canada. Autobiographical accounts of racial hybridity appear in works such as *Miscegenation Blues: Voices of Mixed Race Women* (1994), *Black Berry, Sweet Juice: On Being Black and White in Canada* (2001), *Half and Half: Writers Growing up Biracial and Bicultural* (1998), and *Funny You Don't Look like One: Observations From A Blue-Eyed Ojibway* (1998).²³ These new works often feature the racially hybrid soma text as a central element on the cover (**Illustrations 1-4**). This emerging body of work indicates both a contemporary Canadian interest in biracial autobiography and an increasing demographic of people who identify as “mixed race.”²⁴ The use of the racially hybrid body on the cover also indicates a contemporary Canadian fascination with the visual signifiers of ambiguously coded racially hybrid bodies.

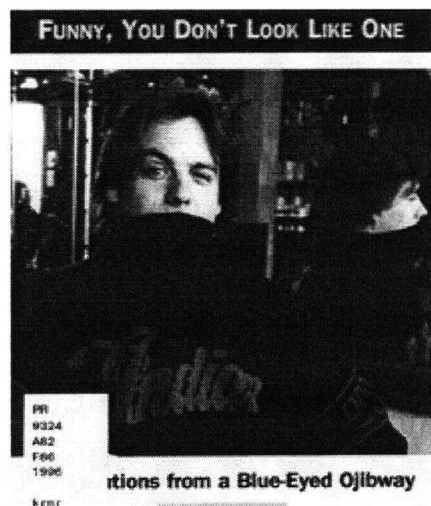


Illustration 1. The cover from Drew Hayden-Taylor's *Funny, You Don't Look Like One: Observations of a Blue-Eyed Ojibway* (1996). This cover draws attention to the racially hybrid body and the notion of the "real" Indian. His partially obscured face parallels his partial identification with the word "Indian" on his sweater and the mirrors suggest the duality of his own racially hybrid body. This use of mirrors and his direct gaze also indicate the importance of the gaze.

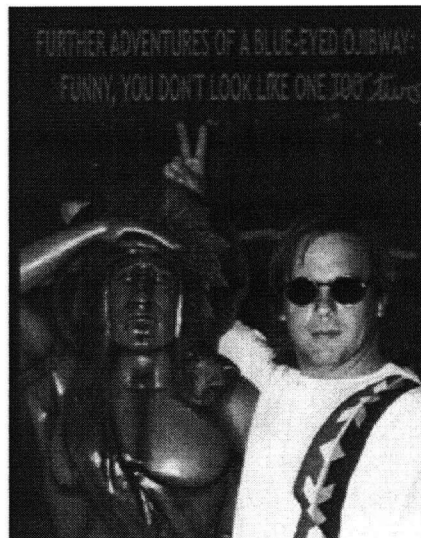


Illustration 2. Here is another cover from Drew Hayden-Taylor's *Further Adventures of a Blue Eyed Ojibway: Funny, You Don't Look Like One, Too* (1999). Interestingly, Taylor resists the viewer's interest in seeing his controversial blue eyes by wearing dark glasses. The color imagery in his clothing to signifies his indigeneity (Native motif on his left shoulder) and also his European ancestry (white t-shirt). His comic pose with the classic Cigar Store Indian suggests that he is also interested in playing with stereotypes of indigeneity.

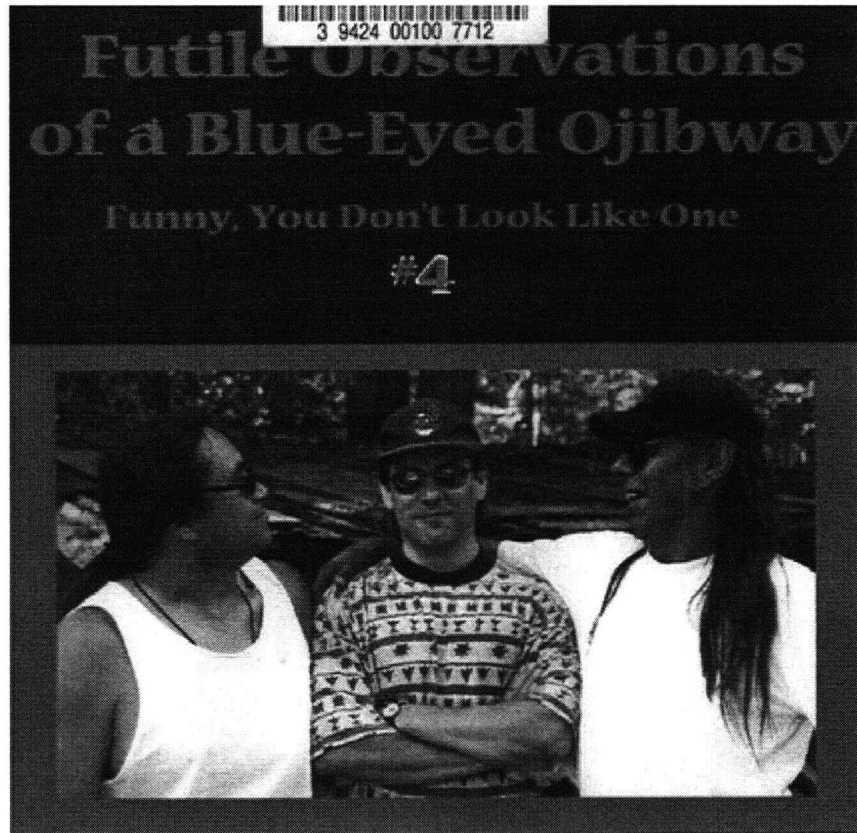


Illustration 3. Here is another cover from Drew Hayden-Taylor's *Futile Observations of a Blue Eyed Ojibway: Funny, You Don't Look Like One #4* (2004). Again Taylor resists a reading of his controversial blue eyes by wearing dark glasses. By wearing a "Braves" baseball cap he is playing with this icon of indigeneity. The cover further draws attention to the role of the soma text and the racialized gaze by having the two phenotypically Native men visually assess his soma text while Taylor defies the gaze of the viewer. He appears to have been accepted by the man on the right who extends an arm in an inclusive gesture but he is cautiously read by the one on the left—a symptom of having a racially hybrid soma text.

"Once you start reading these personal stories, you just can't stop; you keep wanting to read another and another."—DEBORAH TANNEN, Ph.D.

BLACK, WHITE, OTHER



Illustration 4. This is the cover for Lise Funderburg's biography *Black, White, Other* (1994). The photos engage the viewer in the racialized gaze by displaying a variety of soma texts that biracial Americans can possess. The presence of more women than men also hints at the predominance of female reflections on racial hybridity and the relative lack of men's voices in the discourse on racial hybridity. In addition, the design, colors and font style heighten the notion of "black and white" embodiment. The use of white text with shadow parallels the white and black framing of the black and white photos of black and white people.

My dissertation explores the different ways in which various contemporary Canadian writers have represented, negotiated and asserted the uniqueness of the racially hybrid soma text. I will close this introductory chapter with a more detailed account of the ways in which Canadians represent racial hybridity, by identifying my primary concerns in each subsequent chapter and summarizing the way in which each chapter builds upon previous chapters.

In Chapter Two, I focus on embodied epistemologies of racially hybrid subjectivity in order to develop a critical paradigm for the analysis of biracial autobiography in Canada. I engage in a close reading of Lawrence Hill's autobiography *Black Berry, Sweet Juice* (2001) as my primary case study and cite other Canadian autobiographies to support my argument. I note the importance of the performativity and racial essentialisms involved in the articulation of raced bodies from autobiographical accounts, and posit the need for a critical discourse on biracial autobiography. I also argue that the critical reluctance to address racial hybridity **across** racial lines inevitably compromises the development of a comprehensive analysis of the narrative uses of racial hybridity and the understanding of the emerging biracial and/or multiracial autobiographical voice.²⁵

The recent publication of autobiographies by Native and non-Native racially hybrid Canadians has provided ample insight into the material experience of living in a racially hybrid body in Canada. I analyze these autobiographical reflections on the experience of biraciality within the context of autobiographical theories, and ultimately

assert that there are complicated negotiations of identity within biracial autobiographies that necessitate the development of biracial autobiography theory.²⁶ Current theories regarding autobiography and the autobiographical voice, such as those of Eakin (1999), Gilmore (2001, 1994) and Egan (1984), touch upon the construction of autobiographies by writers of colour but do not go into any depth; in fact, most are based on monoracially-identified theories of identity.²⁷

Within the field of autobiography, there is an emerging group of autobiographical theory that addresses specific monoracial, ethnic, or “of colour” identities. Important work that deals with autoethnography includes Joanne Braxton’s *Black Women Writing Autobiography: A Tradition Within a Tradition* (1989), Arnold Krupat’s *For Those Who Came After: A Study in American Indian Autobiography* (1985), Louis Owens’s *MixedBlood Messages: Literature, Film, Family, Place* (2001) and Gerald Vizenor’s *Manifest Manners* (1999). However, none of these theoretical approaches addresses the biracial autobiography and the ways in which this particular negotiation of identity fractures and complicates the monoracial autobiographical “I” in unique ways. These theoretical perspectives provide a foundation for my own research and assist in my construction of a critical and theoretical account of the biracial autobiographical voice.

My research in the second chapter will involve mapping the vocabulary for racial hybridity in terms of metaphors that are used to refer to blood-quantum, establishing paradigms that are used to symbolize biracial or multiracial identity and charting the narrative trajectory evident in biracial autobiographies. I will also articulate some of the nuances involved with living in a racial hybrid body in Canada. This analysis, these

narrative trajectories, conclusions, terms and themes in biracial autobiographies, will inform my analysis of racial hybridity in contemporary Canadian fiction (Chapter Three) and drama (Chapter Four).

In the third chapter I focus on fictional representations of racial hybridity in contemporary Canadian literature and consider the contemporary narrative uses of racial hybridity within a crossracial methodology by looking at sample representations of racial hybridity from fiction. Because many fictional representations of racial hybridity are conveyed by a biracial autobiographical voice, theoretical approaches to autobiography, and autobiographical accounts of racial hybridity provide insight into the narrative uses of a biracial autobiographical voice. In order to develop my thesis on the construction of a biracial autobiographical voice in fiction, I will extend my analysis of the biracial autobiographical voice (Chapter Two) to the construction of fictional biracial voices. In the primary texts that I address, themes such as racialized aesthetics, multiraciality and the representation of interracial relationships framed around notions of exogamy and endogamy are signified by the racially hybrid body, and indicate a subset of concerns regarding the biracial and multiracial “I.”

As a transition from autobiography to my chapter on fiction, I will address works that blend the generic conventions of fiction and autobiography such as Fred Wah’s *Diamond Grill* (1996), and a work that blends autobiography and biography such as Maria Campbell’s *Half-breed* (1973). Because Fred Wah has directly stated that *Diamond Grill* is written in a mixed mode that combines both autobiography and fiction, it will provide the transition from my own analysis of autobiographical accounts in

Chapter Two to fictional representations that use the autobiographical voice to frame racial hybridity in Chapter Three. Campbell's work articulates an autobiographical voice that is *also* the voice of the Métis community and, in this respect, the work can be understood as a blend of autobiography and biography. These texts suggest some of the ways in which the generic conventions associated with fiction and autobiography are blurred as a part of a "hybrid aesthetic."

As a critical lens for the analysis of these transition texts, I will use Fred Wah's *Faking It* (2000) because it is an important example of a hybrid literary theory that focuses on the aesthetics of hybridity in Canada. Many biracial writers employ a Wahsian "aesthetics of the hyphen" in which future and past, individual voices and communal voices, are refracted within a single unifying narrative. This notion of a "hybrid aesthetic" is also represented frequently in biracial autobiographies where we find multiple voices constituting a single autobiographical narrative (see Hill, Funderburg, and Zack). This structural element of the biracial autobiographical narrative is in keeping with the lived experience of racially hybridized individuals for whom polarities and dualisms are constantly being translated, incorporated and responded to. In this Wahsian paradigm, when a narrative features a racially hybrid character, we can often find traces of a hybridized aesthetic whereby the structure, content and characters' soma texts all signify hybridity.²⁸

Although some racially mixed characters engage in fluid racial identity assignment through faking it and passing, other mixed race characters fix their identity within a third-space paradigm. Campbell's *Half-breed* documents a racially mixed

woman who embraces her mixedness signified through her Métis identity. Campbell embraces racial hybridity through writing her own “story” and stating that it signifies the “story” of the racially hybrid Métis nation in Canada and, for this reason, I have included this work as a transition text.

Following this analysis of these two transition texts—Wah’s *Diamond Grill* as “biotext” and Maria Campbell’s *Half-breed* as an (auto)biography—I will address novels that represent racial hybridity. The novel *In Search of April Raintree* (1999) represents many of the features of the “tragic mulatto” story found in American “passing narratives,” and April also tries to “fake it” as a white woman. I argue that this novel is a classic Canadian “tragic half-breed” story that challenges the “tragic” element in unique ways at the end of the narrative.

In this chapter on fiction I engage in a close reading of selected contemporary Canadian work that is written by Native writers and features racially hybrid characters and/or culturally hybrid Native characters. The primary texts in this chapter, in addition to *In Search of April Raintree*, include *Keeper N’ Me* (1994) and *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (1998). These contemporary Canadian novels demonstrate the fictional application of Wah’s notion of faking it as a narrative strategy that enables hybrid characters to perform specific monoracial identities in order to pass.²⁹ In my crossracial examination of these fictional narratives, it becomes clear that racial drag offers different narrative possibilities in what I consider to be distinctly Canadian representations of racial (and cultural) hybridity in fiction.

In Chapter Four, I focus on the signifying nature of the Canadian biracial body on stage in order to address the following questions: What are the complex signifiers associated with the “soma text” of the racially hybrid body on stage in Canada? How do these plays utilize a biracial autobiographical voice? Do these plays represent racial hybridity in ways that reinforce or challenge a third-space paradigm? What is the relationship between the audience and the racialized body (performer) on stage? What is the audience witnessing and participating in when viewing the racially hybrid body on stage? And how does the staging of race in *contemporary* Canadian theatre differ from earlier performances of racially hybrid identities on stage? I pay close attention to the generic implications facing playwrights who perform their own racial hybridity on stage, and I also consider how playwrights use the trope of racial hybridity in drama that features racially mixed characters.

In the first part of Chapter Four, I return to the thread of the autobiographical voice in my analysis of contemporary playwrights who, like Margo Kane, write from their own autobiographical experiences of being racially mixed Canadians. Lesley Ewen’s play “an understanding of brown” (1994) and Tasha Faye Evans’ play “She Stands Still” (2003) are both framed around their personal reflections on how their soma texts are read and how they have come to understand their soma texts over time. Ewen and Evans literally stage their racial hybridity in a way that draws attention to the conventions of the theatre and engages the audience in a unique form of a controlled experience of reading their racially hybrid bodies. In each case, the writer/actor draws

attention to her racially hybrid corporeality by direct audience address when they ask the audience to read their bodies on stage as part of the dramatic narrative. In this way, these women implicate the audience in the dynamics that they refer to within the play proper and make the visual relations between the actor and audience more evident.

This structural component of their plays allows both biracial Canadian actor/playwrights to assert their own biracial autobiographical voices and to contain and direct the process of interpellation. The structure of their plays implicates the audience in the process of interpellation, and thereby these playwright/actors engage in a unique form of actor/audience engagement through a very racialized autobiographical pact with the audience. In this final chapter I will map the distinct ways in which each of these playwrights stages racial hybridity, engages with “third-space” paradigms, draws attention to blood quantum, revises history and/or addresses the taboo of miscegenation.

In the second half of this chapter I look at other contemporary plays and examine the ways in which the racially hybrid character serves a number of different ideological and narrative uses. Canadian “mixed blood” Ojibway playwright Drew Hayden Taylor uses the racially mixed character Summer in *The Buz’ Gem Blues* (2002), and to a lesser extent *The Baby Blues* (1999), to suggest the complex negotiations involved in biracial identity.³⁰ This character is also present for comic relief in both plays.³¹ In *The Buz’ Gem Blues* (2002) Summer does *not* identify herself within the “third space” paradigm as a racially mixed or “crossblood” Native character but is forced to come to terms with the fact that she is a Native “wannabe.” This presentation of racial hybridity reinforces notions of Native blood-quantum by presenting an essentialist position; because Summer

is 1/64th Native she is too “mixed” to claim a Native identity. Conversely, Taylor represents a “half-breed” boy in *Boy in the Treehouse* (2000) as a character who has enough blood quantum to entitle him to both explore and adopt a Native identity. I am interested in what Taylor is suggesting about Native blood quantum and authenticity in these plays. I am equally interested in the metaphors that the characters themselves use to express their “mixedness.”

Monique Mojica represents racial hybridity quite differently in *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* (1991) by representing a pan-indigenous experience of racial hybridity. In this play racial hybridity is a feature that unites racially mixed women throughout the Americas, from “halfblood” Métis Canadians, to “half-breed” Americans through to Latin American “mestizo” women. Mojica’s representation of a transcultural racial hybridity suggests a pan-ethnic third-space community founded on racial hybridity. Mojica explores interraciality as a metaphor for colonial contact and includes this examination within a play that is framed around a transcultural, strategically essentialist representation of a pan-hybrid history.

Unlike to the sweeping gesture of inclusiveness and strategic essentialism implicit in the community of racially hybrid women that Mojica represents, George Elliot Clarke’s libretto *Beatrice Chancy* (1999) deals with the *specific* effects of racially hybrid embodiment on a single character. A central feature in this work is the indelible corporeality of racial hybridity and the material effects of this form of embodiment. This play is a contemporary revision of Canadian history that centers on the dramatic trajectory of a Canadian “tragic mulatta.” The dramatic tension in Clarke’s play revolves

around the soma text of the racially mixed woman whose body becomes the site of the tensions for the two central racial groups in the play. I am interested in the manner in which Beatrice Chancy's body is read by both white and Black characters who are monoracially identified.

I close this chapter with a brief examination of Clarke's play *Québécoisité*. Clarke's representation of crossracial tensions challenges the strategic essentialism of a unified community consisting of "people of colour" in Canada. In the postlude to the play, Ajay Heble suggests that this work also addresses the "fraught role that ethnicity and race have played in struggles for Quebec nationalism" (97). By articulating the concerns of different characters who represent marginalized communities in Quebec, Heble argues that Clarke challenges "mainstream assumptions about Quebec as white" and that the play presents a more inclusive representation of Canadian citizenship and identity (99).³² This play represents a contemporary vision of interraciality, hybridity and crossracial unions in ways that are consistent with the current theoretical interest in articulating hybridity within a paradigm that is not based on a "white and Other" binary.

Generally speaking, my dissertation addresses the unique ways in which racial hybridity functions in contemporary Canadian narratives—be they in autobiography, fiction, or drama. By examining racial hybridity in the Canadian context and employing a crossracial methodology, I assert the importance of including Métis and "halfblood" Native literature and paradigms in the analysis of Canadian narratives that feature racial hybridity. I am developing this crossracial and crossgeneric methodology to posit some theoretical contributions to the growing body of critical mixed race studies. By

examining the numerous ways in which racial hybridity is coded in a number of different Canadian sources and locating similarities that exist *across* racial and generic divisions, this research will outline some of the narrative complexities involved in representing racial hybridity.

In sum, my dissertation suggests that the representations of racial hybridity that are found in Canadian contemporary literature and drama enable one to establish critical terrain that can be used to develop new theories on the literary uses of racial hybridity. These new models, terms, insights, and methodologies will have great utility in the growing field of critical mixed race studies. These new critical terms can be usefully engaged with and applied to the analysis of other contemporary and emerging “mixed race” literature in Canada. In addition, these critical terms and methodologies contribute to the field of hybridity studies and reconfigure current theories on autobiography.

CHAPTER TWO: AUTOBIOGRAPHY

“What Are You?” and “Where Are You From?”

The blacker the berry the sweeter the juice...a suggestion of the myth of the overcharged, overheated, high-performing black body. Presumably, the blacker berry tastes richer, more full, and is juicier. It is waiting to explode in the mouth.

(Hill, *Black Berry, Sweet Juice*, 21)

I search for the caramel that is my skin...soma text.

(La Flamme, *Soma Text*, 2005 unpublished)

I was troubled by my mother's whiteness. Embarrassed by it. Couldn't she have looked at least a little darker, a little less white? Perhaps like a Southern Italian.

(Hill, *Black Berry, Sweet Juice*, 25)

Ask me where I am from?

I am from here

and everywhere

I am multinational/United nations/United in one body

Bloodlines intermixed/traveling centuries

To create me

A Millenia of inter racial fucking

I am from here-especially here.

(Baines, *Miscegenation Blues*, 151-152)

I approach my analysis of different representations of racial hybridity in contemporary Canadian literature by focusing on the recent autobiography *Black Berry, Sweet Juice: On Being Black and White in Canada* (2001) written by biracial Canadian writer Lawrence Hill. Hill's work represents many of the aspects of racial hybridity that appear in autobiographical narratives written by racially mixed people in Canada. I start my analysis by examining the polyphonic, intertextual and dialogic aspects of Hill's autobiography, in terms of theories on autobiography. I argue that the structural elements of this work suggest a hybrid aesthetic that complements the racially hybrid multiplicity that is represented as the thematic center of the autobiography itself. Following this, I will analyze this work by employing the key terms and concepts that I set out in Chapter One and which are, as I hope to demonstrate, the foundational elements in narratives that feature racial hybridity in Canada: the soma text, the racialized gaze, trauma associated with interpellation and the notion of passing as a form of racial drag.

The representation of racial hybridity in contemporary Canadian autobiographies provides readers with a heightened awareness of the signifying nature of the racially hybrid soma text, documents the impact of the racialized gaze and asserts the importance of self-definition. Hill's autobiography and other autobiographical reflections on the experience of racial hybridity will be used to illuminate some of the nuances involved in representing racial hybridity. My analysis of the signifying nature of the racially hybrid soma text and the impact of the racialized gaze in Hill's work will provide insight into the use of racial drag in fiction (Chapter Three), and the representation of the performative aspects of racial hybridity in drama (Chapter Four). In short, the performativity of race,

the construction of racial essentialisms and the construction of a national identity are often signified by the racially hybrid soma text in autobiographical accounts, fictional representations of racial hybridity and performances that feature racially hybrid actors addressing their unique somatextual experiences.

As I have outlined in Chapter One, at the most basic level, the experience of racial hybridity shows great variety and is deeply influenced by familial and social messages about racial identity. Racial hybridity is also informed by culture-specific ideologies about blood and belonging, and by legal and historical approaches to racial amalgamation. These familial and socio-cultural facets affect how an individual experiences his/her racially hybrid soma text, and they also affect the messages one may receive about racial hybridity. The experience of racial hybridity is also necessarily influenced by demographics and shows great variability; therefore, it is impossible to use one specific individual's experience of racial hybridity in Canada as an example of the whole range and diverse experiences of racial hybridity.

This being said, I have chosen to focus on Hill's autobiography because of the scope of this work and because Hill addresses and decodes many of the elements that are evident in other memoirs and reflections of racial hybridity in Canada. There are many commonalities in the experience of racial hybridity. In *Rethinking 'Mixed Race,'* Laurie M. Mengel asserts that "[m]ixed race people of all backgrounds and histories have tended to have similar characteristics attributed to them" (100). As a result, much insight into the experience of racial hybridity can be applied crossracially. Key aspects of racial hybridity, in particular the somatextual complexities of racial hybridity, the role of the

racialized gaze, and the trauma of interpellation are present in Hill's autobiography. This is one reason why I strongly believe that it is useful to place Hill's work at the centre of a discussion of racial hybridity in Canada. This does not mean that Hill's autobiography represents *all* experiences of racial hybridity but rather that my analysis of his work identifies many of the key critical aspects that appear in autobiographies by racially hybrid Canadians.¹

In addition to autobiographical accounts, there are a number of biographies that have been recently published that deal with the topic of racial hybridity. Paul Spickard's essay "The Subject is Mixed Race: The Boom in Biracial Biography" draws attention to the proliferation of biracial biography as a consequence of "a multiracial movement" that has emerged in the USA (76).² Spickard places this mixed-race biography boom with its divergent themes as a consequence of "a transition in the reading public's mind from the stable categorical thinking of the modern era to the multi-faceted and contingent thinking of the postmodern" (94). He also suggests that we must consider how these biographies are consumed because "perhaps such biographies may be popular because they are comfortable vehicles by which White readers can enter into the exotic and frightening world of Blacks in the company of the domesticated, half-white guide" (77). Spickard cautions against a simple celebration of this mixed-race biography boom and suggests that we take note of how such narratives are consumed.

With the increase in the publication of autobiographies by racially hybrid Canadians and this biography boom, it becomes interesting to consider how these works are marketed. As noted in Chapter One, publications on the topic of racial hybridity often utilize the soma text of multiracial and biracial individuals to market their books on said topic. Often photos of racially hybrid people appear on the cover of the publication and visually represent the centrality of the theme of embodiment. The racially hybrid body becomes a visual text that is used to market the work. In this way the content of the autobiography is identified by the soma text of the racially hybrid body on the cover and the book buyer is engaged in decoding the race of the individuals in these photos from the outset. In fact, one might argue that on these covers, the racially hybrid soma text *stands in for* the experience of racial hybridity, engages the viewer in decoding the racial configuration of the photo and highlights the central themes of racially hybrid embodiment by visually representing the body as a complex signifier.

The cover of Lawrence Hill's *Black Berry, Sweet Juice* is an excellent example of the racially hybrid body being used as a visual text in order to market the book.

(Illustration 5).

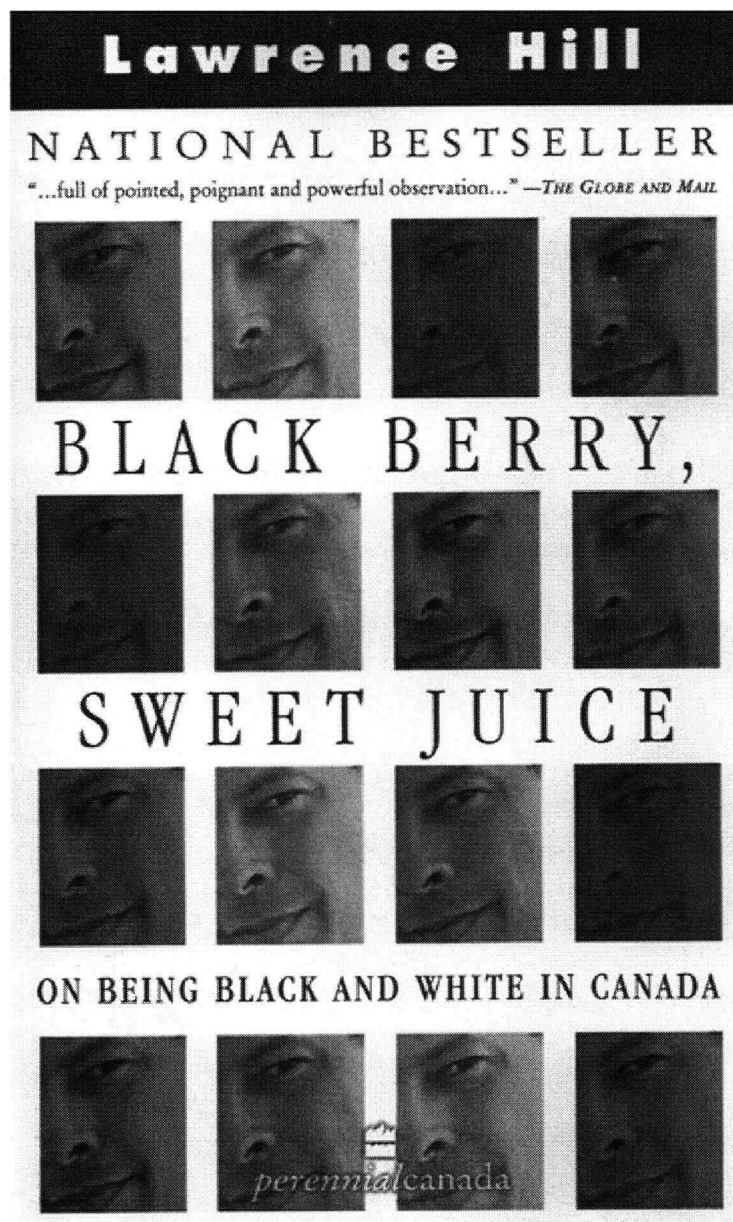


Illustration 5. The front cover of Lawrence Hill's autobiography *Black Berry, Sweet Juice* (2001) complicates our autobiographical pact with the author. As viewers we are immediately invited to determine which skin tone and which image is the real Lawrence Hill. As a consequence of seeing this range of tones, viewers have already started to use the racialized gaze to decode his racially hybrid soma text.

At the most basic level these photos legitimize Hill's truth claim of growing up in a biracial body. This simple autobiographical pact is made more complex than it would be if there were only one image of Hill because the cover shows 16 images of the same photo of Hill's face. In addition, each image is tinted in different hues in order to suggest greater or lesser degrees of mixedness. The viewer is engaged in decoding which of these hues most represents what they imagine is Hill's racially hybrid soma text. The title indicates that the writer is black and white and viewers are left to decipher which of these images is the *real* Hill based on their own ideas of what a black and white Canadian looks like. The use of different hues to color Hill's face also draws attention to the process of racialization whereby one is assigned a race based on somatic markers such as skin color.

This multiple representation of Hill's own face and the multiple color coding of it, suggest the fluidity of racial identity for racially hybrid individuals and the different ways in which a racially hybrid body with ambiguous signifiers may be read. The cover signifies Hill's own subjective experience of racialization in multiple racial locations and visually represents the different ways in which his racially hybrid body has been read. In sum, the visual representation of Hill's racially hybrid face on this book cover suggests the centrality of embodiment, the role of the racialized gaze and the mutability of racial hybridity. These elements are central to my analysis of autobiography in this chapter and are also critical points of entry in my analysis of racial hybridity as represented in contemporary Canadian fiction and drama.

To see Hill's work in perspective it is helpful to consider it in relation to Carol Camper's anthology *Miscegenation Blues: Voices of Mixed Race Women* (1994). This was the first national anthology dedicated to collecting the autobiographies of mixed race women in North America. Although Americans had been publishing anthologies of writing by mixed race people for decades, this was the first *Canadian* attempt to collect diverse autobiographical works by Canadians and Americans who identified themselves as "mixed race" women. *Miscegenation Blues* appeared as part of a national literary movement that was grounded in the strategic essentializing of women of colour who collectively addressed their place within the Canadian canon and nation from the 1990s on.³

The use of the term "miscegenation" in Camper's title has specific historico-legal ramifications in the American context. This term also signifies the connection between anti-miscegenation laws and the presence of racially hybrid people. Although Canada does not have the same history of anti-miscegenation laws, the title suggests that Canadian mixed race women have also been informed by the American prohibitions against interracial marriages. Unlike the American use of the word, the term "miscegenation" is used here in the title to identify mixed race people crossracially and not simply to refer to the overdetermined American tendency to think of "mixed race" people as simply "black and white" admixtures.⁴

The title, *Miscegenation Blues*, suggests that Camper has cross-appropriated the American history of criminalizing interracial unions. The title is also signifying on an African-American blues aesthetic.⁵ In choosing this title, Camper is drawing attention to

the African-American context of racialization and also suggesting a connection between the issues of interraciality and the experience of racial hybridity in Canada and the United States. Like Camper's title, Hill's title signifies on the American socio-cultural context to suggest that racial ideologies have been imported to Canada and have led to both *scopophilic* interests in policing racial identity and *scopophobic* complexities for racially hybrid Canadians.

In addition to being interpellated in a number of different ways, racially hybrid individuals share stories of agency and self-identifying mechanisms in Hill and Camper's works. Camper, like Hill, draws attention to a growing need for self-representation for mixed race people in Canada. Camper opens *Miscegenation Blues* by declaring that "mixed race people must speak" (xv). It is urgent for racially mixed Canadians, she claims, to "identify who we are and identify our needs" (xv). Through the publication of the anthology Camper hopes to "end isolation" and allow mixed race people to "understand racial multiplicity, within our own bodies, families and cultures" (xv). Camper signals the importance of self-representation as a tool to end isolation—a theme that is echoed throughout Hill's autobiography.

Almost all racially mixed people who have ambiguous or compound phenotypes experience their identity as a minority within a minority. For example, Hill refers to the fact that he is a minority as a light-skinned Black person but also that he is a minority in that he is not quite white. This doubling of his minority status means that it is more difficult for him to find others who reflect or mirror his soma text. Hill and Camper

describe the experience of growing up biracial in monoracial communities as alienating and even traumatic.

I want to make one further point about a crucial difference between *Black Berry*, *Sweet Juice* and *Miscegenation Blues*. *Miscegenation Blues* is unique among representations of racial hybridity in Canada because Camper includes self-identified Native and non-Native mixed race women in this anthology. This work documents several crossracial parallels in the biracial autobiographies of a number of different North American mixed race women. The anthology itself is based on the assumption that there are many experiences of racial hybridity that transcend the racial divisions of each particular “mix.” This crossracial element sets this anthology apart from other anthologies that have documented the experiences of different monoracial groups in Canada (i.e. Asian-Canadian, African-Canadian, Japanese-Canadian). *Miscegenation Blues* engages in a crossgeneric and crossracial methodology and has informed my own approach to the topic of racial hybridity in Canada within this dissertation as a whole. Throughout my analysis of Hill’s autobiography, I will consider how other writers, such as those found in *Miscegenation Blues*, have addressed the same issues from their own racially hybrid perspectives.⁶

One of the key issues in Canadian autobiographies is related to the demographics in Canada. Often a writer will suggest that emotional and psychological development can be interrupted when a biracial individual does not see others with the same soma text. Camper states that while growing up in Canada she realizes she “didn’t resemble anyone in [her] world,” and this experience of isolation is echoed throughout a number of

Canadian autobiographies where racially mixed individuals reflect on their soma texts and chart their evolving racial identities. Camper states: “Some of us don’t even have a sibling that looks like us let alone anyone else. No one wants to feel this alone. To be perceived as a racial oddity is isolating and confusing” (xv). This theme is also echoed by other racially mixed women in this anthology. I have chosen key examples from this anthology that illustrate these points.

Hill, like Camper, introduces his work by explaining his need to “connect with other black people” (1) and states that “[c]onnecting with black people in a land with few clustered black communities has been a lifelong journey for me” (3). As an African-Canadian, Hill was mostly isolated from black communities but he learned early on from his father that it was important to establish links with other Black people in Canada “especially when there were so few of us around” (1). While Hill does not draw attention to the distinctions between black communities on the west and east coasts, it is important to note that his experience is particular to being raised in the white suburban environment of Don Mills and does *not* reflect the experience of Black people in other areas where there has been a longer historical presence of Black communities, such as Halifax or Toronto.⁷

In addition to his stated need to “connect” with other black people, Hill identifies another more specific need to find a community of *mixed race people* who, like Hill, had one black and one white parent and were living in Canada. Hill states that the impulse to write his autobiography stemmed from an early desire to connect with “people who, like me, were of mixed race. People with one black and one white parent” (2-3) because

outside of his own home in Don Mills he “never saw people of mixed race” (3). Clearly, Canadian demographics informed Hill’s quest to seek others who mirrored his own experience and racially hybrid soma text. This sense of alienation is specific to his generation because his children and other racially mixed Canadians will have work, like Hill’s, to refer to when they seek representations of their identity.

Hill suggests that the Canadian context has certain consequences for racially hybrid people. He writes that “Canadians are quick to point out what we of mixed race are not—we are not white, and we are not black—but they don’t tell us what we are. This is the quintessential Canada: the True North, Proud, and Vague” (228). Hill goes through a number of questions about his identity and wonders, “Can I be black and white, all in the same breath?” (11). Mixed messages about one’s racial identity can create a vacuum because these messages about racial identity are often predicated on what a racially mixed individual is *not*, rather than a positive assertion of an identity based on wholeness.⁸

It is not *just* within the Canadian context that racial hybridity signifies an absence. Hill states that in the North American context, the terms “black” and “white” ultimately acquire meaning only in opposition to each other.⁹ Hill claims that “[a] white [person] is somebody who is not black, Asian, or Aboriginal. A black [person] is someone who is not white” (208).¹⁰ According to Hill these racial lines have become “more blurred” recently whereas in the past, “you were black if you were known to have any black ancestors. And you were white if nobody could prove that you were black” (208).¹¹ Both Camper’s anthology and Hill’s autobiography identify and celebrate the recent trend for

racially hybrid Canadians to self-identify because, as Hill points out, “in recent years, it has become possible to define oneself on one’s own terms” (228).

Hill, in the end, does not assert a racially hybrid identity as a “mixed race” man and he also does not accept being called “mulatto.” He declares that he is throwing out “the language that has guided and misinformed and indeed blinded our thinking for four centuries. Mulatto? Quadroon? Octoroon? One-quarter black? Half black? All black? Black in this knee but white in the other? These terms I toss out the window, to be buried deep in the snow drifting high outside the farmhouse where I’ve come to finish this book” (239). Throughout his autobiography he suggests the importance of self-representation for racially hybrid individuals, until the final paragraph where he defiantly declares: “I am black because I say so, because I feel it, know it and own it” (239).

This need to self-identify is particularly common in autobiographies written by racially hybrid individuals. The genre of autobiography is used by many biracial individuals to map the experiences of racial hybridity in Canada and to document the mixed messages that people, like Hill, receive about their racially hybrid soma text. Reactions to racially hybrid soma texts involve everything from a celebration of the mixedness of racially hybrid people’s soma texts as signifiers of beauty or the exotic, to expressions of resentment or discomfort with the soma text of the racially hybrid body because of the racial messages it encodes. If there is one consistent thread linking these autobiographies it is the fact that mixed messages form a crucial aspect of racial identity formation for biracial individuals in Canada. The signifying nature of racial hybridity as

well as the arbitrariness and constructedness of racial categories highlight the importance of self-definition.

Writers of colour have been consistently self-identifying in contemporary post-colonial and Canadian literature. Autobiographies that have been written by racially hybrid Canadians are part of the larger genre of post-colonial literature that is continuing to emerge in Canada. A number of different writers have understood the need to write from their position as minority subjects and reflect upon their lived experiences of racialization. In *Postcolonialism and Autobiography*, writers Cliff and Dabydeen point out that, “[p]ostmodern fictionists, political activists, ethnic and women writers alike have taken resort to a form of life-writing which allows them to address their specific needs and to pursue their respective purposes” (1). The relationship between postmodernity and postcolonialism is linked to the rise in autobiographies written by minority subjects because “[p]ostmodern practices applied and political goals pursued by mostly minority and women writers seem to be prominent in the combination of postcolonialism and autobiography” (1). The genre of autobiography allows for a reconfiguration of national discourse and has been used by marginalized people to enact emancipatory political agendas. Another way of describing the impetus for autobiographical writing by minority groups is to think of this writing as part of the process of “writing back.”¹²

The biracial autobiography may also be understood not simply as a *reaction* to postcoloniality and/or a symptom of postmodernity but as stemming from a need to express agency and to articulate a complex, multiply-coded multiraciality. In the

introduction to *Half and Half* (1998), O'Hearn, like Hill and Camper, writes about the need to fashion her autobiography because people didn't know where to place her for much of her life. O'Hearn claims she would "try on identities with strangers I knew I would never meet again" (92). This performative aspect of biracial identity based on floating or ambiguous signifiers appears in many autobiographies, fictional representations of racial hybridity and in drama. I will address this element of performing different identities in each chapter.

Ambiguous soma texts prompt people to ask two central questions in order to place the form of racially hybrid embodiment that they see into a certain racial taxonomy that is based on a set of assumptions about phenotypes. Perhaps the central experience for biracial people, of being asked the questions "What are you?" and "Where are you from?" has spawned the contemporary outpouring of autobiographies in order to create a narrative of self-identity in the absence of cultural affirmations for particular racial mixes of people. Rather than simply reacting to these questions, racially hybrid writers have turned to the genre of autobiography as a means of articulating their own responses to these questions about the signifying nature of their racially hybrid somatexts. Hybridity theorist Paul Spickard suggests that this genre is suited to such reflections because "[a]utobiography [. . .] gives multiracial people a means of fashioning a coherent ethnic narrative for themselves" (93). These primary works indicate that two of the methods for fashioning such coherence may be to claim the multiplicity of a racially hybrid identity by way of a third-space paradigm or, deny or obscure the biracial elements in one's

genealogy. This denial usually involves revoking a third-space identity by passing as “pure” and claiming a monoracial identity.

Autobiographies by racially hybrid Canadians are inherently political acts by a minority (racially hybrid writers) within a minority (writers of colour). Autobiography theorist Leigh Gilmore suggests that “writing an autobiography can be a political act because it asserts a right to speak rather than be spoken for” (*Autobiographics* 40). The position of the “I” is crucial to mapping the ways in which the autobiographical voice challenges hegemony, because autobiography can also be understood as a “site of resistance” (80) and self-representation in autobiography as “a discourse of identity” (81). In this respect racially hybrid Canadian writers are the liminal figures currently claiming a right to self-identify through the genre of autobiography within the postcolonial subset known in Canada as “writers of colour,” and this work may be read as resistance writing based on discourses of non-hegemonic identities.

I present this larger context as a frame within which Lawrence Hill’s autobiography may be placed. His work is one of many examples of minority discourse that is part of the postcolonial writing back. Lawrence Hill’s autobiography *Black Berry, Sweet Juice: On Being Black and White in Canada* was published in 2001 but has had little critical analysis to date. The title of Hill’s work is based on the African-American expression, “the blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice.” Hill uses this saying in the title and again in the preface to his work to identify the signifying nature of blackness and the implicit judgments about his skin colour that have informed his own sense of an identity.¹³ He cites his father’s version of the saying in the preface, “The blacker the

berry / The sweeter the juice / But if you got too black / It ain't no use," in order to provide an example of the multiple messages about being black that circulate in African-American and African-Canadian communities. There is an implicit judgment about the superiority of "blackness" in this message that Hill received as a child, and it is this message that Hill seeks to deconstruct in the course of the autobiography.

Before engaging in a close reading of Hill's autobiography I want to outline some of the structural features that make this work a unique blend of voices. Hill set out to examine the following questions in his autobiography: "Who exactly was I? How do you navigate the waters of identity with one black and one white parent? How have other Canadians who share the same mixed-race background managed it? What does it mean to be black and white in Canada?" (7). In choosing this particular set of questions, Hill positions his autobiography as a narrative that *both* documents his own growing awareness of his racial identity and simultaneously charts how other biracial Canadians experience and understand their racial hybridity in the Canadian context.

This dual purpose sets up his most obvious departure from the genre of autobiography because Hill frames his own autobiography in relation other autobiographies of racially hybrid Canadians. According to Lejeune's seminal work *On Autobiography*, autobiography is defined as "[r]etrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality" (4). If we follow this definition, conventional autobiography offers the story of an individual who the reader assumes is narrating the events of his life. Lejeune suggests that readers enter an "autobiographical pact" when

entering into the experience of reading a work that is labeled autobiography or when the name of the writer and the protagonist are the same, or when “the author has declared explicitly in an initial pact that he is identical to the narrator” (17). Hill clearly claims his own voice in his autobiography but the autobiographical pact shifts slightly because Hill also moves from his *own* story and voice to a more objective and impersonal voice when he attempts to elucidate the ramifications of racial hybridity in Canada by way of other racially hybrid Canadians’ stories. His use of these two voices creates a different kind of pact between the reader and writer and, in this sense, his work can be understood as an (auto)biography.¹⁴

This dual purpose has several interesting consequences because it suggests the centrality of the *relational aspect* of this narrative. The reader is involved in the narrative in a dialogic and polyphonic intertextual exchange from the outset. Hill’s relational autobiography includes the experiences of other biracial Canadians and simultaneously charts the effects that meeting these people, interviewing them, and transcribing their anecdotes have had on his own personal development of a positive racial identity. Hill articulates the relational interconnectedness between his narrative and the narratives of other racially hybrid Canadians that form the center of his autobiography in the following quote:

I wanted *Black Berry, Sweet Juice* to reach beyond my own world, and to include the voices and observations of other people who had one black and one white parent. The process of finding those voices has changed my life, and has had a profound effect on the way I have come to understand identity. (7)

This narrative structure challenges the idea that this is simply Hill's autobiography and it also suggests that this autobiography can be read as a summary of some of the relevant aspects of racial hybridity in Canada.

I must state at the outset that Hill's selection of interviewees and his role as the transcriber and editor of these reflections moves the work away from being a straightforward sociological document because he has not followed any scientific methods in collecting his data and he does not have a control group. Hill concedes he is not an academic and this was not "a scholarly process" but more of a "personal and literary adventure" (9). Another caveat is in order here because while Hill charts his experiences and those of people with one black and one white parent, he has not addressed the different nuances that determine different experiences of racial hybridity for people who do *not* have one white and one black parent. Nor does he address the ways in which gay and lesbian people in interracial unions understand their interraciality or racial hybridity. Consequently, Hill's insights are necessarily constrained by the limitations he imposed from the outset and they must be read within this context and qualified as *representative* samples of a particular type of racial hybridity.

Hill was conscious of the limitations that he imposed on his study. For instance, he interviewed only one child. I firmly believe that Canadian children who are racially mixed may have different experiences of this form of subjectivity because the racial ideologies regarding interraciality and the growing presence of discourse about racial hybridity will have a significant impact on the development of their views about themselves and their experiences of identity in Canada. However, in terms of national

representation of a specific generation of mixed race Canadians, Hill's work is broad in its scope because he did interview people from Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Saskatoon, Hamilton, Burlington, Oakville, Georgetown, Mississauga, Toronto, Halifax and Sydney. His interview subjects ranged from ages eighteen to sixty-one and the total number of interviewees was thirty-four. All of the interviewees had, like Hill, one black and one white parent and this must be kept in mind when one considers the transferability of these insights to other forms of racial hybridity. Hill also gained insight into his own interracial family and racially hybrid siblings by conducting nine additional interviews.

Interestingly, Hill is conscious of the slippage between his story and the stories of the other racially hybrid Canadians he interviewed. However, he still asserts that this is his "story" and declares that,

[p]art of it is memoir, an examination of my own life through the prism of mixed race. Part of it includes comments and observations from the many people I interviewed of black and white ancestry. Part of it looks at broader social issues dealing in one way or another with mixed race (13).

Hill offers his autobiography and his relationships with these interviewees as part of the emerging discourse on racially hybrid Canadians. He states: "I hope that how I have come to see not only myself but the world in which I live will enrich the ways that people understand identity, and the ways in which we speak to each other" (13). I agree with Hill that the larger project he has in mind in telling his story is to address issues of identity that may have value for all Canadians, and this is another reason why I have chosen to

examine this text in detail as the primary part of my analysis of contemporary Canadian narratives that deal with racial hybridity.

In order to analyze the impact of this structure on the autobiographical pact between the reader and the writer, I would like to address this work within the context of the genre of autobiography which is usually structured around a single narrative voice. Besides the inclusion of transcripts and summaries of the interviews that Hill conducted with other racially hybrid Canadians, Hill also presents different voices, sources and uses different registers within his autobiography. Hill includes legal references to two key cases that challenged racial essentialisms and interraciality. He cites the case of *Loving vs. The Court of Appeal* (USA) and *Edwards vs. Van de Perre* (Canada) in order to underscore the racial ideologies inherent in these cases and to identify the different ways in which these trials were informed by Canadian and American ideologies around race and belonging. This is one example of Hill's use of legal references to situate and comment upon his own autobiography. He also uses these two important cases to demonstrate the differences between views on interraciality in Canada and the United States. I do not want to delve into these historico-legal differences, but prefer to focus on what this digression does to the autobiographical pact that is established between the reader and the writer.

Hill's autobiographical voice is lost at several times in this autobiography and this digression is one of many examples. The thread of his autobiographical voice is also lost when he adopts a less subjective journalistic voice in sections of the autobiography. At these moments in the text, Hill cites newspaper articles, summarizes books on black-

white sexual relations, and even cites his own opinion piece written for the *Globe and Mail* on biracial custody battles in Canada. He also assumes an academic tone of detachment when he cites a doctoral dissertation on Black people in Toronto, as well as when he summarizes his father's thesis from the University of Toronto, written in 1960.¹⁵ In addition to this intertextuality and Hill's use of a different register, Hill's distance from his story and his autobiographical voice is evident when he presents a historical sampling of interracial issues by referring to Canadian history, laws pertaining to slavery, Malcolm X's description of white women as the devil, and the presence of the KKK in Oakville, California (which is a central part of the plot in his novel *Any Known Blood*). Hill's own autobiographical voice becomes lost in these sections of his narrative and, as readers, our autobiographical pact with Hill is compromised when we are taken away from his story each time he explores these related topics and uses a more impersonal register.

Hill also uses an informal register to summarize conversations that he has had on topics that are related to his own hybridity. At these moments in the narrative we move away from Hill's interviews with racially hybrid people and into Hill's reflections on key experiences that have influenced his sense of identity. The more informal register that Hill utilizes in his autobiography includes his anecdotal recollection of family stories, summaries of his experiences of watching films that deal with interracial relationships, use of snippets of conversations he has had with his children and the incorporation of lyrics from pop songs written by his brother Dan Hill. He also has quoted dialogue from conversations on interracial relationships that he engaged in with an African man named Mengel whom he met in Niger. Hill even refers to conversations he has had with his co-

workers. These narrative voices and the hybrid aesthetic that Hill uses in his autobiography are worthy of much more analysis than this chapter permits. However, it is evident that *Black Berry, Sweet Juice* stands out as a polyphonic and dialogic narrative that simultaneously asserts a racially hybrid writer's reflections and analysis of the multiple sources of data that inform his own autobiography.

Contemporary theories of autobiography provide important models for analyzing Hill's construction of an autobiographical voice. Current theories regarding autobiography and the autobiographical voice such as those of Eakin (1999), Gilmore (1994, 2001) and Egan (1999) are foundational to my research. From Eakin I have borrowed the idea of the "autobiological" in that I place primary importance on the corporeality of the racially hybrid soma text and the epistemological ramifications of the embodiment of racial hybridity. Because of the centrality of the genealogy of the racially hybrid person, one might argue that these autobiographies stem from the biological and thus, my primary texts may be referred to as **autobiological** or even **autogenealogical**.

Biracial autobiographies are often framed as judgments about genealogies and this aspect makes the autobiographical pact unique. These narratives function variously and, at times, simultaneously as explanations for, and judgments of, estranged monoracialists in the family, warnings to people seeking interracial relationships, calls to other biracial individuals to self-define and sometimes simply as a cathartic means to evacuate traumatic memories. There are at least two conversations that take place between writers and readers: those who *identify* with the writer as other racially hybrid individuals, and those who are *estranged from* the narrative due to their monoracial identities. This

distinction affects the reader's mimetic engagement with the writer. When Hill refers to his experiences as distinct from those of monoracial individuals or declares that monoracial people cannot understand what it is like to grow up biracial, monoracial readers are positioned as inherently estranged from Hill's experience. This distancing has certain effects on the autobiographical pact and the act of identification that is established between the reader and writer.

In examining the act of identification that may occur when a reader invests in the truth claims of the autobiography, Gilmore suggests that one might ask, "With what ideology is the reader identifying?" (*The Limits* 23). Often the biracial voice is invoked to suggest the incommensurability of an autobiographical pact made with the reader due to the unique genealogical and somatic position of the racially hybrid individual.¹⁶ For many biracial autobiographers, staging moments of interpellation is a central feature in the narrative and often functions as the impetus for the writing. Moments of interpellation also appear as crucial markers in the autobiographer's process of identity formation. Others write about their racial hybridity in order to explain their unique experiences to monoracial individuals. Still other autobiographies serve as memoirs that penalize parents and society for their lack of understanding of the complexity of the biracial experience. These complex writer-reader engagements suggest that the biracial autobiographical voice speaks to a number of different audiences depending on the trajectory of the biracial individual.

When charting the frequency of trauma as interpellation in these biracial autobiographies it becomes clear that the vividness of traumatic memory can overshadow other experiences. The autobiographical pact established in these narratives serves as a cathartic experience for the autobiographers. Gilmore states that “autobiographers frequently wish to reposition themselves in narratives [. . .] for cathartic, confessional, or therapeutic ends” (*The Limits* 69). In addition to undertaking a close reading of the primary texts, it is important to analyze the confessional aspects in biracial autobiographies and the impact that such confessions have on the autobiographical pact.¹⁷

In contrast to the implied separation between the racially hybrid autobiographer and the monoracial readers, the use of other racially hybrid stories within the narrative has the opposite effect in that these relational elements suggest that the experience is shared by many other racially hybrid people. In fact, many biracial autobiographers and theorists engage in interviews with Canadian subjects and use the transcripts to form the narrative (e.g. *Miscegenation Blues* (1994), *Black Berry, Sweet Juice* (1999), Mahtani in *Rethinking ‘Mixed Race’* (2001). Lise Funderburg’s *Black, White, Other* (1994) is another example of an autobiography that is framed around interviews with other biracial individuals. Hybridity theorist Naomi Zack offers theories on racial hybridity in *Race and Mixed Race* (1993) that also incorporate interviews with other biracial people. These transcripts are woven into a narrative that includes Zack’s autobiographical reflections on her Black-Jewish identity.

Hill, like many other racially hybrid autobiographers and theorists, inserts a number of different peoples' experiences of racial hybridity within his own narrative. By embedding other racially hybrid peoples' stories within one's own, the writer makes a link between the personal narrative and the *phenomenon* of racial hybridity by charting the experience of various members within this imagined community. Hill writes of having an "immediate and visceral connection with almost all of the men and women [he] interviewed" (8). This immediacy and mirroring of the racially hybrid identity counters the socio-cultural isolation that many mixed race people feel when growing up in Canada.¹⁸

This structural feature of racially hybrid autobiographies illustrates John Eakin's concept of the "relational self" as an identity that is constructed in relation to others. Hill's autobiographical structure suggests that the individual story is one that is shared by, informed by, and linked to the narratives of other individuals. This technique of embedding autobiographical stories or interviews about racial hybridity within one's own narrative serves to highlight the range of possible identities and affiliations that are available to biracial individuals. This structural feature also helps to chart a community of biracial people in order to map the unique and overlapping elements of this experience of racialization.

Another useful way of thinking about Hill's relational autobiography is to consider how the other stories of racially hybrid Canadians provide a mirror for Hill's own racial identity. Each time an autobiography includes the experience of other racially hybrid people within its own narrative, the writer is engaged in a form of "mirror talk."

This narrative technique is akin to Susanna Egan's theory that "mirror talk" occurs in autobiographies that incorporate dialogue within the narrative. While the frame narrative of the autobiographer's story may not explicitly *comment* upon the inserted interviews or other inserted autobiographical reflections of racial hybridity, there is an *implied* dialogue and *implicit* mirroring of the experience of racial hybridity. The autobiographer, by embedding these narratives, engages in an internal "mirror talk" within the structure of the autobiography itself. Hill, by placing other biracial Canadians' experiences of racial hybridity within his own autobiography, suggests that the racially hybrid self at the centre of the autobiography is constituted *in relation to* other racially hybrid narratives and individuals who mirror or echo the experiences that are documented by the primary autobiographer.

The contemporary phenomenon of racially hybrid people charting their own experiences by way of embedding other narratives within their own autobiographies differs from historical approaches to racial hybridity in which racially hybrid people were *objects* of scrutiny from monoracist perspectives. The contemporary writers and researchers whose work I study are writing *from within* the community of racially hybrid individuals, and thus use other autobiographies by racially hybrid people to support their contentions about the unique experience of racial hybridity. By citing other biracial individuals' experiences of racial hybridity and embedding them within their research or autobiographical reflections, these researchers create a **methodology** for examining racial hybridity that places the researcher at the center of the narrative, and selects and

incorporates other biracial experiences into the autobiography as the normative narrative structure.

I want to also consider the effect that this structure has on the autobiographical pact that is established between the reader and the writer. By framing his autobiography by describing the impulse to write his own story, but also embedding other autobiographies and interviews within the narrative, *Black Berry, Sweet Juice* repeatedly diverts the reader's attention from the autobiographical frame. The result of this autobiographical pact with the reader is that the reader is immersed within the secondary transcripts from other interviewees for much of the narrative. In fact, in Hill's autobiography, some of the chapters consist mostly of transcripts from his interviews, and in these sections of the narrative, his own autobiographical voice shifts from the center to the margin. At these moments in the text the autobiographical pact shifts from Hill and the reader to the reader and the other interviewees.

This "mirror talk" within Hill's autobiography allows racially hybrid Canadians to see themselves reflected within the life experiences of many other biracial people. This structural feature is evident in other biracial autobiographies. For example, biracial American writer Lise Funderburg interviews forty-six racially hybrid individuals in her book *Black, White, Other: Biracial Americans Talk About Race and Identity* (1994). Funderburg, like Hill, frames each contribution with her own anecdote about how the biracial contributor contacted her for the anthology or she supplies some other details relating to the racial identity of the contributor, or suggests how the interviewee's story affected her own biracial identity. These personal reflections by the editor of the

anthology document the relationship between the contributor's story of racial hybridity and Funderburg's own story of growing up as a biracial American. The frame narrative of Funderburg's own autobiography becomes constructed in relation to the secondary material that she incorporates, and her story becomes understood in relation to the transcripts themselves. Funderburg states in the afterword: "I found myself, a little sliver of me, in each person" (378). For Funderburg, the process of reading and editing the forty-six autobiographical stories about growing up as biracial Americans was an important "mirroring" process. Her biracial identity, like Hill's, has been formed in relation to other biracial individuals. Although Hill is not strictly an editor of these transcripts, he too, has chosen aspects of the interviews that have significance for his own autobiography.

It is my contention that this narrative element of framing one's story by way of other racially hybrid stories exists with great frequency within this subset of autobiographers because of the absence of such mirroring of the experience of biraciality in the world at large. Thus, the need to see the self in others' experiences directly affects the form of these autobiographies. This framing device also suggests that there are multiple ways in which biracial identity can be experienced. In sum, these framing devices suggest the importance of crossracial methodologies and both document and celebrate the community of mixed race individuals by engaging in mirror talk—an autobiographic that accounts for the relational self and complicates the autobiographical pact.¹⁹

In addition to the imagined community of biracial individuals that results from such narrative structures, the individual racially hybrid story is often also narrated by a single autobiographical voice. I would like to move from my analysis of the structure of Hill's autobiography and these theoretical concerns to my assessment of the content of his autobiography and the ways in which he represents the racially hybrid soma text and documents the power of the racialized gaze.

Autobiographical accounts of racial hybridity consistently represent the narrative trajectory for the biracial person as a process that starts with the memory of a childhood trauma signified by a moment, or series of events, where the biracial child is interpellated. This remembering of the event(s) is usually followed by a journey, or return to cultural "roots," often resulting in the racially hybrid person either gaining a renewed connection to both parts of his/her cultural and racial identity or becoming engulfed in despair and confusion with his/her identity. In each case the body is central to the experience of identity. One might argue that the *compulsion* to tell the tale of biracial trauma, as one of the material consequences of this form of embodiment, is the major impetus behind the current explosion in biracial autobiographies.

Based on the evidence I have uncovered, it is perhaps fair to say that a crucial part of the development of a racial identity for mixed race people comes from the messages that their parents give them. These messages are represented in Hill's and other autobiographies as a source of trauma. Hill refers to the childhood expression that eventually became the title of his autobiography, and which signifies the racial ideology that dark skin is both sexual and desirable. Hill states that his childhood was "punctuated

by sayings about black people” such as “the blacker the berry the sweeter the juice” (21). In deconstructing this expression Hill notes the following “sexual undertone to the saying,” “a suggestion of the myth of the overcharged, overheated, high-performing black body. Presumably, the blacker berry tastes richer, more full, and is juicier. It is waiting to explode in the mouth” (21). As a result of hearing different expressions about the merits of being “Black,” Hill’s biracial identity was conflicted. Hill’s father “gave out mixed signals about black people—signals that complicated [his] sense of racial identity and racial pride” (23).²⁰ Hill’s relatives also made judgments about each racially mixed child in Hill’s family based on notions of “good” and “bad” skin tone and hair texture. This expression from his father and these mixed messages from his relatives informed Hill’s racial identity and marked crucial moments in the development of his racial identity from a place of trauma for not being “black enough” to a place of accepting his mixedness.

Autobiographies by racially hybrid writers often outline a series of encounters and mixed messages they receive based on the signifying nature of the racially hybrid body. The lifelong experience of being interpellated is first encountered in interracial family systems. A primary marker of separation and trauma for many racially hybrid individuals in interracial family systems stems from the fact that they do not look like their parents, nor identify themselves in the way(s) that their parents have. Hill addresses this dis-identification by stating that: “One of the first things I discovered is that my own experience of race, including my concept of my own racial identity, is shaded quite differently from that of my parents” (4). In addition to their different racial identities, Hill’s parents had grown up in the United States and their relationship was considered

transgressive given the social prohibitions against interracial relationships. These social constraints stem from early legal prohibitions and distinctly American ideologies around the importance of maintaining “pure” races—an ideology most evident in the legal prohibitions against interracial marriages. By citing these experiences in his autobiography, Hill is suggesting an ideological and temporal difference between his experience of race in Canada and that of his parents.

In addition to these socio-cultural differences between Hill and his parents, Hill was also marked as different because of his racially hybrid soma text. Many of the writers who reflect on the experience of constant interpellation and their dis-identification within their family and socio-cultural contexts have not had their experiences understood in the context of trauma. Even though Hill’s own siblings have been able to claim a black identity despite being racially mixed, Hill writes, “I know that some people of mixed race have been put through the mill, dissed by their own racist parents and families, and taught to hate themselves. I see that establishing a sense of personal and racial identity when you have a black and white parent can involve much ambiguity” (232). The repetition of the theme of interracial trauma for racially hybrid Canadians, and the importance that these childhood memories have as critical milestones in the development of a racial identity, suggest that trauma *is* an accurate way to understand the profound impact of this experience on biracial individuals.

When biracial children grow up within monoracially-identified families, the experience of seeing other family members who mirror one’s racially hybrid soma text is often complicated or missing. The experience of growing up without seeing somatic

equivalents for one's own form of embodiment has a number of different epistemological ramifications, one of which is alienation from one parent or another. The missing somatic equivalents or mirrors in one's own family can also lead to a sense of alterity and alienation. Repeatedly racially hybrid writers refer to this absence of familial mirrors as a source of trauma and I therefore conclude that many biracial people experience trauma due to the absence of a complete and positive somatextual mirror in their interracial family systems. I refer to this experience of dis-identification between racially hybrid children and their monoracial parents, or the tension between the differently-inflected soma texts of the racially hybrid children, as a site of primary trauma.

The experience of this form of trauma for mixed race people who do not grow up with people who mirror their identity is profound. Theorists who examine trauma have not looked to these experiences as early childhood trauma, and yet the autobiographical reflections that racially mixed people, like Hill, share indicate that such early childhood trauma has a disastrously long effect on the self-esteem of racially mixed people.

Hill's autobiography documents his childhood trauma and states that his own racial identity is quite distinct from his monoracially identified parents: "I discovered that my own experience of race, including my concept of a racial identity, is shaded quite differently from that of my parents" (4). To support this idea that trauma can be the result of growing up in a monoracially identified family system, Hill documents other racially hybrid Canadians who also endured this trauma. In an interview with a mixed race child who grew up with white adoptive parents, Amanda, the interviewee, refers to the fact that her parents did not provide her with access to a black community and did not have the

skills to assist her in navigating her way through the racism she encountered as a child (31). As a result, the formation of her racial identity, like Hill's, was disrupted or retarded because of a lack of mirroring within her own family and a lack of access to other people who looked like her.

These autobiographical reflections on the experience of growing up racially hybrid in a monoracial family suggest that the presence of mirrors in one's early childhood development is an important process in the formation of a positive identity. However, narratives documenting biracial experiences are riddled with the absence of this experience. These autobiographies suggest that many racially hybrid Canadians may have been stuck at an early phase of development due to the lack of mirrors in their family and social life who reflect who they are. Naomi Zack clearly understands how early experiences of racial identity in interracial family systems may be traumatic for the biracial individual. Zack states: "the facts of a mixed-race lineage may be associated with personal trauma and tragedy [. . .] individuals who are the first 'issues' of mixed race in their families do not have any forbears of mixed race with whom they can identify" (*Race and Mixed Race* 69).

Similarly, in *Miscegenation Blues*, Camille Hernandez-Ramdwar recalls her experience of being at a family reunion of three hundred people and still "[she] didn't resemble anyone in the crowd" (2). Ramdwar recalls leaving the event because "[she] couldn't relate to anyone, and was tired of being asked whose (half-breed, bastard, darkie, nigger) offspring [she] was" (3). This experience of alienation within the interracial family is a consistent theme in many accounts of biracial experiences in

Canada. Many racially hybrid Canadians, like Hill, recall their childhood experience of never seeing anyone who resembles them, and this trauma is first documented in their childhood memories of what it was like to live in an interracial family system.

The presence of trauma in early childhood for racially hybrid people who grow up in monoracial family systems is also identified in a number of theories on racial hybridity. I will take a moment here to outline some of these in order to validate my own analysis of these experiences as trauma. In the introduction to *Rethinking 'Mixed Race'* (2001), David Parker and Miri Song reflect on the impact of monoracial and interracial family systems for biracial individuals. They document the trouble that ensues when one's parents do not look like, or identify in ways that are similar to, the biracial child's experience of racial identity. Parker and Song argue that racially hybrid individuals often have distinctive experiences from their parents and these distinct experiences create unique patterns of identity formation. In fact, these experiences are so unique that Parker and Song state that racially hybrid individuals are "subject to exceptional forms of discrimination that cannot be addressed within existing conceptions of 'race'" (7).

These unique patterns of identity formation are also addressed in Laurie Mengel's essay in *Rethinking 'Mixed Race'* (2001) where Mengel suggests that there are a number of different responses that are available to the biracial individual who lives with monoracial parents. Parker and Song summarize these positions as "particular experiences [which] include: falling outside dominant racialized categories; facing distrust and suspicion from both 'sides' of their family; being profoundly and hurtfully misrecognized by others, enduring the 'What are you?' question; enjoying the potential

for multiple allegiances and identities" (7). However, what may start out as trauma, dis-identification, misrecognition or even alienation for racially hybrid children with monoracial parents can be transformed into a dynamic potential for fluidity and the ability to name the self in contrast to one's experience in one's family system.

Most often the racially hybrid individual documents the difficult process of identifying with his or her monoracial (usually white) mother. Reflections on growing up as a brown child with a white mother come up time and again in biracial autobiographies, including Hill's. Even when biracial individuals grow up in monoracial white societies, they often seek affiliation with other communities "of colour." Hill recalls going to a family gathering in Washington, D.C. and he writes of feeling ashamed of his mother's whiteness: "I was troubled by my mother's whiteness. Embarrassed by it. Couldn't she have looked at least a little darker, a little less white? Perhaps like a Southern Italian" (35). Hill recalls thinking that his mother's whiteness would make it harder for him to "fit in" with his cousins in the United States because he was already wondering "Was I too white" (35). His mother's whiteness heightened his sense of alienation from his Black relatives and thus, the site of primary trauma (within his interracial family system) both impacted and heightened the secondary site of Hill's trauma (social situations outside of the interracial family system).

As a racially hybrid individual, Hill searches for a mirror for his identity due to the lack of soma texts to mirror his racially hybrid Black-Canadian identity within his family system. Hill suggests that at times in his life he "wished [he] was darker" (36). This wish to be accepted unconditionally as monoracial is a theme that is echoed in many

other autobiographies written by mixed race people. Although the assumption has historically been that mixed race people would *prefer* to be white, here the contemporary view of racial hybridity is expressed in the desire of a mixed race Canadian to be monoracially and undisputedly a Black-Canadian. Many biracial individuals, like Hill, look and experience life in ways that are dissimilar to their parents; hence, the relationship between biracial individuals and their family systems has an enormous impact on the development of racial identity. Often biracial individuals write about feeling alienated from their monoracial parents. I consider this dis-identification as a primary site of trauma.

In order to address some of this interracial family dynamic, and before turning to the secondary sources of trauma in Hill's autobiography, I return to Eakin's notions of the relational self as outlined in *How Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves* (1999) in order to examine the impact that such primary trauma may have on an individual. Eakin's paradigm for understanding the "self" is to think of it as "a kind of awareness in process" (x) that is informed by our relations to others. For the biracial individual this relation to others is often the site of alienation and dis-identification within family systems. If we are to deploy Eakin's notions of the "the relational self" and "the relational life" (43) when analyzing biracial autobiographies, we must understand these approaches within the context of the process of interpellation, racialization, and trauma in interracial family systems.

As I have argued in the previous section of this analysis, many biracial autobiographies document broken bonds with parents. According to Eakin, the primary break with a parental bond can provide the impetus for writing one's autobiography in that "[w]hen the bond is conflicted [. . .] the motive for memoir is likely to be more intense, and a great number of relational lives could be classed under the heading of 'unfinished business.' These lives are set in motion by the existence of tensions and secrets; there is a disruption, distortion, or omission in the family narrative that must be repaired" (87). Many of the primary texts that I analyze do indeed preface their reflections on racial hybridity within this larger spectrum of family systems. Eakin suggests that the autobiographical "narrative's role in self-representation extends well beyond the literary; it is not merely one form among many in which to express identity, but rather an integral part of a primary mode of identity experience, that of the extended self, the self in time" (137). In this model, the parent-child conflict provides the impetus for the autobiographical narrative, and thus, it is important to frame Hill's autobiography by way of familial trauma regarding racial identity.

Interestingly, the children within interracial family systems can have different racial identities despite having the *same* parents and receiving similar social messages about racial identity. Hill refers to different racial identifications that existed within his own biracial siblings by stating: "although Karen and I had generally thought of ourselves as black, Dan had always described himself as mixed" (82). Hill's anecdote suggests that biracial siblings in interracial family systems have a range of responses to the messages about racial identity that they receive because they also have different skin

tones, a range of hair types, and diverse phenotypes. Hill's autobiography indicates the variability of soma texts *within* interracial family systems— between parents and their racially hybrid child(ren), and *amongst* the siblings—in terms of somatextual encoding. Hill's reflection on the range of experiences of racial identity that his siblings had suggests that sibling experiences of and responses to racial acculturation in interracial family systems need to be seen in a continuum.

One more salient point needs to be addressed here regarding the impact that reading about such trauma has on the autobiographical pact between reader and writer. In moments where writers document the incommensurable gap between themselves and monoracial people, the reader can either identify with the racially hybrid narrator or may withdraw from an identification with him/her. I turn to Gilmore's ideas of the "autobiographics" in the text to shed light on what might be happening to the autobiographical pact in these moments where trauma is central to the narrative. In *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony* (2001), Gilmore suggests that if the reader is barred from identification with the subject of the autobiography because of his or her "nonrepresentativeness" then the reader may withdraw their sympathy "because of the conflict between identification and representativeness" (22). In her analysis "[a]utobiography about trauma forces the reader to assume a position of masochism or voyeurism"(22). However, there is yet a third possibility, and that is that the reader may identify his/her own complicity in reading the racially hybrid soma text for signs of authenticity and may, through the act of reading the autobiography from the perspective of the object of scrutiny, develop an acute awareness of the power involved in the

racialized gaze and a deep understanding of the impact that this particular dynamic has on people who are racially hybrid. For racially hybrid readers, the experience of reading about another racially hybrid person's trauma may be cathartic and reinforce their own sense of being constantly interpellated due to their identification with the racially hybrid writer.²¹

Given this lack of mirrors within interracial family systems for a racially hybrid individual, he/she may search outside of the interracial family system in order to find people who approximate his/her own racially hybrid soma text. In a search for a similar racially hybrid soma text and a feeling of belonging, the biracial individual will often claim a range of racial identities. In such instances the biracial person goes through a process of intensely scrutinizing the soma texts of other racially hybrid people for racial features that might mirror their own. As an example of this search, I turn to Camper's own reflections on searching for a mirror for her own racially hybrid soma text. While living in Canada, Camper recalls that in her "attempts to understand race and mixing, [she] began to search for faces like [hers] in [her] immediate world" (xvii). The need for a somatextual mirror propels this desire to find a somatic reference for one's racial hybridity particularly in countries like Canada where racially hybrid communities are a minority within a minority.

In addition to this alienation and primary trauma of being different that Hill acquired from each of his parents, Hill began to discover that he was coded as different in school. I understand this as the secondary source of trauma that I have alluded to in the last section of this analysis. I return to Hill's autobiography to find an example of this

secondary source of trauma. Once he began school Hill became increasingly aware of the signifying nature of his soma text and remarks: “my environment started talking to me and making me aware that I was different, that I could never be truly white. There’s nothing like being called ‘nigger’ to let you know that you’re not white [. . .] it happened enough to awaken me” (5). Hill’s identity was developed in a vacuum in that he learned that he was not white and was not black but did not learn what he was. Unlike his American cousins whose identity “was wrapped around them, like a snug towel, at the very moment of birth” (6), Hill struggled to name a racial identity that would fit his biracial corporeality and experience.

Many biracial autobiographies refer to traumatic childhood experiences of interpellation at primary school in ways that indicate that these experiences have had a profound effect on the formation of a positive racial identity. In *Black Berry, Sweet Juice*, Hill refers to the informal ways in which being called a “nigger” affected his sense of a racial identity. For Hill, traumatic experiences resulting from interpellation ranged from being called “nigger” in school (26-27), to being refused entry to a grocery store on the basis of being perceived as a “nigger” (29), to being introduced by a teacher as “the nigger of the school” (30). Direct insults and childhood rhymes also negatively affected Hill’s racial identity. Hill cites the example of the rhyme “Eeny meenie miney mo / Catch a nigger by the toe / If he hollers let him go / Eenie, meenie miney mo” (184).²² Given that he had been called a “nigger” he was insulted when he heard this rhyme in the playground. I understand these experiences as secondary sites of trauma for racially hybrid people.

While the experience of being racialized as “Other” amidst predominantly white communities in Canada is documented, for some racially mixed people, being immersed within a black community can cause tension for the biracial person who wishes to become part of the monoracial black community. The same ideologies around race, authenticity and purity can, and often do, inform both “white” and “of colour” monoracialist hegemonies. Hill’s sister recalls her own scopophobia by stating that when walking “into a new situation with a majority of black people, [she was] much more on edge than walking into a totally white world. I feel like I’m not totally at ease in my skin. I guess I don’t always feel as comfortable. I feel nervous. I wonder if people are going to accept me, or are they looking at me and saying, ‘Oh, here comes a light-skinned person again, and what does she have to with all this?’ (109). Hill refers to the fact that he was “astounded to find [out] how often those with one black and one white parent expressed a desire to appear more black, and a wariness of being rejected by black people for not being black enough” (110). Another interviewee in Hill’s autobiography recalls being asked “So what are you?” before she was told that she was not black (108). Hill suggests that the “idea that mixed-race people are somehow not ‘real’ blacks has put a lot of people on edge” (109). These quotes suggest that *real trauma* or *the fear* of trauma can result from biracial individuals’ experience of being rejected by both “white” and “brown” monoracialist communities.

Racially hybrid writers often refer to the differences between monoracial identity and multiracial identity as a distinct marker of separation between themselves and the dominant monoracial community where they grow up. Racially hybrid writers consistently chart another aspect of this secondary trauma that stems from constant interpellation and being asked two specific questions about one's racial identity. Racially hybrid people are repeatedly asked these questions (Where are you from? and What are you?) in order for their racial identity to be clarified. These questions can become the source of secondary trauma for racially hybrid individuals. Hybridity theorist and racially hybrid American writer Maria Root opens the book *The Multiracial Experience* (1996) with her own autobiographical reflections on being coded as "different" because a number of people throughout her life "let [her] know [she] was different by asking, 'Where are you from?' and the other seemingly benign question 'What are you?'"(xiii). These two central questions inform both American and Canadian biracial autobiographies and are represented as *the* questions that haunt biracial people throughout their lives. The centrality of these questions suggests something of a thematic concern that propels many narratives about biraciality and multiraciality.

Multiple responses to these questions are documented in Hill's autobiography, where he outlines the way in which his experience of growing up "black and white in Canada" involved being asked these questions. Hill states that "Canadians have a favourite pastime, and they don't even realize it. They like to ask—they absolutely have to ask—where you are from if you don't look convincingly white. They want to know it, need to know it, simply must have the information. They just can't relax until they have

pinpointed, to their satisfaction, your geographic and racial coordinates” (173). In a section of his autobiography devoted entirely to “The Question,” Hill uses humour to address the frequency of this particular line of questioning:

I am forty-six years old. Since about age ten, I have been asked, “So what are you, anyway?” and all its variants. (“Where are you from?” “Yes, but where are you really from?” “Yes, but where were your parents born?”) That’s thirty-four years I’ve been fielding The Question [. . .]15,330. That ladies and gentlemen, is the absolute minimum number of times Canadians have asked me either “Where are you from?” or “*D’ou viens tu?*” or any of the multitudinous variations” (173-74).²³

Although Hill uses a comic tone to represent the number of times he has had to respond to these questions, I understand the increased frequency of being asked these questions as an indicator of the performative nature of racial identity. For racially hybrid people, the frequency of this line of questioning suggests the heightened interest that people have in fixing the racial identity of people whose soma texts encode ambiguous, multiple, or conflicting signifiers of race. Although *all* individuals are subject to the forces of interpellation, racially hybrid individuals document the experience of being *incessantly* questioned about *what* they are and where they are from in such a way that it suggests a particular form of trauma.

Later in this chapter on “The Question,” Hill refers again to the experience of being asked “the question” throughout his life. Hill shifts from his initial humorous tone to a more serious tone when he tries to map the power dynamics involved in this

interrogation. He also tries to understand the racial ideologies that are the subtext in these exchanges. He says these exchanges are “like the opening of a chess game” (175). Hill deconstructs this exchange and uses this metaphor to highlight the combative or confrontational aspects underlying such questions.

Part of the negative reaction that mixed race people, like Hill, have to being asked these two questions has to do with the way in which the questions imply a normative standard and a position of authority that is claimed by the questioner. Often the questioner will ask the questions so that he/she may then elaborate on his/her ability to have guessed the “right” race of the individual based on his/her perceptive abilities to decode the ambiguous soma text of the racially hybrid person. One of the biracial interviewees for Hill’s book said that after being asked the question (“Where are you from?”) and answering it accurately, people “get into a discussion of what they thought I was. I’ve had Armenian, Egyptian, Pakistani, East Indian [. . .]” (177). A recent article in *The Vancouver Sun* written by biracial Canadian Sasha Bogin entitled “Please Don’t Ask The Question” offers a witty response to these questions which she also describes as “annoying.” Bogin addresses her readers directly by stating: “If you know someone who isn’t Caucasian or someone who is mixed, you don’t have the right to invade another person’s personal space” by asking such questions. Bogin lists a number of things that one should not ask a mixed race person and writes that when she is annoyed by these incessant questions she claims she is “Vanyan.”²⁴

I would like to place Hill's work in light of other reflections on being asked the questions that appear in other Canadian autobiographies. In *Miscegenation Blues* writers consistently refer to the centrality of these questions and the effect that being asked these questions has on their sense of identity. For example, Biracial Canadian writer Kim McNeilly states that being asked the question "Where are you from?" is a very alienating but common experience in Canada (201). Many of the biracial writers in Camper's anthology discuss, invert, and/or deconstruct this question and the deconstruction of the power dynamic involved in these questions becomes a central motif that appears throughout the writing.

Besides these power dynamics, this exchange is not simply one of being interpellated as racially hybrid people often develop a number of different responses to this line of questions. Hill suggests a number of different reactions that he has developed in response to the questions: "I can give a teaser, such as 'My parents came up from the States,' which frustrates the questioner, who really wants to know my parents' racial background" or "I can give it all up and explain that I have a black father and a white mother" (175). Here Hill clearly outlines his own agency in this exchange and one of the ways in which he tries to invert the power dynamics between the questioner and the biracial individual. Because of his ambiguously signifying racially hybrid soma text, Hill states: "I can invent an answer, such as 'My father is a White Russian and my mother is an Ethiopian Jew' [. . .] Or I can turn the question around, as in, 'Why are *you* asking *me* this?'" (175) (emphasis my own). Still, another biracial interviewee in Hill's autobiography responds to the same question by claiming the situation as "an opportunity

to educate people about issues of mixed race and blackness” (178). These anecdotes suggest that mixed race people have multiple responses to being asked *the questions* and that they develop different responses to *the questions* that give them more or less agency within the process of interpellation.

Despite the flexible responses that biracial and multiracial people may develop over time to *the questions*, one common theme remains—biracial people are annoyed or traumatized by the insistent questions about their soma texts. One biracial interviewee describes being asked the questions as a painful and annoying experience. Hill concludes that “most of the people [he] interviewed—and virtually all of the women—expressed impatience with constant questions about their racial background” (178). It is safe to say that in these biracial autobiographical reflections, the racially hybrid person who is repeatedly asked these questions often expresses trauma or at least annoyance at being asked these questions over a number of years, despite being able to develop witty, false, or vague responses.

Hill’s autobiography and others like it, suggest that *the questions* often come from a monoracialist person who assumes that others will have a singular identity and many writers suggest that most often these questions come from a person who is white. The issue of white privilege is central to understanding the process of racialization. The subtext for the interrogation into what a biracial person *is* or where they are *from* places a white norm at the center. Another biracial interviewee in Hill’s autobiography suggests that the question itself involves placing the racialized person into a position of alterity, and he responds by turning the question around: “Where the hell are they from? No one’s

from here unless they're First Nations peoples. But they're trying to make you feel strange. It's displacement. They're just trying to let you know that you do not belong [. . .] They are not coming from a position of intelligence, asking those questions. White privilege doesn't operate from a level of consciousness. It operates from a position of privilege" (180). The social and cultural phenomenon of white supremacy supports the right of the questioner to ask "What are you?" when they see someone who is not the racial norm, i.e., white. Thus, the frustration, annoyance and trauma that biracial people experience as a result of these insistent questions highlights the discomfort they feel about being marginalized in the process of the interrogation and a resistance to being placed in a position of alterity.

Being repeatedly asked "where are you from" or the more disturbing question "what are you" is identified in these works as a very troubling experience that places the individual as an object of scrutiny and may lead to feelings of alterity and alienation. Racially hybrid people also identify a hypersensitivity that they develop because of the ways in which they are expected to identify their racial origins or declare a word to identify describe their mixedness. In these exchanges, the racially hybrid body is the sign or text that prompts others to dissect, fragment, and quarter it according to their own notions of racial ideologies and concepts of racialized mathematics. It is my contention that people who employ the racialized gaze seek answers to decode the racial ambiguity of the racially hybrid soma text. This process can result in a calculation of percentages of authenticity, or what I refer to as racial mathematics, that results in terms that signify

absence and terms that represent the racially hybrid soma text as fragmented as I have noted in my first chapter (half-breed, mulatto, half-caste).

Many biracial writers also reflect on the ways in which such language reinforces a sense of a fragmented corporeality. According to Mengel, “[t]he most common designation imposed on mixed race people of all ancestries is the inference that they are fragmented human beings” (*Rethinking* 100). Terms such as “octoroon,” “mulatto,” “mestizo” and “Hapa” are cited in Mengel’s essay as words that “perpetuate notions of blood division that can be quantified in fractional terms” which “in a race-conscious society serve to reinforce the ideology that the mixed race individual is somehow less than a whole person” (101-02). In addition to noting the ways in which such language reinforces a sense of a fragmented corporeality, Mengel notes that the language used to refer to such individuals privileges the half or part that is not white: i.e., “half-breed” refers to the half that is Native, whereas the term “octoroon” refers to the 1/8th that is Black.²⁵ As a result, “the notions of Whiteness as normative” and “being a person of colour as deviant or pathological are perpetuated” (101). In addition, “because Whiteness is a racial construction based on notions of an unalloyed purity, by definition, mixed race people cannot be White” (101).²⁶ The image of the fragmented body and the implicit reification of whiteness as “whole” and “pure” is central to many biracial autobiographies and often stems from an individual’s being interpellated in ways that confine their identity to such terminology.

A number of different terms have been used to describe people who are racially hybrid. Hill also refers to the term “mulatto” which has been used to describe people who

have one black and one white parent.²⁷ This term has had its most notorious legal application in the slaveocratic United States and through the legislated apartheid in South Africa. The legal implications of this term within the black diaspora affect both the use of, and stigma associated with, this term when it is used in Canada. Hill also notes the terms “Quadroon” and “Octoroon” (199) which are used to describe one-quarter and one-eighth of authentic or “pure” black blood. Hill identifies other terms that have been used to denote varying degrees of proximity to an authentic monoracial black identity are:

- “casco” is a term used to refer to a person with “two mulatto parents”
- a mulatto parent and a black parent makes a person “a sambo”
- “Sambo plus black” creates “a mango” child
- “octoroon and white parents” create a “mustiffee”
- a “mustiffee and white parents” creates “a mustifino”
- “meamelouc” is a term used to refer to “a person said to be one-sixteenth African”
- “sang-mele” is the term used to describe “a person considered to be one-sixty-fourth black” (199-200).

In addition to the terminology that maps racial hybridity by way of percentages, biracial hybridity theorist Zack suggests that the word “peola” is used for “fair-skinned designated blacks” (*Race and Mixed Race* 37).²⁸ Both Hill and Zack address the ways in which their soma text has been fragmented and stigmatized in different monoracial communities and outline a number of other terms that are used to identify different degrees of mixedness in other racially hybrid individuals.

Fragmentation, according to Hill, is central to his experience of racial hybridity. He cites many other people he interviewed who support this contention. A recurring issue in biracial autobiographies is the childhood trauma about being regarded as “half-breed,” “half caste,” “mixedblood” or hyphenated.²⁹ Root opens *The Multiracial Experience* by referring to the “[c]ountless number of times I have fragmented and fractionalized myself in order to make the *other* more comfortable in deciphering my behavior, my words, my loyalties, my choice of friends, my appearance, my parents, and so on” (3). She states that “[r]eciting the fractions to the *other* was the ultimate act of buying into the mechanisms of racism in this country” (3). When someone asks if you are one-quarter something they have dissected the soma text into parts and made a calculation of racial authenticity based on their notion of racial phenotypes. The questioner assumes a right of access to some very personal information. In addition, racially hybrid writers often wonder why *this* information is of critical importance to the questioner.

Whether these terms are *chosen* by the people whom they identify or externally imposed, they indicate a rhetorical desire to map the percentage of “brown blood.” As one example of the discourse around racialization, Hill states that “[o]ver the past thirty or so years, the term used to describe black people has evolved from ‘negro,’ to ‘black,’ to ‘Afro-Canadian,’ to ‘African-Canadian,’ or even, for some, ‘people of colour.’ As a racially hybrid man Hill uses the terminology that is available even though it does not describe his mixedness because the “utter inadequacy of racial terminology plagues us to this day” (197). According to Hill, this inadequate terminology becomes most obvious “when describing people of mixed race” (197). In reaction to the common reference to

biracial African-Canadians (and African-Americans) as “*half black, half white*,” Hill states that he has “performed tests on [himself], scratched [his] skin, measured [his] legs, taken blood samples, evaluated colour schemes, but [he] just can’t locate a black half and a white half” (197- 8). Despite Hill’s ironic tone, the centrality of this theme suggests that he has been deeply affected by such racialized mathematics throughout his life.

In choosing his own self-definition in defiance of the process of fragmented corporeality, Hill asserts: “I’m not one-eighth or one-quarter or one-half black—I’m simply black. And that’s because I see blackness as a form of identity, cultural belonging. I’m attached to my heritage. I love the sense of family that comes from living as members of black communities—no matter how disparate they are geographically” (239). Hill closes his autobiography by stating, “I am black because I say so, because I feel it, I know it, and I own it. It is not the only thing that I am [. . .] when the census form comes around, I’ll mark myself down as black” (239). In choosing his own self-definition as “black,” Hill defies an either/or paradigm for biracial identity and resists accepting the terms that would signify that he is only half of anything.

Hill also suggests that despite his light-skinned soma text he still understands his racial identity as monoracial rather than a multiple third space identity such as “mixed” or “mulatto.” He adopts the racial ideology imported from the United States that suggests that any known presence of black blood makes a person black. Hill writes: “These days, I just use ‘black,’ but only because nothing better seems to be kicking around” (197). In claiming the word “black” to describe his racially hybrid soma text, Hill echoes the American legal definitions of Blackness by declaring that “[i]f you’ve got any known

black blood, you're black" (198).³⁰ This indeed is the ideology and terminology that he implicitly accepts at the end of his search for a racial identity.

In addition to the racially hybrid soma text being a site of fragmented embodiment, Hill's autobiography points out that the body parts themselves can also signify racial belonging and thus limit one's membership in a given monoracial community based on phenotypic markers. One of the most common racial qualifiers among biracial children with African ancestry is the signifier of hair. Hill suggests that "many of us of mixed ancestry do have hair issues [. . .] they reflect how we see ourselves, and how others perceive us" (89). Hill relates the fact that at seventeen he became aware of the ways in which his hair signified his blackness and at this point in his life he decided it was time to

do something about the wild mop that was sprouting in all directions from my head. It had become completely uncontrollable. Even when I drenched my hair with conditioner, I still couldn't comb out the knots. They shot out like a condensed, fused mass from the sides of my head. The curls had wound and twisted themselves around each other to such a degree that the hair looked like one massive dreadlock. The only time that my hair looked presentable was when I emerged from the shower, soaking wet. (89)

Many biracial Canadian writers, like Hill, refer to the fact that hair texture, length, or colour is read as a signifier of racial identity. Hill's anecdote draws attention to the ways in which a racially hybrid individual with African ancestry will have the somatextual cue

of their hair read and they will be accorded progressively “less Black” authenticity depending upon the absence of curly or kinky hair.

The site of the soma text is the central place from which cues about one’s identity circulate, and racially mixed people often do not fit into the phenotypes associated with monoracially identified individuals. Hill refers to the ways in which his soma text affected his sense of identity and eroded his self-esteem:

Although I had a good share of friends, I felt no sense of community. There were no blacks in my school, on my street, or in the neighborhood [. . .] Because I looked so different from everyone else, I feared that I was terribly ugly. I worried about having frizzy hair, big ears, a big nose, and plump lips. When I looked in the mirror I felt horror and disgust. None of the people I admired, respected, or found attractive looked the least bit like me (53).

Even as an adult this early lack of mirroring for a positive racial identity affected Hill, who “shrank in horror” when he saw a photo of himself in the paper—“I hated the way my hair stuck out, moplike. I felt repulsed by the sight of my own thick lips” (53). This negative sense of identity is related to the fact that during his childhood, growing up in Don Mills, he “didn’t see [himself] reflected anywhere” (53). This anecdote implies that the racially mixed person is a double or compounded minority in contrast to the monoracially identified individual.

In addition to such somatextual markers as hair, racially hybrid people respond to social cues and codes that qualify their racial authenticity. The handshake is also a racial qualifier in Afrocentric communities. Hill explains the importance of the handshake as a

gesture that signifies authentic Afrocentricity. Hill recalls going into the black barbershop and introducing himself with “the standard white handshake. I wasn’t getting into any kind of soul shake because I would have felt like an utter fake, and would have betrayed myself as one, too” (91). Hill sought to be recognized as black in that predominantly black space: “I wanted to be seen and recognized as black, and treated as one of the race” (91). He identifies the ways in which racially hybrid people can have their bodies read for signs of blackness in Black spaces. He refers to being seen as a white interloper in black salons and consequently getting “the cold shoulder” (94) because he was read as being not black enough.

This idea of hair as a racial qualifier is echoed by another mixed race person whom Hill interviewed for his autobiography. This interviewee related a story of the relationship between his hair and his growing sense of an Afrocentric identity. The interviewee tells Hill that once he got a “fade” he felt he looked, and consequently acted, more black.³¹ Because this biracial man was able to approximate an Afrocentric soma text by getting a fade, he started to behave in a more consciously Afrocentric way. Hill states that this man “started renting black movies, changed [his] music completely. [He] got rid of his heavy metal tapes, all [his] rock and roll tapes, replaced them with NWA, Public Enemy. It was rap, it was hip-hop, that’s who [he] wanted to be at that time” (95). Like Hill, the interviewee was able to manipulate his somatextual codes to more closely approximate a monoracial (Black) identity.

Another interviewee in Hill's autobiography draws attention to the role of gender in the process of racialization for racially hybrid women. She states that one's hair "is a source of pain for a lot of young black girl or girls of mixed race" (100). The woman also states that "[i]n the black community, a lot of mixed race girls are considered to have 'good hair.' Which is longer hair, [with] the texture not quite so 'nappy.' Black men perpetuate the idea and go after girls with the long, straight hair" (100). Despite the discomfort many of the biracial interviewees express about being in a black hair shop, one interviewee states that she is relieved to be seen as black in hair shops because "[t]he second they touch my hair, hairdressers know that I am mixed with black" (101). For this biracial Canadian, the hair shop is a site where her Afrocentric mixedness is read and understood as a feature of her belonging to this community.

Like Hill, this interviewee suggests that certain racially mixed people with African ancestry are "celebrated for having good hair. You're not directly told that you're ugly, but it's very clear that if you don't have the good hair, you're not considered to be beautiful or attractive. It starts at a very early age" (103). I have drawn attention to these anecdotes to suggest that according to these autobiographical reflections, hair can be a qualifier of racial identity from within "black" or "white" monoracialist spaces. The soma text and racialized gaze condition the racially hybrid person's experience of racial identity in different monoracial spaces where the soma texts and gestures that signify racial identity are policed for signs of authenticity.³²

Because the racially hybrid soma text is constantly being read for signs of authenticity, autobiographical reflections on racial hybridity contain a number of different, complex looking relations. These fall into a few different categories: 1) looking relations within interracial family systems; 2) looking relations from outside of the interracial family system; 3) looking relations between racially mixed individuals that enable one to identify other racially mixed people (mirroring); and 4) the racially mixed person's self-identification. The looking relations identified in the first three categories affect the latter category.

Canadian biracial autobiographical accounts of racial hybridity often address the impact(s) of the racialized gaze and feelings of isolation from monoracially identified individuals, through the representation of a "mixed race" identity crisis and the pull of different racial loyalties or a state of limbo.³³ Hill states that "for the longest time [he] didn't learn what [he] was—only what [he] wasn't" (5). For many racially mixed individuals this sense of a racial identity is formed in a vacuum because of the lack of individuals who mirror one's particular form of racially hybrid corporeality. For Hill this created a "racial limbo" which is something like the "hyphen" that Fred Wah refers to: a middle place that is not fully in the Occident nor the Orient.³⁴ This biracial experience of "racial limbo" is in contrast to the experience of racial constancy that many monoracially-identified individual's experience.

The process of this negotiation is represented by Hill as being as unstable as walking through a revolving door. Hill identifies his process of negotiating between two monoracial communities by stating: "When you're black and white, negotiating racial

identity is like going through a revolving door. You think you're sure-footed and slipping through just fine until someone shoves that door and a big glass wall smacks you from behind and you stumble sheepishly into daylight, mumbling 'What was *that* all about?'" (41). This idea of representing racial identity as a process or movement through racial identities signifies the uncertain, and at times precarious, attempts to obtain a stable racial identity, because of the ambiguous nature of a racially hybrid soma text and the violence of mis-recognition.

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, this uncertainty is contrasted by the experience of monoracial individuals, whose "identity [is] wrapped around them, like a snug towel, at the very moment of birth" (6). This image of a monoracial racial identity as a snug blanket suggests a primal certainty and comfort that is denied to racially hybrid individuals. This experience of constancy in seeing others who look like you and being seen as whole, marks a crucial separation between the experience of growing up biracial in a monoracial world and the experience of growing up monoracial in a monoracial world.

Like many other racially mixed people, Hill's racial identity was formed in relation to the racialized gaze. Racially hybrid individuals, like Hill, are constantly being informed by how the racially hybrid body is read. As I have argued earlier in this chapter, often these experiences of being interpellated as Other are represented as childhood or adolescent trauma. In fact, Hill states that these thoughts about being biracial do not preoccupy him "unless tourists invade my paradise and start looking at me, and I start looking at them, and we begin the endless dance of adjusting how we see others, how we

want to be seen, and how we see ourselves” (5). Often biracial autobiographies will stage a scene to illuminate the difference between the “white” interpellator’s interest in fixing the racial identity of the biracial persona and the biracial persona’s defiance. These scenes are used in these autobiographies to demonstrate the difference between how one’s racially hybrid body is read and how an individual understands his or her racial hybridity.

A perfect example of this interpellation scene occurs in Mercedes Baines’ autobiographical poem entitled “Where Are You From? A Broken Record” (Camper 151). This title is used to suggest the countless times in which the same conversation occurs between white people (usually men) and mixed race women. Baines uses the image of a broken record to suggest the constant repetition of this question. In this dramatic scene, the “white young lusty man” is foiled by his own assumptions and Baines takes charge of the situation and inverts the power dynamic. In this scene, Baines’ persona records the white lusty man’s thoughts and counters them with her own self-identification, foils his expectations, and talks back.

Mercedes Baines

“Where Are You From? A Broken Record”

So...uh...where are you from?

A white young lusty man asks hoping for a delicious exotic entrée.
I look around knowing he is asking me but I'm still surprised
the record plays on
He has not asked my white women friends / only me.

Assumption: Plain white wrappers come from nowhere but here
but plain brown wrappers must be from someplace else/ Not from
here definite-ly
Not from here.

Where are you from?

Why-I ask / do you want a taste of the exotic? To fuck another
other?
Does it makes you feel...

Well you look like you could be from Trinidad, Spain, France not
from here, South America, not from here def-in-ate-ly not from here.

He smiles hopeful thinking he's impressed me...the record plays
on and on
I am from here-actually.
Oh-he says truly disappointed. It was not the right answer he was
looking for. He did not ask the right question.
The right question would be: Why is your skin the shade it is? Why
is your hair the texture it is? Why are your lips and hips full/your
eyes brown?

There is not a simple answer-I do not fit into a simple box.
It depends on the day
The colour I feel.

Today I am Black and beautiful with my heart full of song and my
hips full of music. She is in my walk, my loud laugh and my anger
when it speaks.

Yesterday I was white

Tribes of Irish French Danish
 Methodical, inward spirit meditate, white light staring at my brown
 self laughing loud

Tomorrow I will be red-heartbeat to a drum-walking on a long
 Journey
 I remember what it was like when the earth did not have an owner.
 I remember our people when we would have also laughed loud
 I remember when Black skin did not need explanation.

Do you see my face trans form with each invocation?
 Ask me where I am from?
 I am from here
 and everywhere
 I am multinational/United nations/United in one body
 Bloodlines intermixed/traveling centuries
 To create me
 A Millenia of inter racial fucking
 I am from here-especially here.

(Camper 151-52)

In this poem, Baines identifies the ways in which her brown exterior invites the racialized gaze into interrogating her genealogy and nationality. The irony here is that Baines *is* from Canada and consequently this line of questioning about her identity and birthplace underscores the ways in which people perceive Canada as white and people of colour therefore must be from elsewhere. This simplistic assumption is undermined here.

Baines also suggests that behind the benign question "Where are you from?" lies the insidious racial ideology that people who come from Canada are white. The question also obscures the questioner's interest in what is perceived to be "Other," non-Canadian and simultaneously, exotic. Baines also suggests that the real subtext for this question is the deeper unstated question which: Why is your body and hair the way it is?

Baines deconstructs the tangled genealogies that make up her soma text. In the second half of the poem, Baines explains the multiple racial allegiances that make up her totality. By using the pronoun “she” to refer to parts of her racial identity, Baines suggest the ways in which these racial identifications are like personalities that live within her. Baines employs a number of racial essentialisms in this section “Blackness” with “music, “song” and “anger,” “Irish, French, Danish” with being “methodical” and Native identity as being linked with the “drum.” Baines is identifying the ways in which her racial identity is a floating signifier based on how *she feels* each day. This idea of racial hybridity as a complex process is repeated in many biracial autobiographies and suggests that a multiracial soma text may signify both a fragmented body and an excess of identities.

In the final stanza Baines asserts the transcultural history of racial hybridity, “I am multinational / United nations / United in one body / Bloodlines intermixed / traveling centuries / To create me / A Millenia of inter racial fucking.” The idea that colonial contact, read here as sexual contact between different races, is the *norm* rather than the *exception* is presented by Baines. This final stanza is therefore a subtle challenge to the assumption that there is a “pure” race anywhere in the world. Baines reinforces her right to assert that she Canadian by closing the piece by asserting that she is indeed, “from here-especially here.” Scenes such as these are evident in autobiographical reflections on the experience of racial hybridity and these scenes form the dramatic basis of many plays that address racial hybridity as I will argue in Chapter Four.

I hope to have demonstrated that different communities have varying degrees of discernment when viewing a biracial person and when trying to assess his/her racial background. The different ways in which the soma text is read suggest that the process of racialization is very predictable and often is not in accordance with how a given biracial person *chooses* to identify him or herself. Visual cues, the racialized gaze, and the individual's sense of racial identity inform the visual narrative of each racially hybrid person's soma text. I want to take a moment here to consider what I refer to as the embodied epistemology of racially hybrid corporeality. Many racially hybrid people refer to the development of a heightened sense of awareness of looking relations as a result of being the recipient of multiple and often conflicting ideologies stemming from the racialized gaze. Hill draws attention to the hypersensitivity he has developed over time and states that he has "a refined radar system for identifying folks of mixed race" (10). The familial, social and cultural scopophilia may enhance a mixed race person's awareness of the important role of the racialized gaze in the process of identity formation and may lead to a heightened ability to detect other racially hybrid individuals.

In their autobiographical reflections and autobiographies, biracial people often refer to the hypervigilance they require in response to being continually interrogated as to the racial constituents of their soma texts. I refer to this as scopophobia or the fear of the gaze. In monoracist societies where scopophilic interest in approximating a biracial person's percentages of blood is the norm, individuals can become scopophobic and hypervigilant about having their bodies seen and interpreted. Although Hill suggests that for much of his childhood, issues of racial identity were not at the forefront, "once in a

while, just as my guard was down, questions of my own identity would leap like a cougar from the woods and take a bite out of my backside” (4).

Hill’s work suggests that the epistemological ramifications of biracial embodiment involve a heightened awareness of the racialized gaze, a complex process of racial identity formation, and an early socialization about the dynamics of racialization. Thus, the corporeal experience of biracial hybridity may result in a number of different epistemological developments based on the embodiment of ambiguous signifiers. He states that “[i]f you’re black and you grow up in North America, part of your very socialization process prepares you for encounters with racism [. . .] You know you will encounter racism and you even come to expect it” (104). He suggests that these experiences have epistemological ramifications in that they are “a way of confirming your blackness, of making your racial identity real and palpable” (104).

Other epistemological effects of this form of racially hybrid corporeality include specific career choices in defiance of racial essentialisms. Hill recalls being told “Negro people didn’t have the correct facial structure to play the saxophone” (105). Hill defiantly chose to play the saxophone despite this racist remark by a callous and ignorant teacher. He writes: “As I look back on this incident, I note that part of me welcomed the remark from the music teacher. It confirmed my own racial identity in a school where I had imagined I would be lost, or blotted out, or ignored” (106). Hill looks at this incident within the larger context of racial hybridity: “For many people with one black and one white parent, it appears to hurt more when we are rejected by the black community than when we are discriminated against in the wider community for being black” (106). Hill’s

autobiography suggests that one of the epistemological ramifications of this biracial embodiment resides in the fact that experiences of racial qualification, rejection, and acceptance by monoracial groups is always qualified and can seriously affect the individual's self-esteem.

It is important to understand racial alienation as *trauma* even though the writers themselves may not use this term to refer to this experience, the autobiographies certainly do represent the experience as traumatic. Although everyone is subject to the process of interpellation, these anecdotes suggest that for biracial individuals, the effects can be profound because of the frequency of being interpellated and mis-recognized, and the lack of sites where the biracial soma text is *not* interpellated. Zack refers to this unique experience of alienation in *Race and Mixed Race*, where she argues that “[n]ormally, one is alienated if one is different from one’s present surroundings because one has been separated from another place and culture in which one had been not-alienated or ‘natural’[. . .] But the American of mixed black and white race has no previous context from which he can be said to have been separated, so he is even alienated from normal forms of alienation” (142). While Zack interprets these experiences as a form of “alien alienation” (142), she also notes the agency that biracial individuals gain in having “more racial freedom than either blacks or whites” (145).

When there is no existing population of similarly racially mixed people, one may, like Camper, seek identification with foreign communities of colour. Carol Camper writes that she became “uplifted” by recognizing a somatic similarity between herself and Polynesian people, and she decided “to claim that [she] was Polynesian” (xvi). The

psychological impact that occurs as a result of the missing mirror phase in childhood development suggests that this delayed transition often leads to an increased awareness of race, mixing and identity as the individual searches for a similar somatic resemblance in other diverse populations. Fortunately for racially mixed Native people in Canada, the Métis population presents a historical racially mixed community through which many mixed race Native people identify.³⁵ However, racially hybrid Canadians, like Hill and Camper, were not surrounded by somatextual mirrors within a racially hybrid community and this absence prompted their desire to find other racially hybrid individuals through their own writing and research.

The desire to be accepted into a monoracial community is represented throughout narratives that feature racial hybridity. This need starts within the interracial family system, extends to social contexts, and can also affect a racially hybrid person's choice of a sexual partner. Due to the dualism in his/her racial identity, choosing to be with either a "brown" or a "white" partner can be seen as a transgression. In fact, the mixed race person is bound to transgress no matter which choice of partner he/she makes unless another racially mixed person is chosen.

Many mixed race autobiographies chart the complexities that may arise from mixed race people's attempts to socialize, date and engage in interracial interactions with monoracially-identified people, and Hill's is no exception. Dating is represented as a complicated process and is often the source of trauma for many racially hybrid Canadians, because the choice of a sexual partner can further qualify one's belonging to monoracial groups. In addition, the choice of a monoracial partner can be impacted and

constrained by one's biracial identity. One interviewee in Hill's autobiography states that the ultimate insult at the time was for a black person to call him "white boy," and therefore he decided to date black girls in order to "seem more black" (107). In this racial formation, white blood is seen as the tainted element, as the biracial individual strives to become more black by choosing a monoracially identified partner to increase his/her affiliation to a monoracial community.

Hill's autobiography suggests that for some racially hybrid people, the positive experience of having their soma text acknowledged can inform their choice of a sexual partner. An interviewee in Hill's autobiography states: "I feel a great deal of pleasure when a black person automatically knows that I'm black" (107). This acknowledgment fortifies the racial identity of the biracial individual and may also affect one's choice of a sexual partner.

For individuals who experience dis-identification and alienation as a result of being isolated, autobiographies may be the only way for them to understand that there are other people who have similar experiences. Thus, biracial autobiographies have socio-cultural value in archiving these unique experiences of racial hybridity and creating a literary sense of community through these narratives. Whether it is in taking a black lover, wearing an afro, having the right handshake or the correct nod of recognition, all of these racial qualifiers punctuate the lives of biracial individuals with black ancestry, and may affect their choice of a sexual partner and views about interracial relationships in general. An interviewee in *Miscegenation Blues*, identified as Stephanie, states that "it always bothers me when I hear the stereotype, that the person of colour in an inter-racial

relationship is always the one that will somehow be oppressed” (207). Another conceptual difficulty involved with imagining interraciality is identified by biracial Canadian Claire Huang Kinsley, who is bothered by the fact that “often people assume that mixed race means one white parent” (Camper 42). Mahtani addresses this issue and suggests that this is one of the pitfalls of the rhetorical focus on mixed race in relation to whiteness—a tendency which obscures the multiplicity of crossracial, multiracial and biracial identities that do not involve any white ancestry.

One of the many reactions against interracial dating or marriage is based on an alleged expressed concern for the welfare of the children. Hill distinguishes between chosen interracial relationships and “involuntary mixing” (119). These traces of involuntary mixing can be found in a number of mixed race Canadians’ genealogies and are often lodged within the near mythologization of family secrets. Hill takes time to address the controversial American ruling on Richard Loving and Mildred Jeter (122-24) that effectively challenged the last of the anti-miscegenation laws in the USA. He also writes about contemporary Canadian legal issues regarding interracial marriages by addressing the recent controversial ruling by the Supreme Court of Canada on the child custody issues faced by Kimberly Van de Perre and Theodore Edwards.³⁶ Hill places the media frenzy for this news issue within the larger North American context: “In North America, we’ve had a thirst for news about nocturnal carousing between black men and white women ever since African men were brought here in chains and made to stand and toil half naked in the sun” (156). Hill analyzes the ways in which this trial signified a

number of issues relating to interracial dating, interracial marriage and the relationship between race and identity in Canada.

Hill also outlines his own awareness of, and insight into, interracial relationships that resulted from interviewing his family and writing his autobiography. He acknowledges that “[l]istening to family stories and stories shared by other interview subjects led me to start reviewing how race may have played into my own romantic choices in life” (126). Hill has always been involved with white women and he had grown up “expecting and assuming that [his] romantic partners would be white. Living in an almost entirely white world certainly contributed to that expectation, as did the fact that I had a father who had chosen to spend his lifetime with a white woman” (126). However, during the interviews for this autobiography, Hill found that “interracial dating was a hot topic. And soon [he] had almost as many opinions as [he] had interview subjects” (128). Hill’s ideas about interracial dating were informed by the numerous strong reactions that his interview subjects had on the topic because “[b]efore writing this book, [he] hadn’t given much thought to race in the context of [his] romantic relationships” (142). One of the consistent themes expressed in these interviews had to do with the idea “common among some black women, that ‘their’ men should stick to black women” (135). Hill documents numerous people’s reactions to the topic of interracial relationships and concludes this chapter by stating:

My thinking on interracial dating changed considerably as a result of the interviews I conducted, the books I read, and the self-examination I put myself through. I know what my own preferences are. If I meet someone I love and who

loves me, I'll throw myself onto that runaway train, and I won't be stopping to worry about that person's ancestry (147).

In this point of the autobiography it becomes evident that through the process of conducting the interviews and writing his autobiography, Hill gained more insight into his own racial identity and discovered that his choice of a partner was informed by ideologies around race and interraciality. However, in this paragraph he defiantly asserts that he will still choose to love whomever he wants despite the prohibitions around interracial relationships that were expressed to him through the interviews he conducted.

In addition to the themes of primary, secondary, and tertiary trauma, there are a number of other themes in these biracial autobiographies. I will conclude my close reading of Hill's autobiography by addressing two of these: passing and the "one drop rule." These themes are used to illustrate the complex negotiations of biracial identity formation. The "one drop" rule privileges an *interiority* that is signified by racial hybridity in that it is based on an ideology that the blood reveals something essential about the racial identity of the racially hybrid individuals. In contrast, passing themes are based on the *external cues* that allow one to pass through racial barriers that are erected to exclude "mixed" people. Since I have addressed the soma text in terms of blood ideologies, linguistic markers of fragmented corporeality, and the impact these ideologies may have on racial identity formation, I will now address the second central theme: "passing."

A recurring issue in many autobiographies by racially hybrid Canadians is the theme of passing or trying to pass as monoracial, which is most often framed as a light-skinned racially hybrid person passing or trying to “pass” as white. The critical preoccupation in those who wish to “pass” as white assumes that whiteness is always the privileged signifier. In fact, as Hill’s interviews with biracial Canadians suggest, many biracial people may strive to “pass” as “black” (110). Hill also documents a number of individuals who are “terrified of attending social functions in the black community” due to the stigma attached to their light-skinned soma texts. Hill argues that “some of us feel that we have to involve ourselves actively in the community to prove that we belong” (111). He suggests some light-skinned biracial people “expect, at every turn, someone to challenge [their] identity or [their] right to be there” (111). This fear can manifest itself in a complex set of looking relations when the soma text of the biracial individual is not experienced as a stable signifier. The epistemological ramifications of this embodiment may lead to scopophilic wariness or scopophobic tendencies where the biracial person can become hypersensitive to the effects of the racialized gaze.

Hill draws attention to the differences between his ability to pass and his children’s ability to pass. He suggests that he has never been tempted to “pass” for white but that his children will have a hard time passing for Black (39). Hill explains how passing may be permitted:

You can have a white parent and still be considered black, but you can never have a black parent and still be considered white. Unless you are so light-skinned and devoid of black facial features that you can pass for white, you don’t get to be

white in this society if you have black parents. It ain't allowed. You'll be reminded of your 'otherness' more times than you can shake a stick at. This is one of the reasons why I self-identify as black (41).

Another biracial interviewee in Hill's autobiography states: "I can think of countless times where I've assumed that everyone around me knows that I'm black, and then something will slip out or someone will ask a question, and I realize that they don't know. It's a very disarming feeling, having that sense of belonging taken away from you all of a sudden and having to remind yourself that they don't know" (107-08). Both of these anecdotes suggest the difficulty involved in passing as monoracial.

Hill explores this topic of passing throughout *Black Berry, Sweet Juice* and concludes that "[w]e blacks of light skin are used to the fact that we may, from time to time, be subjected to racism. Still those of us who seek to identify with black people can feel insecure about the depth of our belonging. Will we be dissed? Challenged? Told outright that we don't belong?" (113). Hill tries to explain the asymmetrical need for acceptance that many biracial individuals feel. Hill asks the rhetorical question,

Why does the rejection hurt more when it comes from black people? I think it is because people with one black and one white parent move through a subconscious process that works like this: *I can't possibly be white. I am not white, although I have one white parent, will never really be viewed as white, and can't see myself as white either. I can, however, be black, and that's the identity I'm choosing to claim.* Having relinquished (or been denied) one aspect of our racial identity, we

feel insecure when our adoptive choice is rejected by the very people with whom we choose to identify (114).

Whether one chooses to “pass” or not, or is able to “pass” is often represented as part of the larger process of searching for a racial identity. Hill and other biracial writers suggest that coping with constant interrogation about one’s genealogy can be tiring for biracial individuals. Although much work has been written on the phenomenon of “passing,” most often this refers to the racially mixed person’s attempts to *trespass* the color line in order to have their soma texts read as white. However, the study of racial hybridity needs to be expanded to include the phenomenon of racially mixed individuals’ attempts to “pass” as something *other* than a white person. This issue of passing will be examined in great detail in Chapter Three where I locate instances of passing in contemporary Canadian fiction and argue that passing is a form of racial drag that is an option that is only available to racially mixed individuals who have ambiguous soma texts that can be read as signifiers of different racial identities.

Passing is represented as one stage in many for racially hybrid people who are light-skinned enough to try to pass as monoracial. This process can also involve searching for people who represent one’s racial identity in literature or popular culture. Hill refers to his own and other biracial Canadians’ experience of gaining a solid racial identity as “a process.” Many racially mixed people and black people such as James Baldwin have written about gaining new insight into their racial identity once they have had a chance to live in a different context. This distance allows individuals to see the ways in which they are conditioned by the racial stereotypes and prejudices within their

home country. Hill refers to his own travel and that of his parents as being fundamental to their understanding of the socio-cultural context within which notions of racial identity are formed (51-52). Hill charts his experiences in the West African country of Niger where he eventually realizes that he is more Canadian than African. Like many African-Americans, Hill goes on a “back to Africa” journey inspired by Alex Haley’s novel *Roots* in order to address his “brewing interest in [his] own racial identity” (64). Another African-Canadian, Dionne Brand, also charts her journey back to Africa and addresses the need to fill this psychic gap in her own identity in *The Map to the Door of No Return* (2001).

Unlike Brand’s autobiography about her journey to Africa, Hill’s journey is complicated by the fact that he is racially mixed and by the fact that he arrives in Africa with a group of white French-Canadians. Hill recalls that “shooting out of every pore of [his] body was a completely unexpected resentment [he] felt for spending time in Africa with this group of whites [. . .] [he] couldn’t stand being among white friends in such an entirely black country, where, [he] suddenly felt, a person was either black or white” (66). Hill also states “[he] felt that they were preventing [him] from being black. And at that moment in [his] life, [he] wanted nothing more than to be seen, understood, and accepted as a long-lost brother come back to Africa to meet his figurative ancestors” (66). Hill is aware that his light-skinned somatext is such that the Africans might not recognize his African ancestry and he relates the fact that “[he] was dying for them to see it. [He] was dying to be known and treated and welcomed as the prodigal son” (67).

Hill's desire to be included in this African monoracial community is contrasted by his inevitable sense of identification with the white monoracial Canadians he went to Africa with. Hill describes being very ill in Africa and documents the care and loving attention of his white French-Canadian friends. This experience led him to realize that he was in fact quite connected to these Canadians. At this point, Hill experiences an epiphany in terms of his racial identity: "I knew who I was, and I no longer felt consumed by the desire to have my identity recognized by others" (71). Hill's weight loss is symbolically related to his shedding of the quest for a racial identity: "Leaving Niger twenty pounds lighter in the summer of 1979, I felt profoundly calmer about who I was, and how I would be perceived racially" (75). Part Two of Hill's autobiography is called "Border Crossings" and this image is fundamental to mixed race studies, whether it be the crossing of geographical, cultural or racial borders.³⁷ Border crossing suggests the dynamic and transgressive elements of racial hybridity and it also suggests the nomadic aspect of a process involving a number of different sites, and movement metaphorically or physically, across borders. In Chapter Four I return to this thread of my investigation by looking at the different ways in which contemporary Canadian playwrights represent a racially hybrid character's search for a stable racial identity as a process that requires movement into and through different communities.

Many biracial autobiographers chart their growing awareness of race as a process by reflecting upon the different ways that they have been interpellated over time, and the different ways in which *they have understood* their own soma texts over time. Naomi Zack writes in "My Racial Self Over Time" that she also identifies biracial corporeality

with floating signifiers. She begins to realize that “someone in my (demographic) position can experience sufficient change in identity over time so that a main concern of autobiographical writing might not be the events in a life but successive stages of how one sees herself” (Camper 21). In this view, the narrative trajectory in autobiographies for biracial people charts distinct and successive *stages* of self-representation and racial identity rather than a singular linear process.

In this essay, Zack identifies her racial identity as a fluid concept because her somatext has been read as a signifier of different racial identities in various sites. As a racially hybrid subject, Zack was thought of as “Spanish” (22) and “Puerto Rican” (25) when in fact she was Jewish and Black. Zack outlines her developing sense of biraciality by stating that “over time, I have moved from being Jewish; to being Jewish but not looking Jewish; to being Jewish and black, which is to say black; to being mixed race” (27).³⁸ She uses a bridge metaphor to frame her understanding of her biraciality: “To have a foot planted on either side of this abyss is an exceptional and conceptual impossibility [...] the chasm keeps getting wider. It’s too late for me to hop to either side because I can’t lie about the presence of my black ancestry and pretend to be white, and I can’t remake my past and become black. Either I sink or I rise. I have decided to rise” (26). In this anecdote, Zack is still using binaries to understand her biracial positionality and the reference to a chasm and the use of the phrase “sink or rise,” suggests that this binary has life-and-death consequences. A number of biracial autobiographers, including Hill, represent racial identity as a process of crossing bridges and borders. In Chapter

Three I return to this concept and consider the narrative crisis that occurs in novels when a character crosses racial and class borders that are meant to be binding demarcations.

The narrative trajectory of racially mixed people, as recorded in their autobiographies, involves border crossing or moving into and through different communities as part of the process of understanding one's biraciality. In addition to the experience of being racialized in different sites, the process of finding a positive racial identity is also conditioned by representations of race found in popular culture. Hill recalls the impact that images of Black characters had on his growing sense of a racial identity. He refers to the *Fat Albert* show and says that he "locked onto Cosby's diction and playfulness like a missile on target" (60). Hill states that it "was something that spoke to [him], that [he] wanted more of, and with which [he] identified entirely" (60).³⁹ When Hill watched television shows with black actors or black themes he says, "[he] felt alive. [He] felt there were people in the world who were speaking to [him]" (60).

Hill also found a positive sense of black identity through his experience of reading the work of African-American writers. He cites Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright, James Baldwin and Eldridge Cleaver, among others, as writers who had a positive impact on his growing racial identity. In reading this literature, Hill states that "[he] was forming [his] own sense of blackness and [his] own connection to the black diaspora by reaching into literature. Soon, this exploration blossomed into creative writing of [his] own" (61). Like many oppressed individuals, Hill's world opened up through his exposure to literature and writing, and "every time [he] wrote, [his] mind wandered into the lives of black characters" (61).

Despite this cathartic experience, Hill concludes that “it was strange to grow up black, or to grow up with a slowly increasing confidence in my own blackness, when there were no black people around” (61). Hill refers to this state as a “nostalgia for a past not lived” (61). In this way, Hill’s experiences echo those of Fred Wah who also had a sense of longing for a China that he only knew through the food and the distant relationship to Chinese identity that he experienced. Hill writes:

I can’t help but wonder what it would have been like to have black people all around me when I was young, and to have them to relate to as friends. I can’t help but wonder what it would have been like to go out with black girls, or compete in debating clubs, chess clubs, and track clubs with black kids. I can’t help but wonder how pleasing it might have felt to be able to drift into a friend’s home and find myself surrounded by black people. What a different life that would have been. (61-62)

For Hill, African-American television characters and African-American writers evoked a sense of racial identity that grounded him despite the social isolation he experienced in Canada. The presence of an African-Canadian community he could live with took a foothold in his imagination, provided a bittersweet reflection on a life not lived, and simultaneously gave him inspiration for his writing.

Different third-space tropes have been offered by biracial individuals in order to map the experience of racial hybridity. Hill refers to the “paint mixture theory” that is used as a metaphor for racial hybridity based on “an assumption that the child somehow represents an equal mixture of the two parents, and therefore is neither black nor white

but somewhere in between. Grey, like the mixed paints” (201). Other paradigms used to symbolically represent racial hybridity include “bridges,” “racial harmony” and “illicit unions.” In order to demonstrate the constructedness of identity, Hill refers to his own Canadian conversion: “I went from being black to being *anglais*” (203).⁴⁰ An interviewee in Hill’s book is referred to as someone who “sees herself sometimes as a person of colour and at other moments as a white woman with black ancestors” (203). Thus individual changes in one’s skin tone as well as the ambiguity of a racially mixed soma text can compound social and cultural readings of one’s soma text, making the whole experience of embodiment conditioned by several fluctuating variables.

Many autobiographies by racially hybrid Canadians address the different ways in which racially hybrid soma texts have been interpellated and offer the writers’ own understanding of the impact of these experiences on their sense of racial identity. In these ways the writer’s own process of working through the trauma that results from a lifetime of interpellation is detailed in their autobiographies. This notion of racial hybridity as a process that involves different sites and involves different trauma due to mis-recognition or alienation is also found in representations of racial hybridity in fiction and in drama. In fact, I argue in the preceding chapters that these elements are integral to the tension in both novels (Chapter Three) and plays (Chapter Four) that feature racial hybridity.

In sum, these autobiographies suggest that the primary site of dis-identification, misrecognition and alienation within family systems is often compounded by an individual’s experience of being interpellated as “Other” in school and in the larger society. These primary texts suggest that it is also difficult for biracial people to claim

affinity to biracial communities because of the isolation that many biracial people live with in Canada. The history of biracial people has also been obscured and, until very recently, narratives that feature biracial experiences have been underrepresented. For these reasons, the publication of biracial autobiographies, premised on the importance of self-representation for marginalized groups, can provide an *imagined community* of like-minded individuals to counteract the primary and secondary sites of trauma.

One of the ways of countering the sense of alienation that racially hybrid people can experience is to imagine a community of racially hybrid individuals. One of the most blatant contemporary acts of self-representation for racially hybrid people is Maria Root's "Bill of Rights for Racially Mixed People" published in *The Multiracial Experience* (7) (**Illustration 6**).

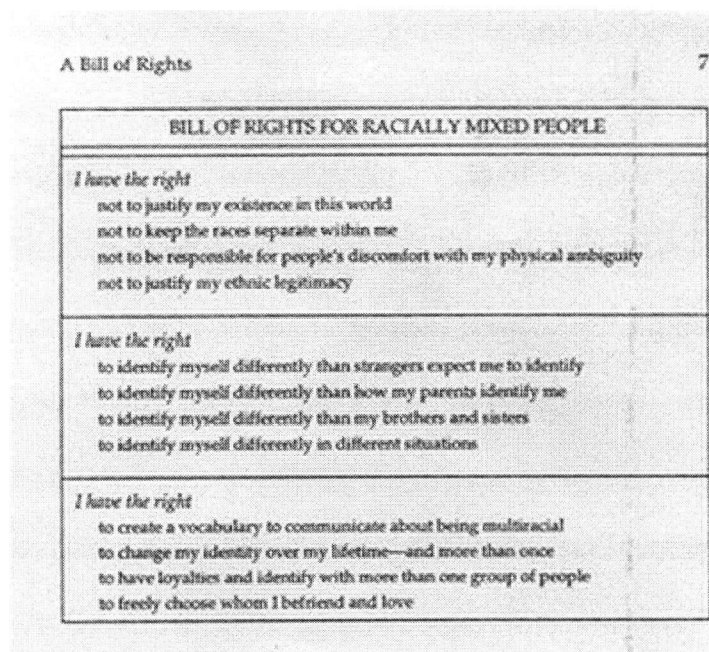


Illustration 6. One of the most prolific Hybridity theorists Maria Root has developed a manifesto entitled “Bill of Rights for Racially Mixed People.” She states that “Everyone who enters into an interracial relationship is born of racially different heritages is conscripted into a quiet revolution” (9).⁴¹

Root offers these rights as a means of empowering racially hybrid people with the right to self-identify and also as a means of validating the experiences they may have as a condition of racially hybrid embodiment. This bill of rights also suggests there is a growing demographic of people who share similar experiences of embodiment.

Root also outlines the importance of self-representation in *New Faces in a Changing America: Multiracial Identity in the 21st Century* where she responds to the growing demographic of racially mixed people by stating that “[w]ith this growth comes a new voice in the political, social and economic arenas and challenges the preconceived notions of racial identity” (xii). Root cautions that this positive use of racial hybridity in

popular culture and the representation of a racially hybrid movement still needs to be critically analyzed. According to Root, in the *contemporary* context:

[s]everal obstacles emerge in discussing mixed race. First, it has been depicted as a movement, when in fact multiple voices are represented (e.g. Fernandez, 1995; Graham, 1995; Byrd, 2002). Secondly, dialogues on mixed race are no longer cast only in black and white; the proliferation of other racialized ethnic groups informs this discussion along with different histories. Third, the voice of mixed-race adults is often absent or dismissed in public debate. (6)

Like Root, Hill also suggests that paradigms for understanding racial hybridity in the contemporary context have shifted as a result of an increasing ability “to define oneself in one’s own terms” (228). This is one of the elements that Hill notes makes the Canadian context distinctly different for biracial individuals who have black ancestry:

[g]rowing up, I was aware that Canada provided me with a little maneuvering space that my American cousins did not have. For example, I didn’t have the weight of a legally sanctioned United States school system telling me that I had to attend this particular school because I was black. Unlike my cousins, I had at least some room to concoct my own identity, declare it, test it out, see how it flew out there in my world. This, I think, is what still defines Canada today for a mixed-race person. There is some wiggle room. (229)

Hill acts on this privilege of having extra “wiggle room” to self-identify. He asserts that he and his sister “are black simply because we are. We have black ancestors, and we identify with it, and that, dear friends, is that” (231). Each of these writers, Zack, Root,

Hill, and Camper, in their own ways, suggests the importance of self-identification for racially hybrid individuals.

Many of the recent analyses of mixed-race issues base their theoretical conclusions on transcripts from autobiographical accounts of their subjective experiences of racialization. In particular, these autobiographical accounts often highlight the ways in which phenotypes are read and the situational and negotiated forms of agency that can be employed despite these folk traditions of reading race through markers. Many current theories of mixed-race identity draw attention to the lived experiences of those engaged in mixed-race situations and the strategies that these people enact in their daily lives. Other contemporary theories on multiracial experiences explore the spatial dimensions implicit in multiracial subjectivity. Interestingly, Mahtani draws on work by feminist theorists Gillian Rose and Elspeth Probyn to examine how multiracial women inhabit “mobile paradoxical spaces” (Parker and Song 173). By looking at the places where such women feel they *do* belong rather than where they *do not*, Mahtani’s approach inverts the tragic and pathological sites of identification to suggest the ways in which agency and the particularities of identity affect how one spatializes identifications.

Lawrence Hill’s autobiography is representative of many autobiographies written by racially hybrid individuals in terms of content. Interpellation is central to autobiographical accounts of racial hybridity and the cover hints at these different ways of seeing the racially hybrid body, a feature that is described in detail in the autobiography itself. The narrative trajectory for the biracial person often starts with the memory of a childhood trauma signified by a moment or series of events where the

biracial child is interpellated. This remembering of the event(s) is usually followed by a journey or return to cultural roots, often resulting in the racially hybrid person either gaining a renewed connection to both parts of his/her cultural and racial identity *or* becoming engulfed in despair and confusion with his/her identity.

Although the content in Hill's autobiography is in keeping with other autobiographical accounts of racial hybridity, the structure of his work is unique for an autobiography. Multiple narratives of racially hybrid Canadians are invoked throughout Hill's story to support or qualify his experience of racial hybridity. He repeatedly reflects on the affect that conducting these interviews with other racially hybrid Canadians has had on his growing sense of identity. In this way the narrative both describes Hill's experience of "growing up black and white in Canada" and, simultaneously, presents a summary of key points that the interviewees shared with Hill on the topic of racial hybridity. In this respect his work is both his own autobiography *and* the biography of a racially hybrid community of people in Canada.

In addition, Hill uses different registers in this work to draw upon other aspects of his research into the larger phenomenon of racial hybridity and at these moments in the text, the thread of his own autobiographical story and indeed his autobiographical voice is lost. This structure and his use of different registers present a fragmented and polyvocal narrative which allows the reader to view Hill's autobiography as both his unique experience and also as one that is shared by many other biracial Canadians. In general the work that Hill cites, the interviews he selects for his autobiography and the theses he refers to suggest that the racially hybrid body represents the terrors, taboos and myths

around racial identity that are common to North American history. These socio-cultural views of blood and belonging are consistently addressed in Hill's autobiography as the subtext that informs the scenes of interpellation that mark the experience of racial hybridity.

Scenes of interpellation are central features in autobiographical accounts of racial hybridity. This work suggests that the reading of the soma text of many biracial individuals is somewhat like deciphering hieroglyphics in terms of its impenetrable excess and complicated symbolism. Writers often document the constant process of revealing and concealing their identity according to the racialized gaze and repeated references to the effects of being interpellated, highlight the unique aspects that mark this form of embodiment as distinct from monoracial experiences of identity.

One consistent theme that runs throughout these narratives is the idea that the family system, the community and the larger nation often do not present mirrors that reflect the soma text of the mixed race individual, making for a number of challenging experiences in racial identity formation. One of the most common responses to this set of unique circumstances that appears to exist crossracially throughout these autobiographies is the idea of faking it or trying to "fit in" by performing a monoracial identity.⁴² Wah's notions of faking it parallel the process of passing that is consistently found in narratives that feature racially hybrid characters. In Chapter Three I return to this idea of faking it as articulated by Fred Wah in *Faking it: Poetics and Hybridity, Critical Writing 1984-1999* (2000) in order to outline the narrative possibilities that performing racial and cultural

drag offer for racially and culturally hybrid characters who “fake it” by passing as monoracial.

When the soma text of the individual is not in accordance with the monoracial act or an authentic monoracial identity is not verified by behaviour or the soma text (skin, blood, body), an individual may experience trauma due to misrecognition. Over time, these experiences can lead to the adoption of a situational identity. Numerous autobiographies and passing narratives describe ambulatory or dynamic methods represented most classically in a racially hybrid character’s efforts to “pass” as monoracial.⁴³

When there are family secrets, shame and/or taboos associated with the conception of the biracial individual, the process of racial identity may be more complex. The repression of racial identity is a common theme within interracial family systems where passing is the assimilationist response to shame or fear for having or creating “tainted blood.” This theme also appears in fiction and drama and will be assessed in the Chapter Three and Four.

Theories on autobiography are useful in assessing the structure of Hill’s work. The narrative structure of Hill’s autobiography presents “his story” as relational and this structural component also allows him to people his story with textual “mirrors” who were largely absent in his own community. In this way the work represents Eakin’s notion of the “relational self” as constructed in autobiography and interestingly reconfigures Egan’s idea of “mirror talk” within autobiography. By suggesting that his experience is shared by other racially hybrid Canadians, Hill’s work implies there can be a crossracial

application of the basic issues that stem from living within a racially hybrid soma text. These autobiographies document the subjective experience of racialization for racially hybrid Canadians and, in this way, these autobiographical reflections may provide textual mirrors for racially hybrid Canadians who do not meet people who mirror their racially hybrid soma texts in their daily life due to Canadian demographics. Hill's insights into the experience of racial hybridity may be interestingly extended in a comparative analysis of other autobiographies written by racially hybrid Canadians who are not black and white.

In addition to my analysis of the genre of autobiography and my description of the narrative structure, themes, and content of Hill's work, I have been trying to locate a vocabulary for racial hybridity in terms of metaphors that are used to refer to blood-quantum and paradigms that are used to symbolize racial hybridity. In representing the experience of biracial identity, many individuals use metaphors and paradigms to chart their experience of biracial identity in monoracial worlds. Autobiographers, like Hill, often use language that suggests fragmentation or paradigms of incompleteness e.g. I am part Black. "Both" or "neither" paradigms are often used to refer to the experience of being part of a family system but not completely like one's parents' racial identity e.g. I am neither black nor white or I am both Asian and African. At times an individual will adopt a third space paradigm to represent their racial identity in statements such as I am a mulatto or I am a woman of color. At times within the same autobiographical account an individual may, like Hill, adopt different paradigms to represent the different ways in

which he or she has understood his or her own racial hybridity over time and in different communities.

These different ways of understating one's own racially hybrid body are particularly affected by the socio-cultural fixation on identifying people according to phenotypic associations of race. The principal work that I analyze in this chapter reveals that a scopophilic world that is predicated on phenotypic associations with racial identity can lead to scopophobia for the biracial individual and any number of other reactions. Speaking out against white identity within family, lovers, society and/or friends is often one reaction. Meeting other biracial individuals and finding comfort in a third space community of racially hybrid people can often resolve many crises due to interpellation. Traveling to countries where many other racially hybrid people exist can ease an individual's discomfort about being policed by the racialized gaze for monoracial authenticity.

The performative aspects of racial identity are addressed in each chapter of this dissertation and become thematic concerns in a number of narratives that feature racial hybridity. I have argued that the racialized gaze is central to the assessment of the racially hybrid soma text and informs the performative process of racialization. This visual aspect of racial hybridity has very interesting ramifications that are informed by different genres. In the next chapter on fiction I argue that racial drag is a performative act that allows a hybrid character to exert some agency. In Chapter Four I explore the performative aspects involved in dramatic performances and, in particular, the impact that performing one's race has on audience-actor viewing relations.

There are a number of themes that occur with frequency in these Canadian biracial autobiographies and these themes also appear in different genres. Three of the oldest and most prevalent themes in mixed race literature are “passing,” the ideology that “blood will tell,” and the effects of the “one drop rule.”⁴⁴ These themes are used to illustrate some of the complex negotiations involved in biracial identity formation. Responses to the central questions “Where are you from?” and “What are you?” become a thematic concern that is found repeatedly in autobiographies by racially hybrid Canadians. If the biracial individual experiences a deficit of mirroring throughout his/her life, he or she may develop a number of unique ways of understanding the self in relation to families, communities and the larger world. This experience seems to include both the *hypervisibility* of the biracial individual and the *invisibility* or absence of individuals with similar soma texts. This visual excess and deficit makes for very interesting and complex looking relations for racially hybrid individuals orienting themselves within monoracial family systems and within the larger Canadian society.

The visualization of a racially hybrid community through photos, the media popularity of racially hybrid actors, the growing demographic of racially hybrid Canadians, and emerging contemporary theories of hybridity have stimulated much of the discourse on the contemporary experience of racial hybridity in Canada. I have now established an understanding of racial hybridity as a lived experience from the self-representation of racially hybrid Canadians in autobiographies by offering Hill’s autobiography as a sample case study. At the simplest level, looking for a singular racial identity poses a unique set of questions and problems for biracial children within families

that have two monoracial identities. The performativity of race, racial essentialisms, and the construction of a national identity are often the subtexts for both autobiographical accounts, fictional representations of racial hybridity, and representations of racial hybridity in drama. The useful insights into the embodiment of racial hybridity, as found in Canadian autobiographical accounts will now be applied to my analysis of racial hybridity as represented in contemporary Canadian fiction (Chapter Three) and drama (Chapter Four). In Chapter Three I focus on the signifying nature of the racially hybrid body, the performative aspects involved in racial drag, and the power of the racialized gaze. In Chapter Four I develop the idea of the performative aspects of racial hybridity by examining the racially hybrid soma text and the power of the racialized gaze in terms of performance.

CHAPTER THREE: FICTION

“Faking it in Fiction”: The Use of Racial Drag

And because I read and write as a mixedblood, a Native American of both Indian and European ancestry, such heteroglossia would seem, for me, to be a precondition of every utterance.

(Owens, *Mixedblood*, 5)

Though the hyphen is in the middle, it is not in the center. It is a property marker, a boundary post, a borderland, a bastard, a railroad, a last spike, a stain, a cypher, a rope, a knot, a chain (link), a foreign word, a warning sign, a head tax, a bridge, a no-man's land, a nomadic, floating magic carpet, now you see it now, you don't. The hyphen is the hybrid's dish, the mestiza's whole wheat tortillas (Andaluza 194), the Metis' apple (red on the outside, white on the inside), the happa's egg (white out, yellow in), the mulatto's café au lait.

(Wah, *Faking It*, 73)

Blue eyes were unusual where I came from and we were teased by our brown- and black-eyed relatives...[a]s a child I believed that any Indian unfortunate enough to have blue eyes must have the devil Scot in him or her, and I would think, 'There goes another spawn of Satan'.

(Campbell, *Half-breed*, 43)

Fiction Part One: Biotexts and (auto)biography

Representations of racial hybridity in contemporary Canadian fiction are the central focus of this chapter. In this chapter I base my argument on the analysis of selected works of contemporary Canadian fiction, namely, Beatrice Culleton's *In Search of April Raintree*, Richard Wagamese's *Keeper 'N Me*, and Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen*. These fictional works, like the autobiographies I analyzed in Chapter Two, and the transition texts that I preface this chapter with, concentrate on the racially hybrid soma text and the role of the racialized gaze. However, the generic conventions of autobiography and fiction produce interesting differences in a reader's reception of these works.

As a transition to the fictional representations of racial hybridity I wish to examine two works that I consider transitional texts because they blur the generic conventions of autobiography and fiction. My analysis of two key texts will provide a transition from my analysis of autobiographical accounts (Chapter Two) to fictional representations of racial hybridity (Chapter Three). Fred Wah's *Diamond Grill* (1996) suggests some of the ways in which the generic conventions associated with fiction and autobiography are being blurred as a part of a "hybrid aesthetic."¹ *Diamond Grill* is written in a mixed mode that combines *both* autobiography and fiction. Maria Campbell's *Half-breed* (1973) is also an interesting transition text because it has been interpreted as the autobiography of a Métis woman and because she frames her autobiography by way of a biography of her community. In both texts, racial hybridity is framed by a Canadian biracial autobiographical voice in ways that mark these texts as distinct from the more

classic autobiography which is defined by Lejeune in *On Autobiography* as “[r]etrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular, the story of his personality” (120) (italics in original). Both of these transition texts address the life of a racially hybrid Canadian writer and simultaneously locate the autobiographical “I” within the frame of Canadian historical, legal, and cultural practices by blending fiction and non-fiction (Wah), or by presenting the autobiographical “I” as *speaking for* a marginalized community (Campbell).

In the main section of this chapter I return to the central thread of my investigation by addressing the signifying nature of the racially hybrid soma text, the impact of the racialized gaze, and the notion of passing as racial drag in contemporary Canadian fiction by engaging in a close reading of specific literary texts. My central argument in the second section of this chapter is that both racial and culturally mixed characters in these novels respond to the process of assimilation by performing racial or cultural drag in order to assimilate or “pass.”

Transition Texts

As I identified in the last chapter on autobiography, Lejeune’s theories on autobiography as outlined in *On Autobiography* (1989) provide the concept of the “autobiographical pact” that the reader enters when a work is labeled as autobiographic or when there is a direct correspondence between the signature of the writer and a given character’s name (19-21). Both Campbell and Wah create central characters whose names are the same as the writers and both writers have declared that their work is based on

autobiographical source material. However, it is useful to think of the *construction* of a biracial autobiographical voice in these texts because of the slippage between their story and that of the larger community within which they live. In both cases the autobiographical elements are combined with explicit or implicit references to, and judgments about, the Canadian government's policies towards their communities. The inclusion of these elements demands a different kind of contract between the writer and the reader than in the strictly autobiographical pact. For this reason I have singled these texts out as transitions between the previous chapter on autobiography and the main focus of this chapter on fiction.

Lejeune describes the "autobiographical pact" as "the implicit or explicit contract proposed by the *author* to the *reader*, a contract which determines the mode of reading of the text and engenders the effects which, attributed to the text, seem to us to define it as autobiography" (29). Because the autobiographical elements in these transition texts are framed by way of the material effects of Canadian legislation, some knowledge of Canadian legal history is needed to support the truth claims of these authors. In this respect the autobiographical pact and, consequently, the contract between the reader and writer shifts slightly when one reads these transition texts. The reader is positioned differently than in Hill's relational autobiography by way of the focus on factors external to the individual's life such as the Chinese Exclusion Act (Wah) and the impact of the Indian Act which resulted in the disenfranchisement of the Métis people (Campbell).

Maria Campbell's *Half-breed* and Fred Wah's *Diamond Grill* represent their own stories and, simultaneously, address issues of cultural difference and familial, communal, and national belonging. Wah's work employs a number of narrative strategies in order to address both his own sense of belonging and the larger sense of belonging or displacement faced by Chinese-Canadians. Campbell's clear acknowledgement of the work as her story and also that of the Métis community, suggests that extratextual information is needed to decode the truth claims that she makes about Métis people. For this reason, *Half-breed* may be understood as (auto)biographical. Fred Wah positions his narrative as autobiographical, biographical, and communal. The reader is expected to examine the intertextual elements that refer to Canadian legal history and draw from extratextual historical and legal information in order to assess the truth claims of Wah's "biotext."

Another aspect of these transition texts marks them as distinct from autobiography proper. Fred Wah has referred to *Diamond Grill* as a "biotext" and, in the acknowledgements to *Diamond Grill*, he states that "[a] biotext, perhaps more than any other literary genre, seems an innately cumulative performance"(np) Wah has also referred to this work as "biofiction"² and states that "[t]hese are not true stories but, rather, poses or postures, necessitated, as I hope is clear in the text, by faking it" (np). By subverting the truth claims of this work, Wah clearly identifies the constructedness of his work. He strategically resists the classification of *Diamond Grill* as simply autobiographical. This is a very interesting position for Wah to take because it calls into question the autobiographical nature of this work while simultaneously pointing out the

necessity to fictionalize whenever one is writing from memory. These statements set up a different kind of reading contract, or if we use Lejeune's term, a different "autobiographical pact" between the reader and writer than the one that is central to autobiography proper.

According to Lejeune, there is a different contract between the reader and writer because the process of reading fiction is "independent from what the reader knows about the author" (32). Lejeune articulates the difference between the autobiographical pact and the fictional pact in that fiction is identified by two key aspects: "*obvious practice of nonidentity* (the author and the protagonist do not have the same name), *affirmation of fictitiousness* (in general it is the subtitle novel, in current terminology, that implies a fictional pact" (15). Wah's biotext engages the reader with the work through these two different pacts simultaneously and this makes his work distinct from the type of writer-reader engagements that occur in the genre of autobiography and fiction. Wah simultaneously resists the autobiographical pact by drawing attention to the work as a fictionalized "biotext" in ways that affirm its "fictitiousness." On the one hand, Wah names his central character Fred. Jr. and uses his own family photos and experiences to substantiate the truth claims of his autobiographical voice, and on the other hand, he has fictionalized the voices of key members of his family (**Illustration 7**).

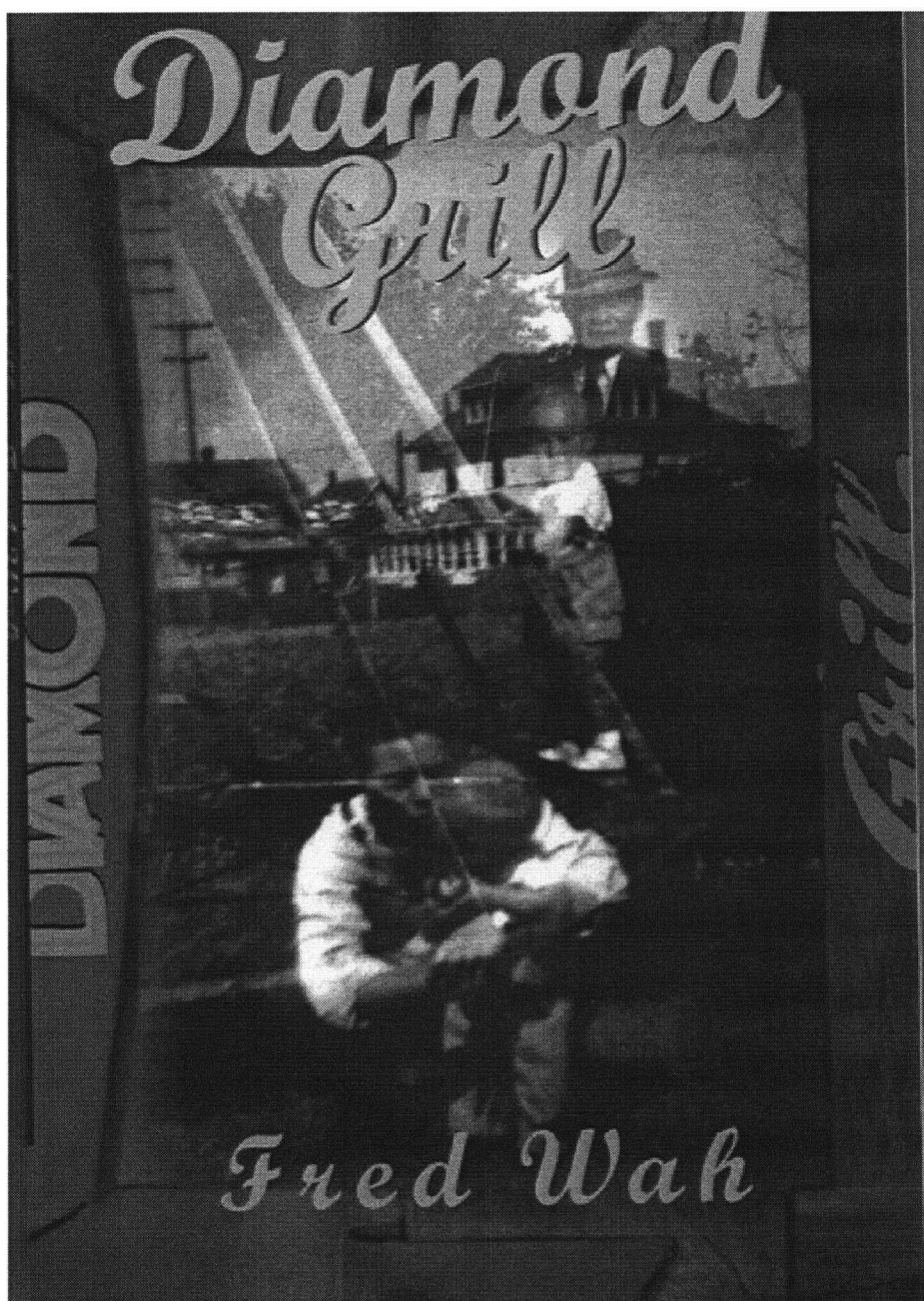


Illustration 7. This is the cover of Fred Wah's *Diamond Grill* (1996). The multigenerational focus of Wah's "biotext" is visually evident here as the layering of his family photos suggest the multiple embodiment of his patrilineal ancestor's bodies and stories. Nowhere in the text is there an indication that these are indeed Wah's *own* family photos so the reader is left to interpret them as photos that could stand in for other Chinese Canadian families or the fictional characters that he has presented in the biotext. However, in conversations about the cover, Wah has admitted that these are indeed his family photos.

Wah's "biotext" and Campbell's (auto)biography pose a challenge to generic classifications at the level of structure and to racial classifications at the level of character. In both cases, the writers use the main character's autobiographical voice to signify and complicate notions of belonging. Wah's autobiographical voice speaks through and for his family and Campbell articulates her story by way of the biography of her community. These transition texts blend and blur the conventions of autobiography. In both texts, the racially hybrid soma text resists a single "reading" just as the texts themselves resist easy classification as autobiography or fiction. It is my contention that racial hybridity at the level of character is complemented by the generic multiplicity of the texts themselves and that the racially hybrid character and the hybrid genre are mutually reinforcing.

Maria Campbell's autobiography charts her experience within the most distinct racially hybrid community in Canada: the Métis. The novel uses the autobiographical elements of a Métis woman's life to comment on the historical process by which Métis people have been colonized and dispossessed (**Illustration 8**). Campbell's work is unique in its articulation of a racially hybrid Native woman's subaltern voice and in her declaration that this is both her own story and that of her community. In the introduction Campbell states: "I write this for all of you to tell you what it is like to be a Halfbreed woman in our country" (2). This statement identifies Campbell's motive, her sense of an audience, and it also demonstrates her conflation of her autobiographical voice with the voice of a narrator who is representing the biography of the Métis people.

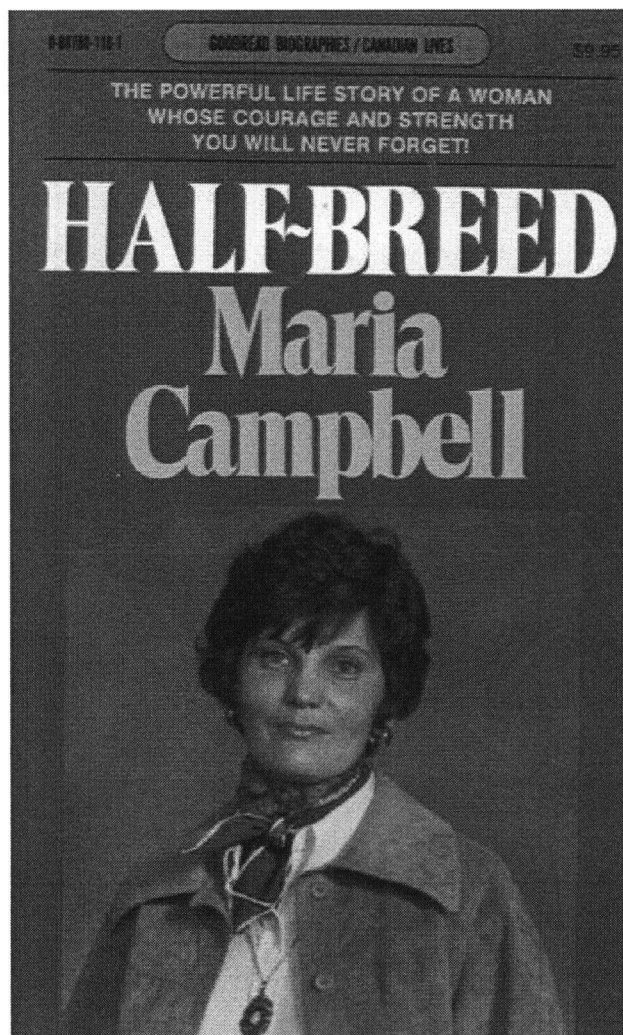


Illustration 8. This is the cover for Maria Campbell's (auto)biography *Half-Breed* (1973). Campbell's photo and clothing signify her racial hybridity and her self-assured gaze suggests that she has moved beyond the tragic "half-breed" story. It is also interesting to note that the by-line for this book does not refer to the indigeneity that the title and her photo both signify. The controversial disenfranchisement of the Métis people, which is central to this narrative, is obscured.

The double-voiced aspect of Campbell's (auto)biography is evident in the first chapter in that Campbell frames her own autobiography by way of the historical treatment of the Métis people, which she charts from the 1860s in Saskatchewan.³

Campbell's own voice surfaces only after she has created a context for her voice and her story by first providing a picture of the devastating effects that colonization has had on her people:

The Halfbreeds [then] became squatters on their land and were eventually run off by the new owners. One by one they drifted back to the road lines and crown lands where they built cabins and barns and from then on were known as the 'Road Allowance people.' (8)

The devastation of Campbell's own family is conflated here with the devastation of the Métis people. This devastation impacted Campbell's own life: "I hurt because in my childhood I saw glimpses of a proud and happy people" but, after they were dispossessed as a community she "never saw [her father] or any of our men walk with their heads held high before white people" (9). This sense of failure as a result of the disenfranchisement and colonization of the Métis people, according to Campbell, is the *cause* of her parents' drinking and her sense of hopelessness about the future. It is also the motivation for her desire to write her autobiography as a way of working through this sadness and trauma. In this sense, her assertion of her (auto)biography can be read as a form of her own and her community's resistance to oppression. The narrative compulsion to tell her own story by way of this larger story of the Métis people is based on her desire to explain the context within which she and her people have become disempowered. In this respect, her

work may be understood as a blend of both biography and autobiography or simply called (auto)biography.

Wah also presents his biotext in the context of his community and in light of Canadian history. Wah frames his autobiographical voice by way of his grandparents' experiences of immigration, the process of assimilation, and identifies numerous experiences of racism. In a newspaper article that appeared in *The Calgary Herald*, Wah suggests that this work gave him a place to release his anger, and he describes the process of writing this book as cathartic.⁴ By locating the personal story within the legal and historical disenfranchisement of people of colour, both Wah and Campbell are engaged in a personal and political act of "writing back."⁵

In *Half-breed* and *Diamond Grill* the intergenerational effects of displacement resulting from the forces of colonization are represented alongside the characters' own shifting allegiances within marginalized and hegemonic sites. These writers negotiate this tension between assimilation and belonging and explicitly and implicitly question notions of belonging and identity in Canada. The intergenerational foci of these works also suggest the multiple layers that make up the story of the autobiographical "I". This communal emphasis resists the idea of the lone individual who can chart his/her life story without reference to familial, communal, and national discourse about who constitutes a Canadian subject. Such work may be read, then, as emphasizing the constructedness of the autobiographical subject, which is made even more relevant by the multiple positions of the racially hybrid character and by the narrative instability of the "biotext" that blends autobiography and fiction.⁶ Such transition texts require the reader to understand the

specific legal and historical contexts that these writers represent as formational to their identities. The reader of such work has a slightly different contract or pact with the author because of these inherently political intertextual references. In order to verify the truth claims made by the autobiographical narrator one must refer to non-fictional sources that exist outside of the autobiography itself.

Wah and Campbell's autobiographical voices are constructed in relation to policies of assimilation that have negatively affected their respective communities. These representations of a hyphenated subject position are also inherently political and signify Canada's particular relation to hyphenated identities; Maria Campbell as a racially hybrid Métis woman and Fred Wah as a Chinese-Canadian man. Of course, discursive constructions of hybridity in the Canadian context are affected by Western and Anglophone notions of hybridity.⁷ In the Canadian context, the hyphen is often seen as a byproduct of the implementation of the policies of multiculturalism. The hyphen signifies a hybrid identity by making new categories of Canadians such as African-Canadian, Asian-Canadian and the like. For some Canadians, the hyphen marks a place of multiplicity and/or ambiguity and for others it carries negative stigma by suggesting that one is outside of the simple national referent of "Canadian." Although the term Métis does not explicitly use a hyphen, its historical usage signifies a hyphenated racial hybridity that combines Scottish, French and indigenous identities.

Hyphenation has been the focus of a number of different debates on national identity and has also influenced discussions of aesthetics in Canadian literary theories. I will briefly outline one such theory in order to assert the utility of it for the analysis of

racial hybridity in a given text. In *Faking it: Poetics and Hybridity, Critical Writing 1984-1999* (2000), Wah has articulated a theory of hybridity called “Half-bred Poetics,” which focuses on the role of the “hyphen.”⁸ In his own hybridity theory, Wah clearly links this punctuation to much larger notions of instability in the text.⁹ Because he is both a poet and a critic, Wah also provides a deeper poetic associative reference for his use of the hyphen in “Half-bred Poetics”:

Though the hyphen is in the middle, it is not in the center. It is a property marker, a boundary post, a borderland, a bastard, a railroad, a last spike, a stain, a cipher, a rope, a knot, a chain (link), a foreign word, a warning sign, a head tax, a bridge, a no-man’s land, a nomadic, floating magic carpet, now you see it now, you don’t. The hyphen is the hybrid’s dish, the mestiza’s whole wheat tortillas (Andaluza 194), the Métis’ apple (red on the outside, white on the inside), the happa’s egg (white out, yellow in), the mulatto’s café au lait. (73)

Wah’s use of the hyphen suggests a number of spatializations of identity based on hyphenation and these spatializations are ultimately linked to a racially hybrid body.¹⁰

Wah’s hybridity theory shifts from the hyphen to a conflation of the hyphen and the body of the mixed-race writer, when he presents “A Poetics of Ethnicity.” He focuses on the notion of an applied poetic “as the tool designated or located by writers and artists to initiate movement and change” (51).¹¹ In his elaboration of a poetics of ethnicity, Wah charts different counter-hegemonic strategies used in the writing of a number of different minority writers in Canada (64-66). Although he grounds his use of the hyphen and the development of his “Half-bred Poetics” in his own racialized body, he also suggests the

utility of his “Half-bred Poetics” for other minorities or hyphenated writers: “My own interest in the site and sign of the hyphen is essentially from a blood quantum point of view, that is, as a ‘mixed blood.’ Others occupy the site as immigrants, or as visible minorities, or as political allies” but, according to Wah, can still invoke and utilize a “hybrid borderland poetics” (74). Although writers with different hybrid identities may *not* frame their hybrid identity by way of the “hyphen,” he broadens the usefulness of the “Half-bred Poetics” from those who are, as he is, “racially mixed.” So, although his theory is based on blood-quantum ideologies, here Wah suggests that the utility of his “Half-bred Poetics” can be extended beyond racially mixed writers.

In addition to his poetic play with the hyphen, Wah, like Bhabha, refers to the ambivalence and dynamic counter-hegemonic aspects of hybrid or hyphenated spaces. Wah states that the “site of this poetics for me, and many other multiracial and multicultural writers, is the hyphen, that marked (or unmarked) space that both binds and divides” (72). Wah focuses “on the scene of the *hyphen* as a crucial location for working at hybridity’s implicit ambivalence” (73). Whereas Bhabha refers to the “third space” as a locus of tension, Wah refers to the “hyphen” as an active agent in challenging hegemony. Wah suggests that the “constant pressure that the hyphen brings to bear against the master narratives of duality, multiculturalism, and apartheid creates a volatile space that is inhabited by a wide range of voices” (74).¹²

In a Bhabhian move, Wah draws attention to the role that the hyphen plays as an active instrument of disturbance and/or dissonance but Wah qualifies this by referring to the role of the “hybrid writer” as agitator. Wah argues that “the hybrid writer must (one

might suspect, necessarily) develop instruments of disturbance, dislocation, and displacement. The hyphen, even when it is noted, is often silent and transparent. I'd like to make the noise surrounding it more audible, the pigment of its skin more visible" (73). It seems that Wah is advocating a form of resistance to the silence that has surrounded racial hybridity in Canada by suggesting that the position of the hybrid subject can be utilized as a space of resistance to hegemony rather than simply being a place of alterity. His evocative use of the hyphen to refer to physical and sonic elements is further enriched by his personification of the hyphen through the metaphor of a racialized body. Here Wah represents his "Half-bred Poetics" as a dynamic tool that is available to the hybrid writer.

Wah also outlines the relationship between the hyphenated identity and the imagination. He seeks to foreground "the dynamic of the hyphen as operating with some force through accumulated value as both an identity container and a frictional and generative device in shaping possible imaginations."¹³ In this respect, Wah is one of the few hybridity theorists in Canada to suggest the utility of the hyphen as a device for literary criticism. Wah's contribution to hybridity theories, like Bhabha's articulation of a "third space," suggests the dynamic potentiality involved in hybrid subjectivity. However, Wah elaborates on how one might negotiate this hyphenated discursive space by "faking it," and also suggests how hybridity, in particular racial hybridity, may influence one's creative and imaginative responses in ways that are linked to, but not confined to, one's blood-quantum. In both Campbell's and Wah's biotexts, the biracial character's attempts to "pass" for monoracial may be understood as a form of faking it in

order for their central characters to fit into different discursive communities that are based on essentialist ideas about blood-quantum and authenticity.

I have outlined some of Wah's hybridity theories in order to suggest some of the ways in which they may be usefully applied to what Sneja Gunew refers to as the growing "self-consciously titled genre of 'mixed race' texts."¹⁴ The study of literature that features racial hybridity continues to gain prominence in academia. The recently published *Mixed Race Literature* (2002), *Mulattos and Mestizas: Representing Mixed Identities in the Americas 1850-2000* (2003), *Confounding the Color Line: The Indian-Black Experience in North America* (2002), the recently published collection of essays *Asian North American Identities: Beyond the Hyphen* (2004), and the UBC course (English 490) taught by Glenn Deer on "Multi-Ethnic and Mixed-Race Identities in Literature and Film" are some of the many contemporary examples of the growing academic interest in expanding the discourse around racial hybridity.

The most recent articulations of hybridity theories, like Wah's, are based on the notion of the soma text of the racially hybrid subject. Corporeal constructions of race in Canada are addressed in Minelle Mahtani's essay, "I'm a Blond-Haired, Blue-eyed, Black Girl" in *Rethinking 'Mixed Race'* (2001). Mahtani's research is important because she points out the situational aspects of mixed-race interpellation and, rather than pathologizing mixed race subjectivity as inherently tragic, she focuses on the places where mixed race women in Toronto feel they do fit in. This dynamic concept of racial hybridity, suggested here by Mahtani, has important implications because it suggests that hybridity is not just a fixed category but rather an ontological marker that takes on very

specific contours according to racialized contexts.¹⁵ Wah, Campbell, and other mixed-race writers' autobiographical reflections often highlight incidents of being marked racially by language due to visible racial encodings and often note the powerful effect that language has on their identity formation. These theorists also importantly suggest that specific "readings" of racially hybrid bodies are not static.

When examined crossracially it is evident that the racially hybrid soma text is often read for signs of an authentic racial identity. These narratives chart *the process* of racialization through their racially hybrid characters' responses to the racialized gaze and, as such, these works can be read as racialized bildungsromans. Fred Jr. in *Diamond Grill* goes through a number of qualifications as he discovers his links to his Chinese heritage. The central character in Campbell's *Half-breed* also goes through a quest for a stable racial identity. The tension between assimilation and acceptance in one's marginalized community as a central theme, is heightened in these transition texts because the central character is *also* struggling with the tension of living within a multiply-coded, racially hybrid soma text. The dedication to Wah's biotext, a poem *Waiting for Saskatchewan* suggests the difficulties faced by mixed race individuals, the practice of "faking it" when you are not "pure" or monoracial. This dedication captures the thematic issues that inform Campbell and Wah's search for a stable identity (**Illustration 9**). By looking closely at the ways in which their soma texts are read and qualified, we can gain insight into the representations of *the process* of racialization for biracial Canadians, the signifying nature of the racially hybrid somatext, and the powerful impact of the racialized gaze.

You were part Chinese I tell them.
They look at me. I'm pulling their leg.
So I'm Chinese too and that's why my name is Wah.
They don't really believe me. That's o.k.
When you're not "pure" you just make it up.

—from *Waiting for Saskatchewan*

Illustration 9. Wah's dedication in *Diamond Grill* (1996) suggests the centrality of the racialized gaze, the embodiment of racial hybridity and the concept of "faking it" as a reaction to being "read" as "impure."

The “look” of one’s soma text determines how the racially hybrid body is read and many racially hybrid individuals develop a sensitivity to the gaze and utilize visual means to decode and respond to the racialized gaze. In Chapter One of her autobiography, Campbell describes her parents by way of their racially hybrid soma texts. Her father is described as “a very good-looking man with black curly hair and blue-grey eyes, strong, rowdy, and wild” (13). Campbell describes her mother as “very beautiful, tiny, blue-eyed and auburn-haired” (13). In addition to this description of their racially hybrid soma texts, Campbell suggests that their desire for each other was occasioned by the gaze. Campbell describes her father’s interest in her mother as stemming from visual appreciation: “When [he] saw my mother, who was then fifteen, [he] wanted her and took her [. . .] Dad first saw Mom cooking bannock over a fire outside her parents’ tent. She flipped the bannock over just like his mother did. When she looked up he nearly fell off the wagon she was so pretty” (13). He is attracted to the familiar and culturally relevant indigenous food that she is cooking and his desire is linked to her racially hybrid somatextuality. Campbell’s mother’s desire for her father is also described through visual codes: “Mom said she saw him and knew she belonged to him” (13). These descriptions of her parents’ soma texts and their visual delight in each other suggest that the visual appreciation of their mutual mixedness was part of the stimulus that led to their betrothal.

In *Diamond Grill*, Fred Jr. also describes his father’s mixedness and “the problems my father has from both the Chinese (he’s a half-breed, he’s really a white man, he’s married to a white woman) and the Wasps (he looks Chinese, he can talk Chinese, and he runs the café, right?)” (39). Wah identifies a self-consciousness about his own

somatextual signifiers and the importance of his own light-skinned racial hybridity when he states: "I don't look Chinese. I'm pretty white" (39). Fred Jr.'s body becomes a site of contention for his white grandparents and the following passage suggests that his racially hybrid soma text was greeted with relief: "my blond hair and blue eyes enough to ease her parents' anxiety about the color of their grandson's skin" (43).

Because of the racial hybridity of their father, and their white mother, the bodies of the Wah children are a range of tones and racially hybrid soma texts. Wah uses a humorous and ironic tone to discuss this range of tones in relation to blood-quantum in the following passage:

I'm just a Baby, maybe six months (.5%) old. One of my aunts is holding me on her knee. Sitting on the ground in front of us are her two daughters, 50% Scottish. Another aunt, the one who grew up in China with my father, sits on the step with her first two children around her. They are 75% Chinese. There is another little 75% girl cousin, the daughter of another 50% aunt who married a 100% full-blooded Chinaman (full-blooded, from China even). At the back of the black-and-white photograph is my oldest cousin; he's 25% Chinese. His mother married a Scot from North Battleford and his sisters married Italians from Trail. So, there, spread out on the stoop of a house in Swift Current, Saskatchewan, we have our own little western Canadian multicultural stock exchange. (83)

Despite this comic tone about the range of Chinese racially hybrid soma texts within his family, Fred Jr. is still traumatized by being read as Chinese in elementary school.

Wah clearly identifies the power of the racialized gaze and the impact of interpellation when he writes: “[u]ntil Mary McNutter calls me a chink I’m not one [. . .] I don’t have to be because I don’t look like one” (98). Here Wah identifies the power of the racialized gaze and the way in which bodies can be raced according to how they are read. As a result of this traumatic experience, Fred decides to “become as white as [he] can, which, considering I’m mostly Scandinavian, is pretty easy for me” (98). Clearly this is an example of the racially hybrid person’s desire to pass being formed as a direct response to the traumatic experience of being interpellated as “Other”—a theme that also appears in the fiction I examine later in this chapter.

Because Campbell and Wah are racially mixed, their soma texts are constantly assessed by the gaze for signs of authenticity. Campbell is born with dark curly hair and her brother tells her: “you’re too black and your hair is like a nigger’s” (14). Throughout her early childhood Campbell’s hair becomes a marker of her racial hybridity. Her Cheechum (grandmother) tries in vain to tame this hair in order for Maria to display the signifiers that will allow her to be read as Native:

My hair was one of Cheechum’s pet grievances and she would attack it with the same patience and determination that she revealed whenever she decided to change something [. . .] She would spend an hour rubbing bear grease into it and then braid it. The grease was to keep the curls from popping out of the braids and to give me a shiny, tidy look. (53)

Campbell was told that this process would make her hair straight and that this would be advantageous because long straight hair is one of the racial qualifiers of an authentic

Native identity. Campbell interrupts this childhood memory and suggests that the belief in the ideal of long straight hair as a marker of indigeneity still affects her by stating that: “today at thirty-three, my hair is straight as a poker” (53).

In addition to her hair being read for signs of Native blood-quantum, Campbell’s skin tone and eye color also represented her racially hybrid soma text and marked her as different:

Instead of tanning a golden brown my already dark complexion would go almost black during the summer. Black hair was supposed to have, as the storybooks went, snapping black eyes or sparkling brown ones. Mine were green. My aunts, uncles and cousins all had brown or black eyes and used to tease me for having dark hair and skin—‘like a nigger’ they said—and eyes like a white man. (95)

Although Campbell grows up in a Métis community with visually mixed-race parents, she is still subject to exclusion because of *the type* of racial hybridity that her soma text signified in this community. Campbell recalls her Cheechum’s warning about white people: “They try to make you hate your people” (51). However, the quote above suggests that the hatred for her racially mixed soma text *also* came from her own racially hybrid family and not just from the white community.

In addition to this familial rejection for not looking “Indian enough,” Campbell is insulted throughout her life for looking “too Indian.” In her foster home she hears her foster mother refer to the children as being “only good for two things—working and fucking. She made jokes about hot bucks and hot squaws and talked like we were animals in the barnyard” (108). At the same time Campbell states that her foster mother would

“go to dances in nearby communities and sneak off into the bushes with the men” and she also made “countless passes at [Maria’s] Dad” (108). These mixed messages about sexuality, interracial desire, and gender informed Campbell’s developing sense of an identity and contributed to her trauma about being positioned as a “half-breed.”

Campbell also writes about the divisiveness between the Native and Half-breed community she grew up in. She refers to her Indian relatives on nearby reserves and states that “[t]here was never much love lost between Indians and Halfbreeds. They were completely different from us—quiet when we were noisy, dignified even at dances and get-togethers. Indians were very passive—they would get angry at things done to them but would never fight back, whereas Halfbreeds were quick-tempered—quick to fight, but quick to forgive and forget” (25). Campbell suggests that these cultural differences stemmed from the fact that, “[t]hey had land and security, we had nothing” (25). Although Campbell recalls that she learned many traditional practices from her Cheechum such as beading and tanning hides and was included in traditional ceremonies, because of her racially hybrid soma text she was forever denied an unconditional acceptance by her Native relatives. As an example of this rejection, Campbell recalls that expressing her opinion was regarded as a consequence of “the white in her” because she is told that, “[t]reaty women don’t express their opinions, Halfbreed women do” (26).

Fred Jr. also learns about the codes of Chinese identity and a part of this acculturation is associated with food. Fred Jr. explains that, “Dad doesn’t cook much with ginger but whenever I accidentally bite into a piece of ginger root in the beef and greens, I make a face and put it aside. This makes him mad, not because he doesn’t think ginger

is bitter but because I have offended his pride in the food he prepares for us. Ginger becomes the site of an implicit racial qualification" (11). In addition to these implicit judgments about the degree of Fred Jr.'s "Chineseness," which is understood by his acceptance of certain foods, he is also judged by other codes of Chinese identity.

In this liminal position, Fred Jr. states that language and Chinese culture are difficult for someone who is "half Swede, quarter Chinese, and quarter Ontario Wasp" (36). Passing, for Fred Jr., becomes a way of fitting into the monoracial community that reads him as white. Embracing his Chinese ancestry allows him to incorporate those aspects of his heritage that are Chinese. He is able to negotiate both sites and concludes, "the name is all I've had to work through"; when he is asked "What kind of name is that, *Wah*?" he responds, "Chinese I say. I'm part Chinese. And she says, boy you could sure fool me. You don't look Chinese at all" (169). Although he is still read as non-Chinese in a number of different sites, Fred Jr. chooses to claim his mixedness and declare that he is part Chinese rather than pass as non-Chinese.

Passing is an issue that is central to many narratives that feature racial hybridity. When a work is represented as autobiographical, the reader accepts the truth claims that the writer presents because the reader assumes that the writer is referring to his or her lived experience because of the "autobiographical pact." In these transition texts, the conventions of autobiography and fiction (*Wah*) and autobiography and biography (Campbell) become blurred. *Wah* constructs a biofictional "I" and Campbell constructs a communal "I." *Wah* uses intertexts and multiple voices in ways that remove his autobiographical voice from the center of the narrative. These features distinguish his

work from autobiography. Campbell's authorial voice is one that is an omniscient narrator that documents the Métis people and this distance from her own autobiographical voice marks her work as distinct from autobiography. The constructedness of these transition texts allows the reader to gain some narrative distance from the truth claims of the work and both transition texts demand a more inclusive and multifaceted pact than operates between reader and writer in autobiography proper.

When addressing the very same phenomenon of passing in fiction, the writer is even less invested in the truth claims of the work because the contract between the reader and writer is different. In fiction, racial hybridity becomes less of a statement of the material effects of this form of embodiment on the racially or culturally hybrid writer. The genre of fiction allows the writer to explore a number of different narrative possibilities that extend beyond the lived experience of the writer. Because of the distance between the writer and the representation of the racially or culturally hybrid character, it becomes useful to think of hybridity as a trope that is available to writers to comment on a range of issues that are signified by the representation of racial or cultural hybridity in fiction. Although generic conventions affect writer and reader engagements, the central theme of passing, the representation of the racially hybrid body as a unique form of embodiment, and the powerful impact of the racialized gaze link these works crossgenerically and crossracially.

Part Two: Racial Hybridity in Fiction

In one of the most comprehensive analyses of the theme of interraciality in literature, *Neither Black Nor White Yet Both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature* (1997), Werner Sollors identifies a number of different types of passing including: “Jews passing for Gentiles, Polish immigrants preferring to be German, Italians pretending to be Jewish, the Japanese Eta concealing their group identity to avoid discrimination, [and] the Anglo-Indians passing as British” (257). Despite these various forms of passing, Sollors concludes that passing is used most frequently “as if it were short for ‘passing for white,’ in the sense of ‘crossing over’ the color line in the United States from the black to the white side” (247). Although we can gain insight into the form of these narratives and identify specific character types based on critical discourse on American passing narratives, one must be aware of the ways in which they are culturally and historically specific and affected by temporal considerations.

Sollors argues that “racial passing is particularly a phenomenon of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century” (247). The twenty-first century may be witness to the widest *variety* of passing narratives because contemporary texts represent not just the overdetermined trope of black and white racially mixed characters attempting to pass but, a number of different *types* of racially and culturally hybrid characters who attempt to pass. Contemporary passing narratives represent different types of racially mixed characters, expose different ramifications of racial and cultural hybridity, and investigate other nuances involved with negotiating the world as a racially and/or culturally hybrid individual. Canadian passing narratives represent a different demographic of people, are

informed by different cultural beliefs, and signify a different legal history regarding race and interraciality. Although Canadian passing narratives are increasingly being published and gaining some critical attention, to date they have not been given the same kind of critical attention as American passing narratives. Because American passing narratives have been critically examined in depth, insights into the aesthetic use of the racially hybrid character as a trope, if applied with care and attention to difference, can provide a basis for the examination of contemporary Canadian passing narratives.

Racially and culturally mixed characters that “pass” in contemporary Canadian novels have a literary predecessor in the “tragic mulatto” figure who performed racial drag and cultural drag in order to assimilate into hegemonic populations and survive. The dominant theme of racial passing in American literature features racially mixed characters, usually “mulattos” or “octoroons,” using subterfuge and disguise to escape from slavery or the Southern states.¹⁶ In the canon of American literature, the “tragic mulatto” has become the primary trope for the racially mixed character. However, in contemporary Canadian First Nations’ literature, racial hybridity appears most frequently in representations of “mixed blood” and “half-breed” characters.¹⁷

American passing narratives that feature the “tragic mulatto,” in effect reinforced a racial ideology that suggests that one is inherently conscripted to embracing a particular part of one’s ancestry. The contemporary Canadian passing narratives that I examine in this chapter also suggest that the presence of indigeneity in one’s ancestry indelibly marks one as indigenous. In this way, these Canadian and American passing narratives both serve to reinforce binaries about race and invoke a racial essentialism that denies the

racially or culturally hybrid character the license to perform both aspects of their hybrid identities. Racially and culturally mixed characters in contemporary Canadian First Nations' literature are similar to their American counterpart, the "tragic mulatto," in particular the representation of performative aspects of "passing."

According to Judith Butler, passing can be understood as "a performative enactment of 'race'" (*Bodies* 185). Where drag may be understood as a form of gender passing, racial drag may be understood as race passing, and cultural drag may also be understood as a form of passing. The main characters in Beatrice Culleton's *In Search of April Raintree*, Richard Wagamese's *Keeper 'N Me*, and Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* provide good examples of characters who enact different forms of racial or cultural drag in order to "pass." Racial and cultural drag in these novels represent a range of responses to the process of assimilation. As "passing narratives," these novels offer different resolutions to the tension between assimilation and maintaining cultural integrity. In First Nations' literature, this tension is often presented as a choice between embracing either indigeneity or assimilation.

Representations of racial and cultural drag in the primary fiction that I analyze in this chapter reveal a number of responses to forced assimilation and the postcolonial condition by foregrounding the methods by which individuals become indoctrinated into performing race and rejecting their indigeneity. My analysis in this part of this chapter will allow me to identify multiple responses to the process of assimilation by addressing the impact that foster homes, adoption, and residential school has the main characters in these novels. These fictional representations of racial and cultural drag foreground the

methods by which Native characters learn to perform indigeneity and the ways in which they “pass” by performing racial or cultural drag. These contemporary Canadian passing narratives suggest multiple responses to the process of assimilation for indigenous populations in Canada who have been victims of these assimilation policies. The representation of this demographic of people in these passing narratives references Canadian historical conditions. My examination of the ways in which Canadian Native characters learn how to perform or reject indigeneity illustrates this performance response process and highlight the ways in which characters “pass” by performing racial or cultural drag in fiction. In each novel, the drag performance is developed in response to being removed from indigenous communities, as reactions against negative stereotypes of indigeneity and, in each novel, the revelation of a character’s indigeneity exposes the drag performance.

Each of the main characters in these novels performs drag in order to survive in settings where they are removed from their indigenous families and communities.¹⁸ April performs racial drag in *In Search of April Raintree* after she is removed from her family and placed in foster care. Jeremiah performs cultural drag when he is removed from his indigenous community and tries to cope with this dislocation by performing the urban Indian and hybrid artist in *Kiss of the Fur Queen*. Because Garnet Raven in *Keeper n’ Me* is adopted into a white home, he is removed from his indigeneity and, consequently, learns to perform a lateral racial drag by performing a variety of brown-toned identities. Each of these drag performances is a consequence of a character being removed from his/her indigenous community. The drag performances can be read as responses to

forced assimilation. In addition, these performances of drag highlight the categories of race and essentialism(s) associated with racial identity. While these characters are not all racially hybrid, the plots in these novels centre on their attempts to “pass” and, in this way, they are linked with other passing narratives that feature racially mixed characters performing racial drag.

In each of these novels, racial identity is constructed within the confines of compulsory norms that are connected with survival. The negotiation of identity involved when a racially or culturally mixed character chooses to perform racial drag may be understood within the context of Gerald Vizenor’s definition of “survivance” whereby passing is a strategy for survival (*Fugitive Poses* 15). Forms of survivance for racially mixed characters may involve cultural, social or racial drag, which allow the character to advance closer to hegemonic ideals and attain social status.¹⁹ These forms of drag are distinct from those that are solely for entertainment as they are linked to each character’s psychic survival.²⁰

The survival of these characters is informed by compulsory systems of identity. Butler suggests that “as a strategy of survival within compulsory systems, gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences” (*Gender* 178). I extend Butler’s notions of performativity to the context of racial and cultural drag because these novels suggest that performing race also involves compulsory systems and may result in punitive consequences for people who cannot “pass” as monoracial.

The repetition of the compulsory practice of racialization portrayed in these novels parallels Butler's notions of the performativity of gender in which repetition of compulsory gender norms leads to the assignment of a gender "performativity" (*Gender* 173). Similarly, within these novels the compulsory practice that results from the process of racialization involves the negotiation of certain racial demarcations that are based on racial binaries. Thus, Butler's notion of the "theatricality of gender" within the context of drag is a useful framework to understand the theatricality of race that is represented in these novels (*Bodies* 232).²¹ One of the reactions to this process of racialization that allows the individual more agency, is the use of racial drag.

The performance of drag involves a certain level of duplicity. Cheryl and April in *In Search of April Raintree* deceive each other and are coded in a way that perpetuates the trope of the duplicitous racially mixed character.²² Their dishonesty causes their alienation from each other; April hides the truth about their parents, which causes Cheryl to mistrust her, and Cheryl conceals her own truth about her lifestyle and her baby, which causes a life-threatening situation for April. April understands the impact of this mutual deceit when she notes that "as it is, I lie to protect her and she lies to protect me, and we both lose out" (185). Both characters, in this respect, fulfill the thematic function of the duplicitous and deceitful mixed race character.

This character type has existed in many fictional representations of the half-breed. Louise Owens suggests that "the tortured and torturing 'breed' has served as a matrix for the conflicted terrors of Euroamerica, the horror of liminality that is the particular trauma of the colonized mind" (25). While I agree with Owens' assertion, the half-breed

character is also informed by the specific somatextual encodings that signify indigeneity or light-skinned privilege so it is not accurate to suggest that *all* half-breed characters function in the same way in literary texts. The extent to which the soma text of the racially hybrid character is liminal depends upon the external markings of race. The multiple ways in which Cheryl and April's mixed race bodies are "raced" determine the limits of their ability to engage in a racial drag performance.²³ Unlike Cheryl, April can pass as white and thus April's soma text, though equally mixed, becomes a more frightening liminal hybrid. April's body functions as a soma text that becomes the locus of crises occasioned by crossing racial demarcations. In this respect we may speak of April's body as a soma text that is the site for multiple levels of doubleness and narrative crises, and a body that is also a signifier of the tension between indigeneity and assimilation.

Doubleness is signified in these novels by forms of racially hybrid embodiment, the presence of character doubles, and the act of passing. For racially or culturally mixed characters, the performative aspects of identity are constantly being negotiated and, as a result, code switching is fundamental in a passing narrative. Drag performance involves an element of code switching and ambiguity which suggests a doubleness of identity. Somatextual doubling occurs in the novel *In Search of April Raintree* because April and Cheryl are referred to as sisters who look exactly the same, "almost as identical twins, except for our skin colouring" (106). Within each child there is a further level of doubling signified by their dual heritage and racially hybrid embodiment.

The doubleness at the level of somatextual hybridity is also evident at the plot level. The relationship between April and Cheryl dramatizes April's internal "warring blood"²⁴ as Cheryl becomes the externalized representation of April's indigeneity. This narrative doubling implies that the difference in their skin color is the primary physical characteristic that defines their different paths. These levels of doubling, the ambiguity of the character's racially hybrid soma texts, and the act of passing create narrative tension and involve code switching at the level of characterization, racially hybrid embodiment, and plot development.

Narrative doubling and somatextual mirroring also occur within the novel *Keeper N' Me*. Stanley Raven is Garnet Raven's physical double and represents Garnet's lost indigeneity. The importance of somatextual mirrors has been traced in Chapter Two with reference to the mirroring that many biracial people seek within their family systems and larger social circles. It is also true that people who are visible minorities may seek others who mirror their soma texts. In this novel, Garnet Raven has grown up in white foster homes and consequently longs to meet other people who will look like him and can visually mirror, and consolidate his sense of indigeneity. When Garnet finally meets his brother Stanley Raven he says: "when I looked at this guy it was almost like looking into a mirror except for there being a ponytail where the Afro should have been and a definite absence of funky threads" (34). The doubling of characters in both novels dramatizes the main characters' struggles with indigeneity and also reinforces the theme of the doubleness of racial and cultural hybridity.²⁵

In *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, Jeremiah and Gabriel are brothers but they are not paired in the same way that the siblings in the other novels are. The doubling in this narrative revolves around traditional notions of sibling responsibility at the level of the plot. Jeremiah is the older sibling and is given the responsibility of looking after his brother. Jeremiah's tie to his brother becomes the test of his ability to honour his traditional role as protector of his younger-brother double throughout the novel. This narrative doubling is reinforced by the theme of cultural drag. In addition, Jeremiah's connection to his narrative double signifies his connection to his indigeneity.

April, like Jeremiah, is also responsible for her younger sibling. In both novels, the elder child's ability to honour this responsibility becomes linked to the extent to which he and she is able to maintain their indigeneity. As Jeremiah and April perform drag in order to assimilate, they become further removed from their siblings and less able to protect them. Both Jeremiah and April fail to protect their younger siblings, and their dissociation from their indigeneity results in the eventual death of their siblings. These deaths may be read as Culleton's and Highway's criticism of the price that a culturally or racially hybrid character must pay in order to "pass."

April's racial identity resists stability because her soma text is coded with ambiguity and it occasions a semiotic and narrative destabilization. In addition, when a racially hybrid character, like April, performs racial drag, this doubleness is further complicated. Because her soma text is capable of being read as a signifier of different racial identities by other characters, her body becomes an unstable and complex signifying text. Culturally hybrid characters who perform drag also cause narrative

instability. Therefore the presence of the racially or culturally hybrid characters in these novels causes a perceptual crisis because the character can shift from one racial assignment into another by making use of the ambiguous signifiers of their body (Culleton) and/or by performing racial (Wagamese) or cultural (Highway) drag.²⁶

Marjorie Garber declares, in *Vested Interests*, that stories which focus on racially mixed characters who “pass” create crises in the narrative because they “foreground the impossibility of taxonomy” (274). Each of the central characters in these novels represents the crossing of boundaries whether they be of race, social class or culture. In doing so, their performances of drag threaten to destabilize other types of boundaries and create further narrative crises.²⁷ According to Garber, the crossing of borders is *meant* to evoke a “category crisis” (16). Thus, with April we have a light-skinned Native character who crosses a racial border. In doing so, April reconfigures, for the Canadian context, the image of a light-skinned African American characters who “passed” in order to literally travel across borders in American fiction.

April, Garnet and Jeremiah travel across social and cultural borders meant to demarcate Native and non-Native people. A successful passing narrative depends upon a character’s ability to convince various discursive communities of the authenticity of the drag performance. In other words, successful passing depends upon one’s soma text being read as “real” despite the performative aspect.²⁸ If we understand border crossings to be metaphoric, these drag performers’ movement across borders is an interesting reconfiguration of a border crossing in Canadian terms that, nonetheless, will lead to the kind of crisis that Garber refers to.

Culleton's novel suggests the different ways in which racially hybrid soma texts can be read in different discursive communities and these different readings create instability in the narrative. Although April successfully performs racial drag in the Radcliffe's home and is read as white in this discursive community, in the urban Native community where Cheryl lives, April is read as Native. In this scene April's body changes from being read as white to being read as native. Vizenor refers to this kind of situation-specific indigenizing of identity as a form of becoming "Native by situation" (*Fugitive Poses* 90). April's racialized soma text is clearly read differently in this discursive community. April wonders how her rapists read her racially hybrid soma text: "I wondered how he knew I was part Native. Just because I had long hair?" (128). April's long black hair and the context provide the clue that mark her as Native in this discursive community despite her light-skinned soma text and her ability to perform whiteness in other discursive communities.²⁹

In this scene, April metaphorically becomes her sister Cheryl, who is "Native by countenance" (*Fugitive Poses* 89). April learns too late that while she performs whiteness in her job and within a small circle of white friends, in a different discursive community her soma text is read as Native and her body is transformed from non-Native to Native, as April's body becomes Cheryl's in this rape scene. This transformation suggests that racial essentialisms determine the ways in which one's soma text is read in different discursive communities and also supports Garber's contention that the presence of racially mixed characters who "pass" can create a crisis of interpretation in texts by demonstrating the "impossibility of taxonomy" (274). This narrative crisis at the level of interpreting the

racially hybrid soma text also leads to a crisis at the level of plot when April is mistaken for Cheryl and raped. However, the crisis that April experiences by being mistakenly raped precipitates a movement towards a more clear understanding of her biracial identity.

The rape scene is the start of April's awareness of the duality of her identity and the way in which her body can be read as Native despite its somatextual whiteness. From the rape scene on, Cheryl's presence and her dark racially hybrid soma text increasingly provide April with insight into her own indigeneity. Cheryl, as April's dark double, embodies April's "dark secret" and represents the indigeneity that is concealed behind April's racial drag. Cheryl's soma text becomes a symbol of the "filth" that cannot be washed away, the parents who cannot be killed, and the Native blood that is also within April's body. In the revelation scenes that occur in both discursive communities, Cheryl becomes the catalyst for the "outing" of April's racial drag performances and it is Cheryl whose soma text marks the "tragic mulatto" spiral downward.³⁰ In this respect, the novel suggests that there is an essentialism associated with Nativeness which, when denied, will reveal itself and wreak havoc on the life of the person in denial, despite one's ability to perform racial drag and temporarily pass as white.

Racially and culturally mixed characters that perform a form of drag also evoke and challenge colonial constructs of race. I have addressed the narrative instability that occurs when a racially hybrid character performs racial drag, but I want to extend this analysis by suggesting that characters who perform *lateral racial drag* also evoke a narrative destabilization. In the novel *Keeper N' Me*, Garnet Raven's body may be

understood as a soma text because in his struggles to “pass” in the city, he performs a variety of identities with his “raced” body. Garnet’s lateral racial drag gives him novelty appeal and allows him to be read as non-Native.³¹ At various times he dons clothing and uses specific gestures that enable him to be read as a “Hawaiian, Polynesian, Mexican or Chinese. Anything but Indian” (14). Though he performs racial drag, he is not able to perform whiteness because he can only perform other non-hegemonic races that are encoded as brown.³² Despite his performance of racial drag, his raced body, the soma text of his lateral drag performances, is still coded as non-hegemonic “Other.”

Racial and cultural drag in these novels is also motivated by the internalization of negative stereotypes.³³ Garnet’s lateral racial drag is based on his reaction to negative stereotypes about Native people. Like April, he learns about “Indianness” from the white world. He believes that “Indians [are] lazy, no account, drunken bums, living on welfare, mooching change on street corners and really needing some direction” (13). These stereotypical associations with indigeneity reinforce his shame and self-hatred. As a result, his racial drag performances start to consume his time to such an extent that his attempts to be read as anything other than Native becomes “a full-time occupation” (16). Similarly, April learns about the “native girl syndrome” (Culleton 162) and struggles to perform racial drag in order to avoid falling into that script. Although Cheryl attempts to share her positive view on indigeneity, April rejects this information. Clearly, the negative lessons that both April and Garnet learn about being Native propel them to dissociate from their indigeneity and adopt new personas by performing racial drag.

Garnet's performance of racial drag is distinct from April's in two important ways. Unlike April, Garnet is indelibly marked with brown skin, which always-already links him to the very community he seeks to reject. Garnet explains that he "didn't want to be known as Indian," which to him meant being "[s]carey-looking, dirty, drunk, fightin' in the street or passed out in the alley" (15). In this novel, the stigma associated with being Native is so strong that Garnet decides he "didn't wanna be connected to [Native people] in any way" (15). Garnet prefers to "be anybody from anywhere" (15) as long as it does not mean having his soma text read as Native. Ironically, because he looks like the very people he is attempting to dissociate himself from, his performance of racial drag is much more difficult than April's dissociation from indigeneity because her racially mixed light skin provides her with the privilege to choose to "pass" as white.

Secondly, Garnet's performance of racial drag is unlike April's because it involves performing another racial "Other" that is not a part of the hegemony. While Garnet performs a lateral racial drag, April performs "up" in that her drag performance moves her from a marginal to a hegemonic social position. Garnet plays the "homeless Hawaiian" by using props such as flowered shirts, mirrored sunglasses, a brushcut and a ukulele (15-16). He also becomes "a half Chinese guy" who is a kung fu artist seeking to avenge the death of his mother (16). The closest he gets to performing indigeneity is when he enacts the identity of "the Mexican/Apache boxer" (16). In Wagamese's novel, being encoded as non-white represents an elasticity of racial identity and the possibility of multiple lateral racial drag performances, while in Culleton's novel, being dark-skinned is represented as static and inherently tragic.³⁴

Keeper N' Me is a unique representation of racial drag because it features a lateral racial drag based on the fluidity of race by representing a Native character who, somewhat successfully, passes as Black.³⁵ Garnet finds a comfortable association with performing Blackness through his connection with the blues.³⁶ Eventually, he performs lateral racial drag by cross-appropriating the Black identity of Lonnie Flowers. Garnet explains that he “started dressing like Lonnie and his brothers, accepting their strut and mannerisms and really feeling like [he’d] found where [he] wanted to be in life” (23). After experimenting with other racial drag personas, Garnet finally settles on passing as Black. Garnet assumes that by getting “a brand-new sixty-buck permed Afro” (23), wearing the right clothing and “adopting their strut and mannerisms” (23), he can become Black. At this stage in Garnet’s lateral racial drag performance he still assumes that the external markers of race such as hair, clothing and body language are the essential and defining racial codes.

Later, in addition to looking and sounding Black, Garnet wants to immerse himself within Lonnie’s family in order to become accepted as a Black person. This suggests that Garnet is aware that there is more to being Black than the external codes. However, he is not accepted as Black by other Black people. Although Garnet is able to perform Blackness and immerse himself within a new brown-skinned surrogate family, his racial drag is always understood by them to be a temporary condition that will help him until he finds his own identity. Lonnie tells him that the “only dude you gotta meet is yourself” (18). This sentiment is echoed later by Delma Flowers who reminds Garnet, “You got a home. You got fam’ly. You gotta go there” (28). These statements suggest

that members of the Flowers family recognize the important role that family plays in developing one's sense of identity, and they encourage Garnet to find out who his people are and gain a sense of racial identity through that association.

Wagamese's novel, like Culleton's, suggests that drag performances, whether based on gender or race, are granted value according to the discursive community in which a given performer's soma text is "read." This aspect of the representation of race in these novels highlights the importance of somatextual cues and the power of the racialized gaze. Garnet is able to convince others of his non-Native identities, despite his sometimes ludicrous racial drag performances. However, Lonnie Flowers' racial gaze instantly dissolves the masquerade. Lonnie reads Garnet's soma text as Native despite Garnet's attempt to perform drag. Lonnie says, "Man, look at you. You be havin' them great big Sasquatch cheekbones, squinty little kung fu eyes and you got like two square feeta unused denim where your butt should be" (18). According to Lonnie's notions of the physical markers of race, Garnet's soma text is read as Native, despite his lateral drag performance as a Hawaiian. Lonnie bluntly states: "Damn, one look tell people you a redskin man" (18). This scene suggests the way in which the racialized gaze "reads" race in essentialist ways despite the cross-appropriation of gestures and costume involved in the racial drag performance.

In order to negotiate various discursive communities and "pass," both April and Garnet develop a hypersensitivity to the racialized gaze. April's performance of racial drag makes her extraordinarily aware of the white gaze because her successful performance depends on her soma text being read as white by white people.³⁷ She begins

to notice the white gaze when she is coded as “Native by situation” (*Fugitive Poses* 90) through her association with Nancy and Cheryl in restaurants. April states: “I began to notice what being native was like in middle-class surroundings” (98). April’s hypersensitivity to the white gaze is based on her desire to conceal her indigeneity. Her drag performance demands a vigilant awareness of the ways in which her body becomes “raced” according to the ways in which different discursive communities read her soma text.

When April decides to pass “for a pure white person” (46), her sensitivity to the power of the white gaze makes her wonder: “How was I ever going to pass for a white person when I had a Métis sister?” (47). It becomes clear to April that Cheryl’s soma text signifies Native blood that could invalidate April’s drag performance. These examples indicate April’s growing awareness of the ways in which bodies are “raced” and read in different discursive communities and by association with other siblings.³⁸

Both April and Jeremiah are reminded of their past and indigeneity by their siblings’ soma texts. However, Garnet Raven has no sibling to represent indigeneity so his struggle to come to terms with his identity is a solo journey. Garnet’s race has been “erased” by the foster home experience; he enters his drag performance as if he were a tabula rasa. By the time Garnet makes it back to the reserve he is lost and dissociated from being Native: “[at] twenty-five years old I never figured on bein’ no Indian [. . .] I didn’t remember a thing about my earlier life and when I disappeared alone into the foster homes I disappeared completely from the Indian world” (12).³⁹ This enforced assimilation causes psychic tension because, as he explains, being raised “in white

homes, going to all white schools, playing with all white kids can get a guy to thinking and reacting all-white himself after a while" (12). These lessons about how to perform racial drag are problematic because Garnet, unlike April Raintree, is marked as non-white. As Garnet explains: "With noone pitching in any information I just figured I was a brown white guy" (12). It is this forced assimilation to perform whiteness that is at odds with his external appearance and marks a crisis of identity that occasions his lateral racial drag performances.

As outlined earlier, Garnet's brown soma text enables him to pass for different racial identities. April's soma text is also read differently in different discursive communities. The white children and teenagers at April's school perform whiteness by rejecting and taunting April who is classified, in this context, as non-white. April learns early that "[s]kin coloring didn't matter in this school. Everyone treated [her] like a full-blooded Indian" (74-75). April Raintree is not able to perform racial drag and "pass" as white until she is out of school. These lessons about "raced" bodies are internalized by April, who later equates a rejection of Métis culture with performing whiteness.

In addition, April's racial drag is prompted by her rejection of her indigeneity. April describes being caught in a bind because "[k]nowing the other side, the Métis side, didn't make [her] feel any better. It just reinforced [her] belief that if [she] could assimilate into white society, [she] wouldn't have to be like this for the rest of [her] life" (78). These statements indicate April's belief that the proper execution of the performance of whiteness requires a dissociation from her indigeneity. April learns that the rigid dictates of performing whiteness require a separation of white and Native.⁴⁰

Once April has learned that her successful racial drag performance necessitates the destruction of her indigeneity, she begins the process of purging it from her identity. When she arrives at the St. Bernadette's Academy she develops her racial drag more completely by symbolically killing her parents and she reconstructs her identity in two ways: 1) by denying that she is Native, and 2) by claiming that her parents were killed in a car accident.⁴¹ April hopes that Cheryl will also "forget" about their parents and "forget that she was Métis" (84). April assumes that through "killing" her parents by denying their existence, she will be able to perform a more complete racial drag so she can "make it" in the white world.

When April has concealed her indigenous genealogy by symbolically killing her parents and denying the existence of her sister, she begins the process of restructuring her identity by performing racial drag in order to "pass" as white. April decides to literally study the performance of whiteness by "reading books on proper etiquette" to prepare her for what she imagines will be a "promising future in white society" (98). Restructuring her identity from Métis to white also includes changing her name. After meeting Bob Radcliffe and successfully passing as white, April realizes that her marriage to Bob will enable her to erase the Nativeness of her name. Fred Wah suggests that the "code-switching" involved in choosing European names "indicates the camouflage possibilities of the name" for the racially hybrid subject (*Faking* 79,82). For April, this name change symbolizes her baptism into her new non-Native identity—the final aspect of her racial drag performance.⁴²

Although April and Garnet *choose* to change their names as part of their performance of racial drag, in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* Jeremiah and Gabriel are *forced* to change their names. For Gabriel and Jeremiah, baptism into their new identities is a traumatic aspect of their enforced assimilation into residential school. Jeremiah's baptism into a new identity is symbolized by a change of name when he is transformed from his earlier identity as Champion to Jeremiah. This change marks the beginning of his performance of cultural drag and his shift from the identity of the traditional Native rural character named Champion to the Christianized identity of Jeremiah.⁴³ In this novel, the destruction of indigeneity also involves altering the external markings of indigeneity through shaving their heads. They are further punished for using their language, and indoctrinated into Roman Catholicism in order to bleach out their Native cultural identity.

April needs more than a camouflaged name to convincingly perform racial drag. April's indoctrination into whiteness and performance of racial drag is further reinforced and polished by Mrs. Radcliffe, who teaches her on a weekly basis how to perform middle-class whiteness.⁴⁴ Mrs. Radcliffe constantly gives April advice about a more seamless performance of middle class whiteness and, to achieve this end goal, she takes April shopping and twice a week to hair salons. Mrs. Radcliffe instructs April to repeat the social patterns that reinforce her sense of herself as white. April's rehearsal of racial drag includes participating in social norms that are based on social class in order to substantiate her racial drag performance of whiteness. Clearly this racial drag performance highlights the performativity of race.

Performing whiteness in this novel is related to the theme of performing the urban Indian, a form of cultural drag that appears in much First Nations literature. In *Kiss of the Fur Queen* performing the urban Indian might be considered a form of cultural passing that has parallels to the act of racial passing. The two siblings in this novel, by making the transition from their rural Cree culture into the predominantly white city and culture, represent a kind of cultural “passing.” Highway explores the tensions between assimilation and indigeneity by following Jeremiah’s transition from rural caribou hunter to Europeanized pianist and eventually to urban Native artist. For the central characters in each novel, passing involves dissociating from the cultural background and isolated rural beginnings that mark them as the non-hegemonic “Other.” However, because passing in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* is not voluntary it must be read within the context of their enforced assimilation into urban and Christian identities.

In Highway’s novel, passing occasions a crisis of identity. In order to “pass” in the city Jeremiah is forced to continually dissociate himself from the Main Street Indians who are living in drunkenness and despair. Reminders of urban Indian despair and a desire to be accepted in the white upper-class society compel Jeremiah to reconfigure his own skin to be “as white as parchment” (124). These three novels, *In Search of April Raintree*, *Keeper N’ Me* and *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, suggest that the main character’s rejection of indigeneity is based on lessons about tragic urban indigeneity. This form of self-hatred and internalized lessons about the worthlessness of indigeneity become catalysts for each characters’ desire to perform drag as a means of assimilation with non-Natives.

Jeremiah's form of passing is clearly an example of a Vizenorian "survivance" (15) which stems from shame, self-hatred and a desire to assimilate into the white urban society.⁴⁵ Jeremiah's cultural drag involves crossing race and class barriers as a classical pianist. Jeremiah performs whiteness through the piano recitals, and recalls that he "worked so hard at transforming himself into a perfect little 'transplanted European'—anything to survive" (124). Thus, an examination of passing in First Nations literature must also consider passing in the context of the relocation of Native people from rural to urban settings and the kinds of struggles with issues of class and race that this represents for Native people trying to, or being forced to, assimilate.⁴⁶

In both *Kiss of the Fur Queen* and *In Search of April Raintree*, the rejection of a sibling is linked with the rejection of indigeneity that results from a character's desire to pass. As mentioned previously, the narrative doubling of these siblings structures the tension between the themes of assimilation and indigeneity in which the rejection of the sibling double results in further fragmentation of the character's sense of indigeneity. The relationship between Jeremiah and Gabriel dramatizes Jeremiah's internal crises in that Jeremiah's pact to protect his brother is connected with traditional teachings, his past and his heritage. Rejecting this responsibility to protect Gabriel is also a rejection of their father's advice. For both April and Jeremiah the rejection of their sibling symbolizes their rejection of their own indigeneity represented by the soma texts of their respective siblings. The resolution of their identity crises does not occur until they have reunited with their families, accepted the indigeneity of their siblings, and honoured their traditional roles as caretakers of their siblings.⁴⁷ The Garberian notion of a narrative crisis

that occurs at the level of taxonomy in relation to these racially and culturally hybrid characters, is represented at the level of plot by the crisis between the siblings, and the crisis that the characters' ability to pass through different social borders occasions.

Jeremiah's class passing, like April's class and race passing, is a consequence of being removed from indigenous communities. While Jeremiah performs cultural drag as a classical pianist, he is isolated from other Native people and dissociated from his own indigeneity. In the final climactic performance, Jeremiah's relationship to his traditional past and his relationship with Gabriel are at stake. Jeremiah knew "that he had to play or his relationship with Gabriel was history and he'd be back in the alleyways of Winnipeg" (267). Jeremiah's synthesis of the piano with his indigeneity occurs when he "leapt from his bench, and with a beaded drumstick pounded at the bass strings of the instrument" making the piano into "a pow wow drum" (267). Through this hybrid performance, Jeremiah achieves a renewed connection to his indigeneity by reconnecting with his father's advice: "Through the brothers, as one, and through a chamber as vast as the north, an old man's voice passed. 'My son,' it sighed, 'with these magic weapons, make a new world'" (267). Jeremiah honors these teachings by literally performing his urban *and* Native identity in this climactic performance. Although Jeremiah has successfully performed cultural drag and passed as an urban pianist, his psychic tension is not relieved until he can acknowledge and express his indigeneity through his art.

The theatricality of race is reinforced in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* by setting the climactic resolution between the brothers in the form of a theatrical production.

Highway's novel suggests the possibility of resolving the tension between assimilation

and indigeneity through Jeremiah's stage performance with his brother. The performance is represented as a liberating and syncretic fusion of both indigenous and European art forms.⁴⁸ Jeremiah develops a way to be both Native and urban through the conventions of the stage, conventions I explore in the next chapter. In this novel, however, Highway suggests a resolution to the tension that such hybrid identities occasion by using the rhetoric and intertext of stage and performance to bring about the conflation of these identities. The fusion of theatre and dance, of indigenous traditions and European musical traditions, and the uniting of the brothers on stage in this climactic performance all signify the hybridity that is at the centre of this novel. The *performative* aspects of racial identity are represented here in the context of a theatrical *performance*. I develop this concept more fully in the next chapter through my analysis of plays that feature racial hybridity and performances that highlight the performativity of race through a number of different theatrical conventions.

Passing narratives often reach a climax at the point when the racial drag performer's "true" identity is revealed. Of course, for the greatest dramatic effect, the revelation of identity occurs after the person has managed to pass. This increases the dramatic spiral downward that is the result of the revelation of the *true* identity of the character who has attempted to pass. Such a tragic fall from greatness reinforces racial essentialisms and discourages attempts to "pass." In this respect, *Kiss of the Fur Queen* defies the usual trajectory for the character who passes in that the final performance in which the brothers are reunited with their traditions represents a syncretism that resolves

the tension between Jeremiah's indigeneity and his assimilation and is *not* the start of his spiral downwards.

Culleton, like Highway, defies the usual narrative trajectory associated with passing narratives. Initially, Culleton's narrative follows the usual pattern for "passing narratives" in that the dramatic revelation that marks April as a tragic figure occurs once she has successfully "passed" as white, married Bob Radcliffe and is read within her new discursive community as white.⁴⁹ When Cheryl comes to visit, April is disturbed by the white gaze and "the questioning stares" that she and her sister receive. These "questioning stares" are in contrast to the adoring stares that the white Heather Langdon receives (107). Cheryl's presence, and specifically her brown skin, "outs" April's racial drag performance by revealing her indigeneity.⁵⁰ Cheryl's raced body at the Radcliffe's dinner party functions at the narrative level as a soma text which is read in this discursive community as the revelation of April's indigeneity and her social class.

While living at the Radcliffe's and passing as a white woman, April begins to realize that performing whiteness entails a complete rejection of her indigeneity. She also realizes that she would be living with the fear that her identity as a Métis woman would be revealed if her sister Cheryl were to appear. Her worst fear of having her indigeneity exposed occurs when April arrives at the Radcliffe house. Interestingly, Cheryl's presence unmasks Mrs. Radcliffe's prejudice and outrage at April's ability to pass. Mrs. Radcliffe's outrage may be due to April's successful performance of racial drag which calls into question the racial categories that Mrs. Radcliffe has relied upon

and is another example of the kind of crisis that results from boundary crossing that Garber identifies in *Vested Interests* (1992).

In addition to worrying about Cheryl “outing” her drag performance, as a racially mixed woman who is passing, April fears that the “dark secret” of her indigeneity might also surface in the soma texts of her future children.⁵¹ This revelation scene exposes April’s drag performance but it *also* reveals something about Mrs. Radcliffe’s fear her bloodline being contaminated by April’s indigeneity. However, in the revelation scene, April is *also* outraged by what is revealed about Mrs. Radcliffe’s blood. April tells Mrs. Radcliffe: “I wouldn’t want the seed of *your* blood passed on to my children” (116), (my emphasis). In this moment, April inverts the usual trajectory that follows from the revelation of the mixed race person’s dark secret by asserting *her* relief that *she* did not become contaminated with the Radcliffe’s white blood.⁵²

In contrast to these dramatic revelations of hybrid identities, Garnet Raven in the novel *Keeper N' Me* experiences a gradual revelation of his “true” identity. He successfully passes into the culture of the city, performs a lateral racial drag, is mistakenly read as a criminal and consequently ends up in jail. Garnet’s performance of drag is not as self-conscious as April’s but rather stems from not knowing anything about his ethnicity because he is an adopted child. His biological family “outs,” or reveals, his lateral racial drag performance by declaring his Indianness through the letters they send to him in jail. These letters confirm Garnet’s indigeneity, but he is not fully integrated as a Native man until he returns to his community, learns how to be an Indian on the reserve, and sheds his Black city persona.⁵³ He gradually comes to accept that indigeneity

is a learned process based primarily on one's Native blood-quantum but reinforced by one's culture and family.

After the initial epistolary revelation of his *true* identity, Garnet Raven's lateral racial drag performances gradually disappear and he eventually learns how to perform Indianness from Keeper, an elder who empathizes with Garnet's plight. Garnet's identity is revealed to him gently through his conversations and meetings with Keeper, his socialization on the reserve, and simply through living in close proximity with his family. Keeper says that Garnet is one of the many Native children who "[d]isappeared. Got raised up all white but still carryin' brown skin" (37). Keeper espouses a Native essentialist belief regarding indigeneity; he explains the following traditional belief to Garnet by stating an indigenous essentialism: "See, us we know you can't make a beaver from a bear. Nature don't work that way. Always gotta be what the Creator made you to be" (37). In Keeper's view of indigeneity, victims of foster homes or other forms of assimilation "[g]ot the Indyun all scraped offa their inside" (39) and need a slow introduction into tradition to restore their latent indigenous interiority. This representation of the indigenous body suggests that there is an interiority to Native identity that depends upon both blood-quantum *and* acculturation into indigeneity.

Garnet continually learns from his Native community that he *must* appear to be Native and perform an indigenous identity. When he steps out of the cab with his "lime green spangly platform-shoed leg" he notices "a loud gasp all around the cab" and eventually "fifty heads all leaning in gazing at [his] balloon-sleeved shirt" (34). This Native community reads through Garnet's racial drag and sees his use of clothing,

language and the external codes of a Black city persona as a clownish performance. They tease him and call him “a walkin’ fishin’ lure” (35) despite his attempt to claim his version of urban Blackness as his true identity. Finally, Garnet is unable to continue to perform Blackness because his racial drag is read by the Native gaze as inauthentic.

Garnet’s baptism into performing indigeneity involves switching the codes of his former Black persona in order to align his genealogy with accepted external indigenous codes: “My ma had cut my Afro off about three days after I was home and around that time I was a scruffy-looking Indian” (62). Throughout the narrative Garnet is represented as destined to become that which he was born to be: a Native man living with his family on the reserve. This narrative pull toward Garnet’s homecoming and indigenization suggests that the theatricality of performing racial drag and passing as an “Other” is a symptom of a lost identity. Garnet’s identity crisis is not resolved through his performances of lateral drag, and in the novel his racial drag is represented as only a temporary solution to his identity crisis. Keeper tells him that “[i]t’s tradition that makes you Indyun” (38). Garnet’s identity crisis is resolved in this novel by learning how to be an Indian, inside and out.

Garnet’s assimilation into indigeneity includes an introduction to external encodings, behaviours and the interiority of indigeneity. He also learns how to engage in a variety of indigenous activities through communal activities and family ties. One of the lessons that Garnet learns on the reserve is how to perform Indianness for whites by pretending not to speak English and how to make up “traditional” stories in order to outwit the white tourists who come onto the reserve, in a “bait the tourist” game (83).

As a result of this indigenization, Garnet quickly realizes that the external codes that he assumes define indigeneity, such as wearing braids and buckskin, are insufficient for his assimilation into this Native community.⁵⁴ Through his indoctrination into indigeneity, one of the things that Garnet learns is that his community values a Native interiority, which is represented as having an Indian heart. Finally Garnet concludes that it “[d]on’t much matter what you look like nowadays but’s still important to carry an Indian heart inside you” (89). Garnet understands the process of assimilation as told to him by Keeper. In short, he learns that he needs to strive to get “[his] insides in tune with [his] outside” (90). The representation of an essential Native interiority in this novel reinforces the essentialist notion that one *should* perform race according to one’s genealogy and external appearance.

This essential internal indigeneity is also represented as the ability to have a sense of humour, which is something that Garnet learns from Keeper. Keeper teaches Garnet that “laughin’s about as Indian as bannock and lard” and Garnet concludes that “it’s that humour more than anything that’s allowed them [Native people] to survive all the crap that history threw their way” (40). Garnet states: “The first thing most people notice about us is how we are laughing most of the time. It doesn’t really matter whether we’re dressed up in traditional finery or in bush jackets and gumboots, seems like a smile and big roaring guffaw is everywhere with us” (42). Again, Garnet learns that the external encodings which are read as Native by others are not as important or essential as a Native interiority. In the novel, he is both “Native by countenance” and “Native by genealogy” (*Fugitive Poses* 89) but does not have the essential Native interiority that Keeper

introduces him to in the latter half of the novel. Eventually, he is reincorporated into his community and his indigeneity is embraced in a way that is in accordance with his countenance and the context of the reserve.⁵⁵

This essentialist view of Native identity is in keeping with the indigenous ideologies represented in *In Search of April Raintree* and *Kiss of the Fur Queen*. Ultimately, despite the characters' ability to perform racial or cultural drag, the protagonist is not at peace until he/she accepts and assimilates the indigeneity that has been denied. For Jeremiah, an acknowledgement of his indigeneity takes the form of celebrating his cultural heritage and infusing his creative art with these elements. The ending of *Kiss of the Fur Queen* suggests a way in which a character may utilize indigeneity within the context of the urban setting in order to pass. Such an ending challenges the essentialism of tragic urban Indianness.

While Vizenor suggests that "Natives are ever and again the national allegories of discoveries, decimation, dispossession, dominance and tragic victimry" (*Fugitive Poses* 70), the fact that *Kiss of the Fur Queen* and *Keeper N' Me* feature successful passing suggests the possibility of heroic Native characterization in literature. While Jeremiah is able to achieve a hybrid identity in the city, Garnet Raven in *Keeper N' Me* finds the solution to his identity crisis through returning to the reservation, his family and his traditional culture. Garnet's homecoming resolves the tension between his genealogy, which is Native, and his drag performances, which are mostly non-Native.

April's passing represents the possibility of performing whiteness that is available to light-skinned mixed race people. In *Keeper N' Me*, although Garnet is not coded as a

racial hybrid, he is read in these discursive communities as someone who is passing for something he is not. Jeremiah's passing represents a heroic fusion of cultural hybridity and a synthesis of the traditional and the urban, European and Native, even though he is not represented as a racially mixed character. In this respect, passing is represented in this novel as a temporary solution but not as the final resolution to identity crises occasioned by racism. In each of these novels, an essential blood tie to indigeneity resolves the characters' identity crises. All three novels suggest there is something within indigeneity that beckons an individual to return to his roots whether they be in the form of a blood relative (April), traditional music and teachings (Jeremiah) or a return to a Native community in which all aspects of indigeneity are learned (Garnet).

These novels suggest that both Native and non-Native race essentialisms inform indigenous people's notions of identity. All of these novels document the importance of family, tradition, and culture for the formation of a positive indigenous identity. These novels also suggest that for Native people struggling with assimilation, dissociating from one's family leads to further alienation from one's indigeneity. This belief may be viewed as a Native essentialism regarding identity.

In these novels drag is represented as a means of addressing the tension between assimilation and indigeneity and also as a strategy that can further alienate an individual from his or her indigeneity. In this respect, these writers challenge the notion that indigeneity is static and necessarily tragic but also stress an ideology that suggests that once one is born Native one *must* accept the social codes and mannerisms that are associated with being an indigenous person. By using racial and cultural drag to present a

range of responses to assimilation, these writers reveal that indigeneity is learned and maintained through the complex process of socialization and acculturation.

The resolution of these different indigenous identity crises reveals much about the racial essentialism that the writers are representing. The central characters' attempts to pass foreground the tension between urban and rural indigeneity, assimilation vs. reconstructing indigeneity, and the differences between marginal and hegemonic populations. Passing, according to Sollors, can be looked upon as comic or tragic depending on the ending of a narrative. He suggests that "[v]ersions of the tragic mode tend to have endings in irresolvable conflicts and often in death—frequently violent death inflicted by others, suicide, or heartbreak" (337).⁵⁶ In passing narratives the racially mixed character is often coded as a transgressor and associated with violence especially when the character "passes" or performs racial drag.⁵⁷ Both Garnet and April's ability to pass is associated with the real or symbolic death of their siblings. Jeremiah's cultural passing in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* causes a dissociation from his brother that eventually leads to Gabriel's death; this death may function symbolically as the price that Jeremiah must pay for his homophobia and "cultural passing."

April's decision to raise her sister's child, Henry Lee, is a move towards acknowledging her indigeneity but her passing has cost her the life of her sister. Patricia Riley argues that biracial offspring are often "portrayed in literature as doomed, defective, dangerous and double-crossed by virtue of the genetic contribution of the Indian parent" (175). In the novel, *In Search of April Raintree*, April is not successful in performing racial drag but she does survive and decide to raise her nephew. In this way

the narrative challenges what Riley describes as the usual trajectory of the doomed and despised half-blood.

These novels present marginalized characters who are reacting to the impact of colonial forces of assimilation. North American histories of slavery and colonization have led to physical and cultural dislocations for many indigenous people and people of colour. Such dislocations inform a heterogeneity of performances of drag in response to the tensions between indigeneity and assimilation. Identity crises, resulting from postcolonial effects ranging from adoption to foster care to residential school, are resolved through a character's use of racial or cultural drag. There are a number of narrative crises that stem from ambiguous somatexts (April), lateral racial drag performances (Garnet), and cultural drag performances (Jeremiah).

It is clear from examining these novels that the way in which this performance is read depends upon the ways in which discursive communities read one's soma text. The conclusions of these Native passing narratives are suggestive of the ways in which racial essentialisms and the forces of assimilation are dramatized through the drag performances of the Native character who is culturally or racially mixed. I would like to propose racial drag, cultural drag and lateral racial drag as new critical terms that address central features in Canadian passing narratives because they allow one to analyze the racially and/or culturally mixed character who chooses like April and Garnet, or is forced, like Jeremiah, to perform a specific identity in order to assimilate. These passing narratives are clearly framed within the Canadian context of the enforced assimilation of indigenous people. Although the character *types* and narrative trajectories have some

similarities with the ones found in American passing narratives, they are nuanced in ways that signify Canadian historical conditions and these characters represent a specifically Canadian demographic of marginalized indigenous communities.

The theatricality of race and the compulsory norms associated with racial identity that I have identified in this chapter can have utility when applied to the analysis of other Canadian passing narratives. These types and the narrative uses of racial and cultural drag can be further examined through critical analysis of the existence of racial and cultural drag in *other* contemporary First Nations and/or Canadian passing narratives. It may be that Canadian passing narratives explore different trajectories and different resolutions to passing that are uniquely Canadian. In the next chapter I will extend my analysis of the performativity of race by looking at the different theatrical means by which racially hybrid performers and characters address racially hybrid embodiment and the power of the racialized gaze when racial hybridity is staged.

All of the work that I analyze in this dissertation addresses the signifying nature of the racially hybrid body, draws attention to the power of the racialized gaze, and addresses the notion of passing. These elements unite these works crossgenerically and crossracially. In the autobiographies I address in Chapter Two, writers often refer to the centrality of the racially hybrid soma text and represent it as a unique form of embodiment by drawing attention to the racialized gaze and different “readings” of this soma text. In this chapter I suggest that many fictional accounts of racial hybridity also focus on these two elements. I identified these elements in these primary texts and extended my argument in this chapter by analyzing the ways in which writers create

dramatic tension and offer alternate possibilities for racial identity by involving the racially or culturally hybrid character in the performance of drag. However, it is in the performance of the dramatic text that the embodiment of the biracial soma text is most clearly physicalized, rendered more vivid, and draws attention to the multiple signifying nature of racial hybridity, because the *performativity* of race is addressed through *performance*.

CHAPTER FOUR: DRAMA

Staging Racial Hybridity

My mother is a white supremacist. I am Black.
 (Ewen, "an understanding of brown," 5)

My father is a cowboy and my mother is an Indian. What does that make me? A
 Halfbreed!! Where do I belong?
 (Kane, *Confessions*, 294)

Do I look Mohawk?
Shows the audience both sides of her profile.
 (Evans, "She Stands Still," 3)

Ovide: I adore cosmo mosaics-rainbows-of women:
 Their peach-copper hair, their plum-cocoa skin,
 Their almond-amber eyes that are an eyeful,
 Their beauty surpassing everything beautiful.
 (Clarke, *Québécoisité*, 54)

In the contemporary Canadian context, playwrights have increasingly written and staged plays that focus on the racial hybridity of the central character. This chapter's opening quotes suggest that the racially hybrid soma text, the racialized gaze and the concept of racial drag are also central to representations of racial hybridity in drama. These elements are evident in autobiographical and fictional representations of racial hybridity with one very important difference that stems from the genre of drama and the dynamic of performance. In performance, the notion of the racially hybrid soma text as a signifier is rendered more visible and the racialized gaze is manifest in the audience-actor viewing relations during the performance itself.

The plays that I examine in this chapter have not been analyzed together as work that represents racial hybridity, in part because a crossracial methodology is not a common approach in the analysis of drama.¹ In addition, some of these plays have not been published, or have only recently been published, which accounts for their absence in the critical discourse on Canadian theatre. I start with my analysis by addressing plays that are based on autobiographical source material (Kane, Ewen and Evans) in which the playwright is also performing as the central character. Then I move on to address rewrites of the "tragic half-breed" (Taylor, Mojica), and the "tragic mulatto" story (Clarke), and finally end this chapter with an analysis of a new non-white paradigm for racial hybridity (Clarke). In each case I place the soma text of the biracial character at the center of the discussion and explore the physical and ideological ramifications of this form of embodiment. In this chapter I shift my focus from the biracial writer/actor in autobiographical plays to the use of racial hybridity as a character trope in fictional plays.

These plays are distinct from other Canadian plays because of the centrality of the racially hybrid soma text. In discussing each play I address four central facets that are present in autobiographical and fictional plays that feature racially hybrid characters: 1) the racialized gaze and its impact on viewing relations between actor and audience; 2) the effect(s) that the representation of primary, secondary, and tertiary trauma associated with the racially hybrid character has on the audience; 3) the signifying nature of the racially hybrid body on stage and; 4) the implications that this form of embodiment has for a director in terms of casting decisions.

In autobiographical plays, the production of identity in performance is doubly suggestive because the actor plays *a role* as a racially hybrid character on stage and is simultaneously enacting the performativity of race as a racially hybrid Canadian. In the autobiographical performance, the truth claims of the racially hybrid writer are legitimized through the display of the racially hybrid body on stage.² Other playwrights have used fiction to represent racial hybridity as a trope in order to comment on racial essentialisms and/or rewrite “tragic mulatto” or “tragic half-breed” narratives. When I address the fictional representation of racial hybridity in drama, I analyze the ways in which a playwright draws attention to the racial hybridity of the character and the impact of the racialized gaze in order to highlight the performativity of race.

In this chapter I map the distinctive ways in which each of these playwrights stages racial hybridity, revises history and/or addresses the soma text, the racialized gaze, and racial drag in order to assess the effect that racial hybridity has on the performance of the play itself. These plays “write back” in ways that are similar to the primary work that

I analyze in earlier chapters in that all of this work ultimately constructs both racially hybrid identities and communities.

The powerful role of the post-colonial body on stage marks a difference between the representation of racial hybridity in drama and in other genres. For a clarification of this difference I turn to Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins who argue in *Post-Colonial Drama* (1996) that “narrative writing tends to erase the gender and race of its authors and protagonists through its production as an artefact of predominantly western cultures, performance centralizes the physical and socio-cultural specificities of its participants” (204). These writers also suggest that performance differs from the written narrative because the “constraints and oppressions” that the body endures can be “visually displayed rather than simply described” (221). In their analysis of post-colonial drama Tompkins and Gilbert devote a chapter to the power of the post-colonial body as a signifier and claim that its “ability to move, cover up, reveal itself, and even ‘fracture’ on stage provides it with many possible sites for decolonisation” (204). These features of drama distinguish the *mode* of representing racial hybridity from the representations of racial hybridity that map racial hybridity through the written word.

In this chapter I pay close attention to the “corporeal signifiers” that these playwrights and performers utilize and the different means that a performer may utilize to contest “its stereotyping and representation by others” in their insistence on the importance of self-representation by bringing the physical presence of the racially hybrid body to the stage (204). This work, understood in the frame of postcolonial drama, is part of the “oppositional process of *embodiment* whereby the colonized creates his/her own

subjectivity ascribes more flexible, culturally-laden and multivalent delineations to the body, rather than circumscribing it within an imposed, imperialist calculation of otherness” (205). In this respect the post-colonial stage “offers opportunities to recuperate the colonized subject’s body...and to transform its signification and its subjectivity” (205)

In addition to the transformational potential in staging post-colonial drama, this work creates a new sense of community for marginalized subjects who can see themselves onstage. As Alan Filewood has argued, “the theatre manifests the constructedness of the community which it redefines in the process of performance” (41).³ The central thematic links between these plays suggest that these playwrights are doing just that, constructing a community and creating discourse around racial identity by staging racial hybridity.

There has been a history of representing the racially hybrid body on stage in Canada, and I would be remiss not to mention the importance of two early Canadian representations of racial hybridity: the staged recitals by the poet/performer E. Pauline Johnson, and the play “Birthright” written in 1905 by Constance Lindsay Skinner. I will briefly address these early representations of racial hybridity before turning to contemporary Canadian plays that also stage racial hybridity. In the Canadian context, the most blatant historical example of the use of racial hybridity in performance is Johnson. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Johnson donned specific costumes in order to perform as both Native woman and (white) Victorian woman on stage (**Illustrations 10 and 11**).⁴ Carole Gerson and Veronica Strong-Boag’s seminal work,

Paddling her Own Canoe: The Time and Texts of E. Pauline Johnson (2000), represents a postcolonial retrieval of an important but obscured literary figure and also highlights the performative aspects of racial hybridity in early Canadian context. Recent work on Johnson hints at the cultural context in which her hybrid subjectivity was read.⁵



Illustration 10



Illustration 11


Pauline E. Johnson, arguably one of the most important hybrid Canadian performers, utilized costume to great effect in her performances and recitals in order to visually represent her different identities on stage. This first image shows Johnson in the evening dress that she wore as a costume for the first half of her recitals (1897). The second image shows the costume that she developed later in her performance career. Her autobiographical pact with the largely white audience would have been interestingly configured in the two halves of her performance as a result of this multiplicity. These photographs appear in Gerson, Strong-Boag.

It is interesting to consider how the largely white audience responded to Johnson's performance of her own racial hybridity. Gerson and Strong-Boag state that by 1861, when Johnson was born, "something of a Mixed-race aristocracy had emerged in North America. This multi-heritage people were a diverse group about whom Natives, as well as Euro-North Americans, harbored ambivalence" (31). Thus, Johnson's audience's "reading" of her soma text would have been informed by the presence of this demographic, discussions of the Métis people as mixed race Canadians, and the racial ideologies of the day.

In addition to addressing the reception of her performances, Gerson and Strong-Boag's research on Johnson's life and their analysis of the mixed-race characters in Johnson's writing suggest the significance of gender and the ways in which gender informed race relations.⁶ Johnson's racial hybridity and gender were focal points in all forms of her artistry and "[t]owards the end of 1892 she established the practice of appearing for the first half of her program in buckskin, and the second in evening dress. This overt display of both sides of her parentage enabled her to create a unique stage persona, distinguishing the strands of her background in a manner possible only in performance, while maintaining conventions of gender and class" (113).⁷ The advertising for her recitals and performances increasingly capitalized on her indigeneity (**Illustration 12**). As the research on Johnson's performances and poetry recitals suggests, writing that represents racial hybridity often signifies many of the cultural ideologies around blood and nation, as well as signifying a variety of legal and socio-cultural ideas about interraciality.⁸ Although I focus specifically on contemporary

Canadian plays and performances in this chapter, I refer to Johnson's performances here in order to remind the reader that the signifying nature of racially hybrid bodies is always conditioned by the racial ideologies that are specific to the time and place of the performance.⁹

Tekahionwake,
(MISS E. PAULINE JOHNSON)
THE IROQUOIS INDIAN POET-ENTERTAINER,
*In Native Indian Buckskin Costume, presenting her own poems of Red
Indian Life and Legends, from her own Book*
“THE WHITE WAMPUM.”



THE TIMES,
LONDON, JULY 17TH, 1906.

Miss Pauline Johnson, whose native name is Tekahionwake, is descended from the chiefs of the Iroquois race of American Indians, and comes before the London public as a reciter of the stories and legends of her race. She dresses in native costume, and she has herself written her poems in clear and effective verse, which, when spoken in the vivid manner, which is characteristic of her, is dramatic and moving. At her recital, at St. George's Hall yesterday, she gave "Ojibwa" and "A Legend of the Appala," and each in its way was a fine piece of declamation. "As it was in the beginning" is no less effective, though its mixture of bitterness and tragedy makes it less pleasant. Mr. Walter McRae gave recitations and sketches in the quaint French-Canadian dialect and was successful in all, though perhaps he was at his best in the little poem "Bened a Plouffe."

Mr. Walter McRae, Humorist,
In Selections from Dr. Drummond's "Habitant" Folk Lore Stories of French Canada.
QUAINT, HUMOROUS, AND PATHETIC.
Agents KEITH PROWSE & Co., 167 New Bond Street, London, W., and Branches.

Illustration 12. Advertising for Johnson's recital/performances increasingly stressed her indigeneity. Note the name and costume she used to represent her indigeneity. This photograph of the advertisement appears in Gerson, Strong-Boag.

In addition to the performances of Johnson, the hitherto unpublished play “Birthright,” written by Skinner and set in British Columbia is one of the most important early Canadian plays to address racial hybridity. The play was not performed in Canada until 2003, is not yet published and, unfortunately, the developing field of critical mixed race studies in Canada has not been able to take this play into consideration. Consequently it has been completely lost to Canadian literary studies.¹⁰ But “Birthright” is an important work for the purposes of my research because it is an early example of a Canadian play that deals with the phenomenon of a racially-mixed character who *specifically* addresses her own biracial subjectivity within the narrative.¹¹

Most importantly, the dramatic revelations, the Native and non-Native tensions, and the irony within this play are rooted in the racial hybridity of Precious, the central “mixed blood” Native character.¹² This play is an early example of racial hybridity being dramatized and supports my argument that when racially hybrid characters are represented in drama the unique aspects of their soma texts and the power of the racialized gaze are central themes. Because the play was not performed in Canada until 2003, there is not any critical discourse on how the racially hybrid character was read in Canadian contexts. These two early representations of racial hybridity highlight many of the issues central to my own analysis of contemporary Canadian plays that feature racially hybrid characters.

The genre of drama provides some unique looking-relations between audience and actor. In the performance of autobiographical plays, the writer/actor is both *performing* the role of a racially hybrid character and using his/her own racially hybrid

soma text, and autobiographical source material to comment on the *performativity* involved in racially hybrid corporeality. By using the dramatic form, the playwright represents the specific embodiment of racial hybridity on stage in such a way that it draws attention to the ambiguous visual signifiers of racial hybridity. In fictional plays that represent racially hybrid characters the ambiguous visual signifiers of racial hybridity inform casting decisions for the play particularly when the character description is based on a certain *type* of racially hybrid soma text.

When racial hybridity is specifically called for in the character description of a play, most often the play itself dramatizes the identity issues that inform the racially hybrid character. These descriptions affect casting decisions and constrain certain possibilities for casting choices by referring to the particular skin hue or racial ambiguity of the character. The director who makes his casting choices must involve himself in the process of decoding the racial hybridity of the performer before him in the audition, in order to determine if this *particular* form of embodiment and skin hue of the racially hybrid actor fits the racial hybridity that the character needs to signify for the dramatic narrative to work. Because of the incredible range of tones and types of racially hybrid embodiment, the Director must see if the racially hybrid actor has the phenotypical markers that will be read as the sign of his or her racial hybridity. Thus the initial casting process involves the racially hybrid actor presenting his or her type of mixedness for the Director to read for the markers of racial hybridity. Many actors may in fact be “part Native” but if they do not have the visual signifiers that the Director believes will be read by his or her audience as signs of that mixedness the dramatic tension surrounding the

racially hybrid character's embodiment will fail. The corporeality of the racially hybrid character is often central to the play's thematic concerns so casting the right racially hybrid phenotype necessarily involves the racialized gaze of the Director and the presentation of the specific form of racially hybrid embodiment by the actor.

In the contemporary plays that I address in this chapter, the visual signifiers of racial hybridity are often alluded to or specifically referenced in the text, in particular through the dramatic retelling of scenes where the racially hybrid body has been interpellated.¹³ These scenes bring the body of the racially hybrid performer into visual relation with the other performers on stage, who often react to the ambiguity of the racially hybrid character's soma text within the performance itself. This has a double effect on the relationship between the audience and the racially hybrid actor. At one level, the racially hybrid character is on stage for the other actors to react to during the course of the play. The performer who embodies racial hybridity is *also* on stage for the audience to detect or decode the character *and* the actor's racial identity. The actors' responses to the racially hybrid character and the audience's reading of the soma text of the racially hybrid character are informed by their "reading" of the racially hybrid soma text of the actor. This doubleness is further complicated by the ambiguous signifiers of the racially hybrid soma text of the actor. Thus, casting decisions, reactions and responses by other actors, and the audience's "reading" of the racially hybrid character/actor's body are informed by the viewer's own ideas of racial hybrid embodiment.

Throughout a given performance the racially hybrid body of the performer and character is read for signs of authenticity. Plays that focus on racial hybridity often feature the racially hybrid body as a complex signifier, document the process by which the character is read in different discursive communities and articulate how he or she self-identifies. A central aspect of representing the process of racialization in the plays that I address involves audience engagement when the actor stages moments of interpellation within the play, or when the actor directly asks the audience to read his/her biracial soma text. In these moments the biracial performer draws attention to the visual signifiers of his/her racially hybrid soma text and most often refers to being "seen" as one race or another while simultaneously being seen by the audience during the performance. In such moments the racially hybrid character is both referring to scenes where he or she was interpellated and is simultaneously presenting his or her body before an audience that is involved in the very same type of visual assessment of the racially hybrid body.

The representation of the trauma of interpellation in drama has interesting effects on actor-audience engagements. In earlier chapters I argued that interpellation for many biracial individuals involves trauma. When a racially hybrid character refers to the trauma of interpellation and mis-recognition, he or she draws attention to the performativity of race and the trauma associated with constant exposure to the racialized gaze. When a racially hybrid character represents such racial trauma on stage, only the individuals who also experience this trauma are implicitly invited to participate in the exorcism of this trauma through a mimetic identification with the protagonist. For audience members who are monoracially identified, witnessing the biracial person's

trauma may cause alienation from the racially hybrid performer on stage. When the play is also autobiographical, the level of mimetic engagement with the actor may be compromised by the actor's drawing attention to the distance between his or her experience of life within a racially hybrid body and the largely monoracial audience. At these moments the monoracial audience members may feel judged by the racially hybrid performer who often details the damaging effects of being mis-recognized or constantly interpellated by monoracial people.

As in the transition from autobiography (Chapter Two) to fiction (Chapter Three), the shift in this chapter involves a movement from the analysis of autobiographical plays to fictional plays that represent racial hybridity. I start with an analysis of performances and plays that are autobiographical and then shift, as I did in Chapter Two, from works that are autobiographical to works that are fictional in order to examine how the distance from the truth claims of a work impacts the viewing relations. My central threads in this investigation are consistent with the other chapters, namely, the racially hybrid soma text, the power of the racialized gaze and the signifying nature of the racially hybrid soma text. However, generic differences impact the meaning that the audience attaches to the representation of racial hybridity.

In autobiographical plays that are performed by the writer/actor the racially hybrid soma text physically reinforces the content of the play and the staging of one's own racial hybridity invites the audience to view the racially hybrid soma text as a signifier that legitimizes the truth claims of the play proper. In *On Autobiography*, Lejeune argues that autobiographical texts "claim to provide information about a 'reality'

exterior to the text, and so submit to a test of *verification*" (22). In the performance of an autobiographical play that focuses on the racially hybrid soma text, the actor's body on stage is assessed as a test of verisimilitude.

Several other narrative possibilities become available to the playwright who is not constrained by the genre of autobiography. It is my contention that even in these fictional plays, the centrality of the racialized gaze and the complexity of the racially hybrid soma text are central features. Audience members who witness the representation of a racially hybrid character in a play, are necessarily removed from the truth claims because of the implicit viewing relation that is established between the fictional representation of identity. In fiction, racial hybridity functions as a trope that can be used to comment on a number of different ideologies. In these fictional plays the representation of racial hybridity can be thought of as a trope that becomes the primary vehicle for addressing a number of ideologies. Fictional representations of racial hybridity are no longer strictly in the service of the autobiographer's performance of the material effects of this form of embodiment.

One way of understanding the impact of autobiographical performances is to claim, as Lynn C. Miller and Jacqueline Taylor do in the introduction to *Performing Women's Autobiography* (2003), that "[c]reating an autobiographical narrative reconstitutes the self, the audience, and surrounding cultural contexts" (3) and, most importantly, allows performers to "define themselves as subjects" (7). In the autobiographical plays that I analyze, the writer/actor often comments on being interpellated and simultaneously engages the audience's racialized gaze in ways that

allow the writer/actor to control, destabilize or reconstruct the dynamics of the gaze. In such performances, the objectifying gaze of the audience can be inverted when the performer returns the audience's gaze or directly addresses the audience in order to assert his or her subjectivity and show the audience how he or she self-identifies. This self-conscious attention to the racialized gaze empowers the racially hybrid writer/actor by allowing him/her to claim agency over the process of interpellation through the performance even when the play itself dramatizes moments when the racially hybrid character was simply subject to the racialized gaze and/or read for signs of authenticity.

As an example of these complex viewing relations, I turn to a contemporary Canadian play that uses autobiographical source material to draw the audience into an intimate and complicated visual relationship with the racially hybrid writer/actor. The play "She Stands Still" (2004) by Tasha Faye Evans, is a one-woman show based on autobiographical source material that addresses racial hybridity in the Canadian context.¹⁴ In general, the play suggests that Evans is not able to "stand still" until she discovers her family's secret shame about being part Native, and uncovers the taboo of rape that is part of her interracial family history. Evans uses her racially hybrid body in the performance to demonstrate the performativity of race and the impact of the racialized gaze by referring to scenes where her body is read as non-Native. Throughout the course of the play Evans draws attention to moments when her soma text was interpellated. In addition to these textual references, Evans uses direct audience address, lighting cues, and slides to visually represent the multiple encoding of her racially hybrid soma text. The play

charts her eventual discovery of her indigenous roots and represents this movement through the use of slides in order to demonstrate her corporeal link to her indigeneity.

Evans physically represents the multiple stories of her genealogy through slides that are superimposed on her body at different points in the performance. In one scene Evans uses her body and the slide to visually represent the multiple stories that make up her complex racially hybrid soma text (**Illustration 13**).



Illustration 13. Evans' embodiment of her indigeneity is represented by way of a slide projection of a forest on the West Coast of British Columbia which, as she discovers, is where indigenous ancestors came from.

Evans, a light-skinned mixed race woman, uses the slide projection of the tree to signify her own embodiment of her great-grandmother Jenny and her traditional Coast Salish territory. The stage directions read, "Small Screen image of tree is cast on her chest," while Evans is performing as Jenny. By using the slides in this way the actor physically represents her great-grandmother's story, traditional territory, and body. Her great-grandmother's link to the West Coast is represented by the image of old growth forest superimposed on Evan's light-skinned soma text and a clear-cut on her back as she transforms back to herself. This visual image links Evans to her great-grandmother and the West Coast territory (Coast Salish) that she came from and the clear-cut on her back represents the heritage of destruction that she was born into. These technical elements allow the actor to transform from her light-skinned racially hybrid self into her monoracial Native great-grandmother and back to her racially hybrid self. This is the most blatant example of Evans physically representing her own multiraciality on stage through the use of slides to represent her indigeneity.

Evans' embodiment of her great-grandmother is represented in another scene through the use of simple slide projection. Evans again becomes Jenny in this scene and, while she is hanging out laundry on a line, we see black and white images of Native women projected onto the clothing. The stage directions read that these images are of "a clam digger in traditional clothes" and of a "native woman wearing Western clothing while washing and ironing" (9). These images express the traditional and assimilated aspects of her great-grandmother before and after going to residential school. The slide of an old growth tree is used at the start of the play to signify pre-contact indigeneity and the

clear-cut is used to represent the post-contact destruction of the land. In this scene this dualism is extended because the slides indicate Native women in a traditional context and the second slide represents a Westernized indigenous woman.

In this dramatic scene Evans becomes her great-grandmother and enacts the rape that led to the birth of Evans' father. On stage there is a clothesline downstage and one of the shirts on the clothesline is transformed from a static prop with a Native woman projected onto the white man who raped Jenny. Evans, as Jenny, takes the white shirt from the clothesline and dances with the shirt. Then the shirt takes on a more sinister role and Evans re-enacts the rape of her grandmother when the white shirt attacks her on stage. By staging the scene this way, the grandmother's experience of being raped is re-enacted by Evans suggesting that this aspect of her great-grandmother's story has been incorporated into Evans' own body.

This intergenerational embodiment is also represented in the text when Evans states: "There is a history that I belong to, a history that has made me" (10). The use of slides in this scene and the transformation of the white shirt from a simple prop into a white rapist is reinforced by the text in order to represent the idea that the history of interracial rape has been transformed from her great-grandmother's indigenous body into Evans' own light-skinned, racially hybrid body.

Lighting cues are also used in this performance to highlight Evans' embodiment of her great-grandmother. In one scene, the stage directions read, "Two shin lights illuminate Jenny's body, casting huge shadows across the stage" (7) as Evans finds the photo taken of her great-grandmother in Residential School and becomes Jenny. This

photo is an important prop because it is the document that legally identifies Jenny's Coast Salish ancestry. In this moment the lighting effects visually create the dual embodiment of the performer who is both Native and non-Native. Evans' performance of multiple selves, highlighted by the use of the slides and lighting cues, suggests the intergenerational embodiment of her great grandmother's trauma and history.

In addition to physically enacting the incorporation of her great-grandmother's body, territory, and story within her own racially hybrid body, Evans identifies the complexity involved in negotiating a racial identity when one's body is encoded with multiple races. Although Evans explains she has moved to Vancouver in one scene and the skyline of the city provides a backdrop for her downtown apartment, she is not able to rest. Her insomnia is linked to her quest to find out her indigenous identity and she states: "I think this is me. . .this is really me. Except. . .It's the middle of the night and I can't sleep" (2). This motif of insomnia is a central thread throughout the play and Evans cannot stand still or sleep until she has re-enacted her quest for her indigeneity, symbolically embodied the history of her great-grandmother, and can cathartically open the boxes of mulch that represent her heritage (**Illustration 14**).



Illustration 14. The opening of Evans' play is set in a Vancouver apartment where she is plagued by insomnia. Note the presence of the box of mulch in the foreground. The box is a symbolic representation of her family's secret about being Native. Her family's destruction of the land through logging practices is represented by the mulch.

Evans' quest for a racial identity is problematized because of her light-skinned soma text and the secrecy and shame that her family carries about their Native heritage and the rape of their great-grandmother. Whenever Evans attempts to find out about her family's Native ancestry, she is rebuked. These conversations with her family are always punctuated by Evans saying "Shhhhhh" just as she is about to gain answers from her family. The play suggests that her inability to sleep or stand still is a consequence of the family's secrecy and shame about their indigenous heritage. Evans is haunted by the fact that she can pass as white yet she knows she is racially mixed but is unable to determine just what *type* of indigeneity she is linked with due to her family's secrecy about their Native ancestry.

Besides the use of simple props, slides and the staging and lighting effects I have just described, Evans also addresses the complex position she is in because of her racially hybrid soma text and the role of the racialized gaze through the dramatization of an interpellation scene. I want to take some time to analyze this scene in order to elucidate the way in which Evans uses performance to draw attention to the performativity of race and also to suggest how her use of direct address implicates the audience in the dynamics of interpellation and complicates the autobiographical pact.

Evans' quest for a link to her indigeneity is problematized by her light-skinned soma text. Evans dramatizes this tension in one scene where her soma text is read as non-Native by a Native man at a rally. In this scene Evans states that she is initially impressed that this "Native kid" recognizes her and she is "waiting for him to say... hey aren't you related to. . . or hey you look like your part of the. . . or what type of Indian are you

anyway. . . but instead he pushes a clipboard hard into [her] stomach and says, ‘your people are logging our land, *native land*. . .’ and then he asks her, ‘what are you going to do about it?’ (3). At this moment Evans realizes that her racially hybrid body *has not* been read as Native but rather as white and, most disconcertingly, as a body that signifies the colonial oppression of Native people. This scene is represented in the play as a crucial traumatic moment of mis-recognition.

I want to take a moment here to consider the way in which the audience’s gaze is implicated in this scene. In this moment on stage when Evans reveals how her racially hybrid body was read by a Native man, the audience is *also* engaged in reading Evans’ racially hybrid body for signs of indigeneity in order to determine if they agree with the Native man’s assessment of her racially hybrid soma text. In this scene, Evans is positioned as one with the largely white monoracial audience, whose members may also have experienced the division between themselves and Native people or had their bodies read as representing the guilty people who have destroyed Native land. In this moment the audience may be drawn into a mimetic engagement or identification with Evans because her soma text has been read as white by this Native man, despite her stated desire to *not* be white.

Evans uses this story of being interpellated in order to explore the relationship between racially hybrid soma texts, light-skinned identity, and the impact of the racialized gaze on one’s sense of racial identity. Evans also uses the text to identify a distinction between her own racial hybridity and that of the largely monoracial white audience. Evans draws attention to her somatextual codes by stating: “I don’t think I look

Mohawk. In fact most people think I look Spanish. I don't mind looking Spanish. Spanish isn't white and no one wants to be completely white nowadays, in fact some of my friends would rather be part elf, or fairy, anything but pure old fashioned white" (3). By stating that no one wants to be white these days she is implicitly judging audience members who identify themselves as "pure, old fashioned white" people. This statement creates a division between the audience and the actor and makes the visual relations involved in interpellation more evident.

Evans further articulates her unique racial position by suggesting that her soma text is "more of an off-white, like a goat milk. Like a soy latte. In fact, I'm a Welsh Polish Jew and . . . Mohawk! . . . maybe" (3). Evans suggests here that her family stories have been so shrouded by secrecy that she is not even sure if she has Mohawk ancestry. In the course of the play it turns out that she is in fact Coast Salish. This revelation ironically reveals her family's complicity in exploiting their traditional territory through their employment as loggers, and simultaneously explains the connection that Evans feels to the West Coast of BC.

The third method that Evans uses to draw attention to the performativity of race is through direct audience address. Evans slips from racially hybrid character in this scene to racially hybrid woman on stage when she addresses the audience directly. She asks: "Who did he take me for? Who did he think I was? When *you* look at me. . . who do you see?" (4). After she asks this question, the stage directions read that Evans "stands still for a moment and lets the audience check her out" (4). Again, as in her use of slides on

her body, in this moment on stage Evans uses her racially hybrid body as a sign for the audience to read for somatextual cues of indigeneity.

Through direct address, Evans asks the audience to assess her own belonging to an indigenous community and, by extension, her right to her great-grandmother's story, and her right to claim a Native identity. Early in the play, Evans asks the audience: "Do I look Mohawk?" (3). The stage directions read that the actor should "show the audience both sides of her profile" (3). While the actor poses in a tableau, the audience is explicitly asked to use their racialized gaze to assess her soma text. Evans then asks the audience the rhetorical question: "*If you're Mohawk what are you supposed to look like anyways?*" (3). Evans literally uses her own body to draw attention to the process of interpellation and make the relations between the racially hybrid actor's body and audience's gaze more visible. Her body also reinforces the truth claims of her autobiographical story.

When Evans is finally able to locate the birthplace of her great-grandmother through a photo of her, she can take the boxes of cedar mulch that have been on stage throughout the performance and cathartically dump them throughout her apartment. The soil is doubly suggestive because it represents the subterranean secrets about her identity and also signifies the destruction of the land through clear-cut logging practices. Evans stands in this dirt and declares: "We're not Mohawk. We're not Blackfoot. We're not Cherokee. We didn't live in tipis. We weren't walked thousands of miles away from our homes. We're Coast Salish. That means we are from here. From here. From *this* land. From *this* place" (11). The implication in the play is that she is now able to sleep and

“stand still” because she has solved the mystery of her indigenous identity and embraced the dirt that links her to the West Coast.

In the final scene, Evans approaches a rally of Native people and starts to sing the women warrior’s song, suggesting her comfort with her indigeneity. In her final statement she has embraced the totality of her racially hybrid identity and claimed her autobiographical voice by emphatically declaring: “My name is Tasha Faye Evans and I am a Coast Salish, Welsh, Polish, Jew” (12). She ends the play by claiming her specific Native ancestry—an ancestry that she has visualized being connected to through the use of slides superimposed on her body and simple lighting cues throughout the performance.

In sum, this play dramatically recounts moments where Evans has been interpellated and, most interestingly, she uses direct address to draw attention to the *performativity* of race. In breaking this fourth wall, Evans utilizes the conventions of theatre in order to demonstrate the multiple assignments of race that are part of her white-skinned but racially hybrid soma text. Breaking this fourth wall also engages the audience directly in assessing her soma text for signs of indigeneity. Her play directs the audience to utilize their racialized gaze in reading her soma text and invites them to consider how *their* reading of her soma text differs from the other ways in which her soma text has been read in the stories she relates to the audience. The writer/performer’s hypersensitivity to the racialized gaze is literally represented when the audience is asked to participate in the very process which is usually present but not named: how the racially hybrid soma text is read for signs of authenticity.

Evans' unique representation of a contemporary Native identity on stage has many predecessors.¹⁵ In fact, colonial relations between Native and non-Native people are always already the backdrop for all performances of Native identity on stage.¹⁶ I want to consider the effect that witnessing Native actors employing and deconstructing indigenous stereotypes on stage has on the audience as a way of interrogating the actor-audience dynamic and the role of the racialized gaze. Robert Appleford argues that

Native-Canadian performance—whether it resembles Western-style theatre, an indigenous oral tradition or performance art—serves to keep audiences, regardless of ethnicity, off-balance. It often mingles stereotype and parody with earnestness and recognizably 'traditional' content, thus challenging non-native audience members—many of whom, one suspects, have bought tickets expecting 'real' stories told by 'real' natives on stage—to confront their own expectations of what native theatre can encompass. (233)

Appleford draws attention to a crucial element involved in the staging of race, in terms of its effect on looking relations between the audience and performer. He rightly argues that the non-Native spectator "may always feel that the authentic story of native experience is somehow consciously withheld from view" and that such a process of dis-identification can lead to a "failure to communicate" (233). In this way, Native theatre can be both alienating and subversive because, as Appleford argues, "Native theatre challenges non-Native audiences to understand how images of Natives circulate within cultural discourse" (233). This paradigm for understanding the relationship between the body of

colour on stage and the audience can be usefully applied to the other contemporary plays featuring racially hybrid performers that I analyze in the rest of this chapter.

These plays also draw attention to the viewing relationship between audience and actor and imply an incommensurable gap between the writer/performer's unique form of embodiment and that of the audience. Plays that feature racially hybrid writer/actors often draw attention to the gulf between the multiracial identity of the performer and the experience of monoracial identity that characterizes most individuals in the largely monoracial audience. In this way, racially hybrid actors who, like Evans, perform in plays that draw attention to their soma texts and the process of interpellation, make the relations between the racialized gaze and expectations of the audience more *visible* by playing with stereotypes on stage. This process may be understood as the non-hegemonic nation *writing back* to revise the colonial racialized gaze through new visions of agency. The conscious manipulation of stereotypical images of racially hybrid people in these contemporary plays, like the new visions of indigeneity that Appleford addresses in his essay, all serve to create a new aesthetic and discourse on the staging of racialized identity in Canadian theatre.

According to Appleford, this oppositional discourse, for many Native artists, involves the championing of "the hybridity of Native discourse as a source of discursive power" (236). In order to illuminate this aspect of Native theatre, Appelford analyzes Margo Kane's play *Moonlodge*¹⁷. This is the Native playwright/performer's acclaimed one-woman show that has become an Aboriginal Canadian classic and has toured for over 10 years nationally and internationally.

Appleford addresses Kane's play *Moonlodge* in this essay and summarizes her "construction of a hybrid native self":

The play dramatizes the life story of Agnes, a young native woman removed at a young age from her family and brought up in a series of white foster homes, who seeks to know her Native heritage. Because of her alienation from her cultural origins, she cannot simply adopt a ready-made authentic ethnicity, but must investigate and reject several different mainstream conceptions of 'Indianess.' (Appleford, 239)

Through the course of the performance Kane, like Evans, stages what is essentially her autobiographical character's search for her lost indigeneity.¹⁸

Although this play does not feature a racially hybrid character, the issue of cultural hybridity interestingly comments on the power of the racialized soma text as informed by the racialized gaze, and for this reason I have chosen to address it in this chapter.¹⁹ Appleford argues that Agnes' attempts to be Native are used by Kane for comic effect and that "[w]hile the audience is included in the process of ridiculing the stereotype, it is denied a mimetic enactment of Agnes' engagement with authentic native culture" (237).²⁰ In one scene, Kane adopts a feather and attempts to connect with her indigeneity by sitting cross-legged and playing a traditional hand-drum (**Illustrations 15, 16, 17**). Kane's use of stereotypes necessarily distances the non-Native audience and implicates the viewing relations between Agnes and the audience and also between Kane as Native actress and the audience.



Illustration 15



Illustration 16



Illustration 17

Kane uses humour to explore stereotypes of indigeneity through her role of Agnes in *Moonlodge*. It is interesting to consider the effect of an indigenous performer's exploration of stereotypes of indigeneity has on the audience.

Part of the discursive power of this play lies in the use of stereotypes of indigeneity and the way in which the racialized gaze is addressed by Kane through performative means. Such an exploration of indigeneity by way of stereotypes necessarily distances the largely monoracial audience from a form of mimetic engagement with the central character. In addition, by reversing the colonial gaze, Kane's performance offers an implicit critique of her subservient position as subject of the racialized gaze. In *Post-Colonial Drama*, Tompkins and Gilbert pose a crucial theoretical question when they address the racialized body on stage in post-colonial drama. Given the nature of theatrical performance, which necessarily gives the power of the gaze to the audience, they wonder "How then can the theatre stage any kind of empowering subjectivity when the person who gazes tends to hold the power?" (248). They suggest that the gaze "becomes a site for post-colonial resistance, and if theatrical representation means to undermine its

authority, performance must somehow engage with the looking relations it establishes” (248). Each of these performers inverts the power of the colonial gaze through different means. Evans uses direct address to draw attention to the gaze, Ewen addresses the audience’s gaze in her pre- and post- show discussions as I will argue later in this chapter and Kane reverses the gaze in this performance. (Illustrations 18 and 19).²¹



Illustration 18

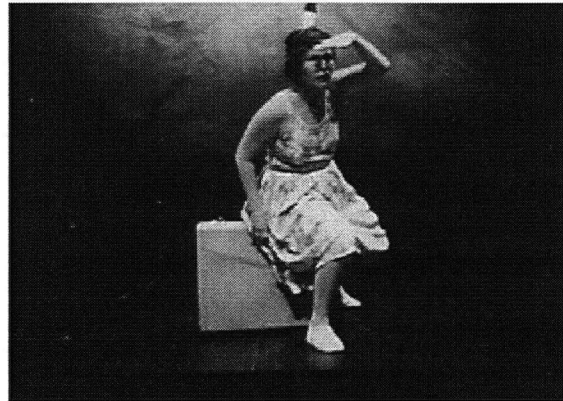


Illustration 19

In these scenes Agnes is exploring her identity by way of playing with stereotypes of indigeneity. Interestingly she is also inverting the colonial gaze in these scenes in a way that calls into question the audience’s own racialized gaze. The looking relations between audience and colonial subject are inverted here as she watches them as they watch her explore the stereotypical images that are the result of colonial constructs. This is the kind of self-conscious attention to the power of the racialized gaze and the strategic use of stereotypes that, according to Appleford, make the relations between the audience and the Indigenous actor more “visible.”

Playing with stereotypes and inverting the colonial gaze are some of the means that Kane uses in this performance as Agnes explains her attempts to indigenize and the difficulties she faces because she was brought up isolated from indigenous culture.

Because Agnes is taken from her home and placed in a white foster care home, she grows up in isolation from indigenous people. The character in such narratives must search for their connection to their indigeneity. Agnes recalls that, "There were no Indians in my neighborhood" (282). Agnes is strongly impacted by representations of indigenous people on television and states: "The only Indians I saw were on television. I remember the Walt Disney Injuns. They were big, fat redmen with flat noses. 'Ugh! Me wantah smokum peacepipe!' And pretty little princesses named Princess Minni-Haha. And cartoon Injuns that danced the rain dance" (282).²² Here Kane draws attention to these stereotypes and identifies the power of media representations of indigeneity.

Throughout the play Agnes refers to her isolation from indigenous people and culture. The play draws attention to Agnes' isolation at the school where she is "one of the few brown faces" (284). She is isolated in her white family and also isolated from school even though she has an opportunity to meet Marvin, the Native boy who was bussed in to Agnes' school. Agnes recalls meeting him and states: "But I never talked to him. He scared me" (284). In this scene, Agnes, like Evans, exposes a dis-identification with her own indigeneity which is coupled with a desire, or need, to be seen and embraced as Native.

Agnes identifies the importance of the soma text and the role of the racialized gaze when she states she was frightened by Marvin because “I knew he could see the Indian in me. He looked right in and touched it with his eyes” (284). This scene helps Agnes to realize that there is more to being Native than simply looking Native. Agnes is aware of the huge gap that exists between herself and Marvin because “He knew me but I didn’t know him. He came from a remote reserve that I knew nothing about. I didn’t belong to his world” (284). Agnes seeks to find out what world she *does* belong to because she is unable to fit into either the white world of her childhood or the Native world she has been removed from.

Agnes’ journey to connect with her indigeneity is the main theme of the play and this is physicalized as a journey complete with a suitcase on stage that she transforms to suit different scenes. With the use of the simple stage prop of a suitcase, Agnes transforms herself into a hitchhiker on the back of a motor bike in order to represent her journey—a journey that takes her to California and Sante Fe (**Illustrations 20 and 21**). The stage directions read: “She sits side saddle the wind blowing her hair all over” (286). The use of this prop suggests the psychological and physical journey that Agnes embarks upon throughout the performance.

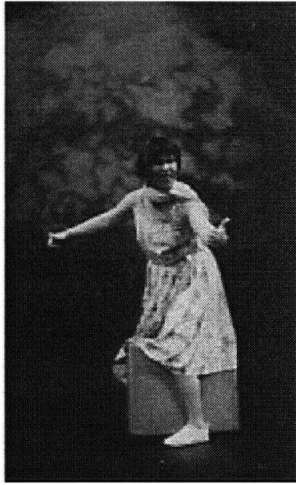


Illustration 20



Illustration 21

In this scene Kane transforms the suitcase into a motorcycle as she goes in search of her indigenous identity. Many Native writers who feature indigenous characters who have been removed from their communities and placed in foster care, or adopted into white homes, or sent to residential school, will document the character's journey back to discovering their indigeneity.

In this play Kane resolves her protagonist's quest for a stable racial identity by providing her with a connection to her Native identity. Agnes' lack of a connection to her own indigeneity in the first half of the play is contrasted with her discovery of her indigeneity at the end of the play when she finally meets Millie, a Native elder, who takes her to her first Pow Wow. Once there, Agnes exclaims: "I've never seen so many Indians in one place!" (288). However, in this play, Kane resists the simple notion that anyone who is Native can perform indigeneity and be accepted as Native.

Even in this indigenous space, Agnes is unable to perform indigeneity because other Native characters challenge Agnes' indigeneity and ask her:

Ohhhh, so you're an Injun? You don't look Injun. What tribe are you? Well, where are you from? Canada? Ohhhh, so you must be Eskimo. If you're an Indian what's the color of North in the sacred Medicine Wheel? What's your Indian name? You're sure you're Indian? Do you have a totem animal? (288)

Although Agnes finds solace and mirrors for her identity within the Pow Wow scene, she discovers that she is still unable to fit in. Millie tells Agnes not to despair and that eventually "[her] medicine will come from [her] own people" (290). With this insight in mind, Agnes decides to return home and the play's quest for racial identity is resolved. In the end, Kane's play, like the novels I addressed in Chapter Two, reinforce an essentialism about Native identity that suggests a return to home, culture, and tradition will ultimately resolve identity crises for dislocated Native people.

Agnes' identity crisis stems from her adoption into a white home. The family system is often addressed as the primary site of trauma for racially hybrid individuals. I have charted the presence of this initial trauma extensively in my analysis of biracial autobiographies in Chapter Two. The impact of a primary trauma within a family system is concentrated in Lesley Ewen's autobiographical play "an understanding of brown" (1995) through the complex relationship between the white mother and Ewen, as her brown biracial child. The brown child (Ewen) refers to her mother as a "white supremacist"—a statement that signifies the dis-identification between white monoracial mother and biracial child. In this play, the issue of mother-child bond is complicated

because Ewen's persona *seeks* an identification with a white mother but she is indelibly "marked" by brown skin. She is, therefore, forever unable to see herself mirrored in her mother's soma text. This is the site of primary trauma for Ewen's character, and this traumatic dis-identification is evident in the repeated refrain that signifies the crux of the tension in the play: "My mother is white. I am not" (3).

In this play, this mother-daughter tension is used to highlight the uniqueness of the racially hybrid soma text and to emphasize the role of the racialized gaze in the formation of identity. The mother's discomfort with Ewen's brown body is expressed throughout the play and marks a separation between them as *monoracial* mother and *biracial* child. The mother's white gaze reads Ewen's body and rejects those elements that are associated with her Afrocentricity. This is most evident in Ewen's reference to her mother's relief that Ewen does not have "one of those Afro things" (5). This is an example of her mother's explicit rejection of the Afrocentricity that is part of Ewen's biracial body.

The play complicates the notion that only white people can become racist by addressing the impact of the process of racialization on Ewen's own adoption of white supremacist ideas. Ewen also courageously discloses her own complicity with white supremacist ideas and suggests how such beliefs can stem from interracial family systems. Ewen becomes a white supremacist because of the messages she receives from her mother and society about her "hideous brownness" (3). Ewen reveals her own involvement in her mother's "conspiracy" of hating Black somatic markers by using "an expensive cream rinse" to hold her "hair at bay" (5) and, thus, more closely approximate

a white soma text by physically altering her Afro. In this way, Ewen's play departs from other representations of racial hybridity in that she destabilizes an easy Black-White binary by implicating her character's *own* investment in a white supremacist racial ideology.

In addition to this already complex mother-child dis-identification, Ewen's Black father's voice is missing from the narrative. Where other biracial individuals have documented the comfort and mirroring of their soma text that is gained by identifying with their "of colour" parent, Ewen is physically distanced from such an identification because her father is absent. The closest she gets to identifying with her father's Afrocentricity is by seeing a photo of her mother with a brown baby in an apartment that signifies his absent-presence.

The father figure becomes the absent Afrocentric signifier in this play and simultaneously signifies the missing half of Ewen's character's racially hybrid identity. The paternal abandonment that Ewen's persona suffers complicates an easy identification with her father and, ultimately, with a sense of her own Black identity. The implication here is that since the father, who represents her Afrocentricity, is absent in the story and his voice is not represented in the performance of the play, Ewen has also been removed from identifying with, and adopting, her Black identity.

The central interracial familial tension is compounded as Ewen's character suffers from her dis-identification from *both* her racist white mother and her absent Black father. This absence sets up the central tension in that Ewen is, in fact, half Black and is forever unable to embody a white supremacist. In the course of the play she comes to realize that

her own white supremacist beliefs are a form of self-hatred and indicate a denial of a crucial part of her identity.

Throughout this dissertation, I have been referring to the dis-identification between a monoracial parent and a biracial child as a primary site of trauma. Ewen develops this theme, and part of her catharsis in the play revolves around her exposing her own dis-identification with her mother, identifying her experience of interracial family trauma, and trying to accept that she is part Black. This play can be read in the context of other plays that have been written by African-Canadians in Western Canada. Playwright Celeste Insell has argued that the experience of biracial trauma in interracial family systems is a central theme:

[i]n Vancouver, where the African community is so diverse and spread out, the sense of alienation and isolation can be profound. It is out of this extreme sense of alienation that African-Canadian playwrights in Vancouver are writing. Most of the plays being written are by young African-Canadians in their late twenties and early thirties who have undergone a deep sense of alienation. Many have one parent who is of European ancestry, which therefore makes issues of cultural identity take on a particular urgency in their writing.

(Insell 39)

Ewen's play can certainly be read within this larger context.

Another play by racially hybrid West Coast African-Canadians entitled "White, Dark and Bittersweet" (1992), co-written and performed by me and Mercedes Baines, also draws attention to the distinctions between a monoracial white mother and brown

mixed race child. The issue of mother-child dis-identification is represented on stage when Baines states:

My mother feels left out when I am simply defined as black.

As if she did not bear me and raise me. Use her own spit on a kleenex to wipe the chocolate from my face.

As if she did not carry me in her womb-sweat and bleed and have her body open To let me into the world.

Her white womb enclosing my brown infant body. (4)

In this passage Baines suggests that her white mother feels that her womb and her genetic contribution to her daughter are obscured when her biracial daughter claims a monoracial Black identity. In the same scene, I refer to the dis-identification between my Métis mother and my biracial soma text by exclaiming “MOM! My hair is not the same as yours!!” (10). In the performance of this scene my hair was full and curly, and I used my racially hybrid soma text to draw the audience’s attention to this racial signifier in order to visually suggest why it has been difficult for me to identify my body with my mother’s (Illustration 22). The implication here is that my mother has the signifier of indigeneity in that she has long, straight brown hair. Here I suggest that my Métis mother’s inability to understand my own biracial soma text leads to a dis-identification between my mother and myself as a child with a complex multiracial soma text.



Illustration 22. Mercedes Baines and I in a rehearsal of “White, Dark and Bittersweet,” at Light Raye Studio in Vancouver, February 1993. Photo by David George from Compton 32.

According to Insell, “White, Dark, and Bittersweet” is a play that “deals with issues concerning women of mixed heritage and satirizes many of the stereotypes that label these women as exotic. A key issue that women of mixed heritage face is the feeling of displacement, of not quite belonging to any community. Such feelings are recurring themes within Baines’ work and a common thread joining the work of many African-Canadian playwrights” (Insell 41).²³ In the play “White, Dark and Bittersweet” and the play “an understanding of brown,” Canadian racially hybrid playwright/actors document the potential for alienation and trauma in interracial family systems when the mother’s soma text is coded differently than that of the biracial child. In staging this interracial

family dis-identification between our mothers and ourselves, we also implicate monoracial parents of biracial children in the audience and all others whose bodies do not have the signifiers of racial hybridity. In this way, the soma text is referred to in each play as a unique form of embodiment. By drawing attention to this form of corporeality, the audience may experience alienation or have difficulty identifying with the performer.

Ewen is self-described as a mixed race African-Canadian woman and the issues that she represents appear in plays that are written by other racially mixed writer/performers (**Illustration 23**).



Illustration 23. The ambiguity of Ewen's racially hybrid soma text is a central thematic issue in her autobiographical play "an understanding of brown." In a discussion about the play she explains her sense of her unique form of embodiment and her cultural and racial hybridity in the following way: "I had more of a British upbringing," she says. "I consider myself brown. It's a place of synthesis made up of black and white - it's a third thing, with its own peculiarities." This photo and the quote come from the *Canadian Immigrant Magazine* (October 2005) which is described as "Canada's first national magazine for *all* immigrants." The online edition is located at (<http://www.thecanadianimmigrant.com/aug05-fusion.shtml?story2a>)

Like the other racially hybrid playwrights I have addressed thus far, Ewen bases the narrative impulse of her play on her unique form of embodiment and the complicated process of achieving a racial identity that she experiences as a biracial Canadian. This is a theme that connects these works crossracially. In this way, the alienation from the mother figure stands in for the larger alienation that racially hybrid individuals feel between their own multiracial identities and people who claim a monoracial identity—an alienation that implicitly implicates the audience.

These plays suggest that some of the results of this dis-identification from one's interracial family system are alienation, trauma, and/or shame. A box is used to great effect in Ewen's play to represent the shame she has inherited from her monoracial white mother. Ewen enters the playing space dressed in black and white and, according to the stage directions, she "enters through / from the audience with a small brown paper box in her hands" (2). This box, like Evans' box in "She Stands Still," is linked to secrecy and shame around racial identity. Ewen opens the play by referring to this box as a metaphor for this secrecy and shame:

A shadowy box in the corner of my life. An unwanted package in tatty brown paper that I've been too scared to acknowledge, let alone open. Most days I just forget about it. Today I opened my eyes and there it was on my lap. I unwrapped this shoddy package and looked inside at the possibility for me, for my life. It's this possibility, this snapshot, that I have been running from my whole life; a black girl in a bachelor apartment, broke, alone, with her baby. The shame, that

that could even be a possibility for me has dogged me and informed my every choice. (2)

Interestingly, the photo she is referring to is of her mother broke and abandoned by her Black father in an apartment with Ewen as a baby. By seeing *herself* as a “black girl” in the photo instead of her mother, Ewen imaginatively projects her mother’s past onto her own future. This slippage implies the conflation of her mother’s and her own identity and indicates the intergenerational effects of her mother’s shame. Ewen has tried to embody her mother’s reality and, in the process, has assimilated her mother’s shame about being broke and abandoned in an apartment with her biracial child.

This photo stimulates Ewen’s imaginative projection and conflation of her identity with her mothers but it also establishes a critical division between them as women. The central monoracial mother-biracial daughter tension is clear in this scene when Ewen looks at the photo and states: “The mother, my mother, was white. And I wonder now if, as she stroked my new brown skin, she hated me” (2). In this scene Ewen refers to “*the* mother” (emphasis my own) in the snapshot, implying her distance from her. This photo informs Ewen’s sense of alienation from her mother’s body and this sentiment is captured in the simple refrain that is repeated in the play: “My mother is white. I am not.” (3).

This photograph and the racialized moment that it represents for Ewen is part of the impetus for her quest to find a racial identity that fits her sense of her own racial hybridity. She documents the different stages in this process, and the crucial moments that marked her growing acceptance of her racially hybrid body at the ages of 12, 13, 21,

23, 27, 33, 35, 38 and 43. The last three stages are referred to at the close of the play when Ewen reveals the powerful impact of the photo, her (dis)identification with her white mother, and her growing deconstruction of identity politics and racial ideologies. She states: “when I was 35 someone told me that the story of a ‘woman of colour’ doesn’t have to involve a ghetto to be true. When I was 38 I accepted the fact that I wouldn’t trade off half myself just to belong. To either side. I can’t. I’m 43. No children. No lover. Perhaps because allowing myself a man would put me one step closer to the shame of the ‘baby in a bachelor apartment’” (11). This final statement about the last stage in Ewen’s racial identity suggests that the primary image of her mother with the brown baby and the missing Black father still plagues Ewen the character and, by implication, the actor at her current age.

A secondary site of trauma for these biracial Canadian writer/performers occurs when they enter elementary school. In this site they are often interpellated as Other. Ewen’s character experiences the secondary site of trauma when she goes to school and hears the same classic playground chants along with a number of jokes that reinforce the idea that brownness is negative: “Eenie Meenie Minnie Moe / Catch a Nigger by the toe / How do you keep black kids from jumping on the bed? / Put velcro on the ceiling / How do you keep Black people out of your yard? Hang one on the front. / How many black men does it take to plug in a light bulb? / Doesn’t matter. Those shiftless shifts. . .they’ll never get around to doing it anyway / Eenie Meenie Minnie Moe / Catch a Nigger by the toe. . .” (8). In Ewen’s play, her persona judges her mother for putting her “in the wrong

class, in the wrong school” which was filled with white children who did not mirror Ewen’s soma text.

Another example of primary school as the site of secondary trauma for biracial individuals appears in the play, “White, Dark and Bittersweet” written by Mercedes Baines and me. This childhood chant, “Eenny, Meeny Minie Moe, Catch a Nigger by the toe,” is repeated throughout a scene called “spoken to a brown child” and punctuates the different jokes, racial stereotypes, and negative messages we received as children in elementary school. In this scene, like Ewen, Baines and I document the numerous negative messages about being brown children that we received at school as a secondary site of trauma. Baines and I list these childhood taunts in order to imply that our mothers did not understand the complex assault of verbal taunts that we would experience as children because they experienced life in bodies that were markedly different from our own. In both plays, “an understanding of brown” and “White, Dark, Bittersweet,” the writer/actors reference their own childhood experiences in order to make the trauma of interpellation palpable to the audience and to suggest the incommensurable gap that exists between monoracial and racially hybrid Canadians.

The ambiguity of the biracial soma text, the power of the racialized gaze, and the trauma of interpellation are at the core of these plays. Autobiographies, fictional representations of racial hybridity, and plays exploring racial hybridity suggest that a third level of trauma caused by mis-recognition and dis-identification occurs when racially hybrid people start to date. As outlined in Chapter Two, often their choices of sexual partners become statements about their own racial identities and racial allegiance.

In Ewen's play, the lack of identification with her white mother is also manifest in her relationships with white men in a way that highlights the primary site of trauma and dis-identification. This identity crisis is represented when her persona tells her mother she has met a nice man, and Ewen's mother tentatively asks, "is he Brown?" (4). Ewen believes that this question indicates her mother's fear that her daughter will meet a Black man and hop "the fence to the other side"—recognize herself as a Black woman, and distance herself from her white mother. As a result of her mother's implicit concerns about the racial identity of her daughter's lovers, Ewen's persona connects with a socially acceptable white lover but is haunted by the difference between *his* monoracial and *her* biracial soma texts. Ewen's character says, "Lover, you put your bone white arm gently around my shoulders / And I feel the weight of four hundred years of oppression / How do I explain this to you?" (6).

To counteract this dis-identification with whiteness, Ewen charts her attempts to adopt an Afrocentric identity by having sex with a Black man whom she somewhat ironically refers to as her "doorway to Africaaaaah!" (7). In the performance Ewen expresses a great relief when she is able to be sexually involved with a man whose body mirrors her own somatextual encoding. She compares this new relationship to her previous involvement with a white man and states: "It was different. When we walked down the street, it was different / Two brown hands swinging between us. / Two brown faces reflected in store windows [. . .] Our bodies would become a tangle of brown on brown. Where did I begin, where did he end? There was no colour line to prevent us from losing our selves in the business. No glaring bluepale thigh over my cocoa brown hip.

Just brown on brown that went on forever” (7). In this scene, Ewen’s character draws attention to the powerful impact of somatextual mirroring and suggests that her intimate involvement with a Black man’s body was a crucial part of her *own* acceptance of her Black heritage. This Black lover provided her with a deep opportunity to feel united with her own Afrocentricity through the somatextual mirroring that his body represented.

Even though Ewen’s character states that she experiences a deep connection to the Afrocentricity that the Black male body represents, as a racially mixed woman she is still policed by the racialized gaze in the Black community. Even in this site, despite her brown somatext, Ewen’s persona states that she feels “pale and invalid” (7) and “not black enough” (8).²⁴ She comes to recognize that she cannot claim a monoracial Black identity nor feel accepted in this community because she is a racially hybrid woman. Once in the community, she asks herself, “I was with one of my own...wasn't I?” (7). This rhetorical question suggests her dis-identification with a complete monoracial Black identity. Like Kane’s character in *Moonlodge*, and Evans’ character in “She Stands Still,” Ewen’s character is uncomfortable in a monoracial community of colour. These plays reinforce the idea that it is difficult for biracial individuals to find a community in Canada that mirrors their own racially hybrid soma texts and accepts them in their wholeness. This theme was identified in Chapter Two and is a recurrent theme in fictional representations of racially hybrid characters as outlined in Chapter Three.

In this state of dis-identification from both monoracial white and monoracial Black communities, Ewen uses metaphors to evoke the positive sense of identity she claims as a “brown” woman through her character’s identification with a brown sweater.

Throughout the play, “an understanding of brown,” Ewen uses different images to draw attention to the monoracial divisiveness that she must navigate through as a biracial woman. Ewen opens the play wearing black and white which is the most obvious physical metaphor for her racial hybridity. In addition, she uses simple color imagery to identify the different racial identities that she has been born with when she refers to her soma text as a “pot of white and a lump of coal” (2) and also understands her biracial subjectivity to be “a black pearl in [her mother’s] rocky oyster past” (4). These images suggest the “Black” and “white” racial identity that is part of her lineage. She draws attention to the racialization process by stating: “I am Black / A woman of colour. / A tar baby. / A Nigro / A Jungle Bunny. / So many labels and none of them quite seems to fit” (5).

The play charts Ewen’s own “understanding of brown” and her attempts to find a label that will fit that is beyond the binaries of Black and white.²⁵ Ewen uses a third-space paradigm when she refers to her own soma text as “brown clay” (6) to identify the self-acceptance of her soma text as a *combination* of both black and white. In addition, Ewen’s play complicates an easy identification with Blackness, or whiteness, because of her indelibly marked soma text and her socialized dislike of that very brownness.

The idea of looking for a label that fits is represented physically on stage by Ewen’s use of a simple prop—a brown sweater. The play tracks Ewen’s own “understanding of brown” until the final scene where Ewen forgives her mother for her limited ways of understanding race and thinks, in hindsight, that her mother “had a perfectly good name for [her]” which was the term “brown” (11). The play closes with

Ewen wearing the brown sweater, which has remained in the box throughout the performance until the climactic closing scene. The final stage direction reads: "The woman brings the box to center stage. Slowly lifts the lid and looks inside. Pulls out a brown sweater and puts it on. She laughs. Lights slowly fade to brown" (11). The box becomes a metaphor made concrete as it represents the shameful secrets and self-hatred that Ewen is discarding, and this brown sweater symbolizes Ewen's acceptance of a third space paradigm for her biracial identity.

Ewen uses simple stagecraft to signify that the sweater is a metaphor for her brown skin. The play also suggests that her own self-identification as a brown woman grows out of her failed attempts to fit into the monoracial category of white or black. In opening the box and placing the sweater on her body, Ewen signifies to the audience her acceptance of her brownness and the understanding of her soma text that she has achieved through a lifetime of searching for a racial identity that "fits."

Throughout the play Ewen explores racial stereotypes and stages moments of interpellation to outline the key experiences that have impacted her growing sense of an identity as a brown woman. The autobiographical pact that Ewen creates with her audience is heightened by the fact that in the performance history of the play she directly addresses the audience as a biracial woman. She often asks the audience if they have had similar experiences and if they have other questions they would like to ask before or after the performance. When she directly addresses the audience at the start of the play as a biracial Canadian woman who is telling her own story, she makes an autobiographical pact with the audience before transforming from biracial Canadian woman to biracial

Canadian character. When she addresses the audience at the close of the play she transforms from racially hybrid character/performer back to racially hybrid Canadian woman/actor/writer. This autobiographical pact is reinforced in the play because she has prefaced the play with an explanation that this is her story and this autobiographical pact sets the audience up to interpret the events as true.

After the performance, Ewen reveals one important aspect of the play that she has fictionalized. She tells the audience that her mother is not dead even though she has referred to her as dead in the text of the play. At times, Ewen has even invited her mother on stage after the performance to indicate the fact that they are “working through” this initial childhood trauma. Most typically, Ewen asks the audience to discuss what *they* saw and experienced in the course of the play. She often asks the audience whether or not they understood what she was representing on stage and if they have their own experiences of hybridity, interpellation, or racialization to share. This discussion period allows the audience to have greater intimacy with Ewen’s story and it provides them with space to express their own readings of Ewen’s soma text through dialogue about their experience of the play. Ewen’s pre-show and post-show revelation of her own racially hybrid subjectivity is a unique way of representing racial hybridity. She constructs an autobiographical voice and “acts” the part and she also unmask this construction of an identity by speaking directly to the audience as a racially mixed woman. It is a multifaceted pedagogical tool because it explicitly draws the audience back into a mimetic engagement with her story, exposes the performance as a theatrical convention, and authenticates the autobiographical voice that she has constructed in the play. In

addition, she clearly uses the performance and these discussions as an opportunity to address the performative elements of racial identity.

The pedagogical benefits of these pre-show and post-show discussions have not gone unnoticed. In fact, Ewen has performed this play across Canada for conferences such as *Realities of Race* (2003) at UBC, *Realities of Race* (2005) also at UBC, *Learning and Building Upon Experiences of Keepin' It Real* (2003) and in numerous other educational settings. At the *Realities of Race* conference, Ewen pointed out to the audience that her story was only one person's understanding of a mixed race experience in Canada and that there may be many. Ewen's direct audience address and the performance history of the play suggest that she uses the play as a pedagogical tool to address racism in Canada, to represent the unique form of embodiment that is part of the experience of racial hybridity and to engage the audience in critical dialogue about their own experiences of hybridization and racial ideologies in Canada.

In Margo Kane's *Confessions of an Indian/Cowboy* (2001) Kane, like Ewen and Evans, foregrounds the experiences of biraciality to represent the complicated dynamics involved in a biracial woman's attempts to claim a monoracial identity in Canada. Kane, unlike Ewen, uses a triadic structure in that she performs both her white European father as the character of the "Cowboy Dad," and her Native mother as the character of the "Rodeo Princess," on stage as well as her own racially hybrid self, as the semi-autobiographical character of Ruby. This triadic structure highlights the tensions between the two monoracial groups and can be understood as a postcolonial Canadian dramatic staging of race through the representation of the syncretic biracial character.

The body of the racially hybrid woman, thus, comes to signify the personal narrative of the conflicted “half-breed” (**Illustration 24**). The racially hybrid body of the character Ruby as both Native and non-Native serves as a metaphor for Canadian-Native interracial relations since contact. In addition to this triadic structure, the autobiographical aspect of the play allows for a reading of Kane’s racially hybrid body as a signifier as well.



Illustration 24. Kane’s syncretic blend of Indian and Cowboy costume is used here to signify both her own racially hybrid body and the body of the character Ruby in *Confessions of an Indian/Cowboy*. Photo by Greg Young-Ing (*DraMétis* 276).

In this play Kane, like Evans, uses her body to map her indigeneity by performing her Kokum (grandmother in Cree) on stage (**Illustration 25**). By using the simple prop of a shawl, Kane transforms her persona into her Kokum throughout the play. This grandmother figure warns Ruby's mother about cowboys, and ultimately foregrounds a particular view of the history of interracial contact between Native women and white men by stating to Ruby's mother, the Rodeo Princess: "You stay away from that cowboy! You gotta watch them cowboys! He's gonna let you down. He's gonna leave you like they all do. Once they get what they want, they go back to where they came from and marry their own people" (292). In this play, Kokum represents the anti-white fear of amalgamation from a Native perspective. Her speech also alludes to the common practice of Europeans claiming Native women as "country brides" that is a part of the history of colonization in Canada.



Illustration 25. Kane on stage as Ruby's Kokum. The fear of miscegenation is represented from an indigenous perspective in this play and in this scene she is warning Ruby's Indian Princess mother about the dangers of "taking up" with cowboys.

In addition to performing her indigenous lineage by becoming her Kokum on stage in front of the audience, Ruby embodies each of her parents on stage in plain view of the audience (**Illustrations 26 and 27**). This staging calls attention by physical and visual means to the multiple embodiment of identities that is at the core of racially hybrid narratives. In performance, Kane transforms from her Kokum to Ruby is full view of the audience. She also transforms from Ruby to her Cowboy Dad and Rodeo Princess Mother in full view of the audience. This decision to transform bodily into these other characters that are all part of the central racially hybrid character is a way of physically performing the complex identity of the racially hybrid character.



Illustration 26

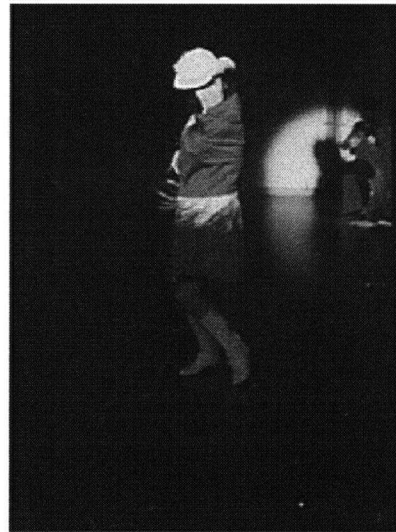


Illustration 27

The first photo is of Kane performing as Ruby's Cowboy Dad and the second photo is of Kane performing as Ruby's Indian Princess Mother. Her physical transformation into these characters on stage in front of the audience, like Evans' transformation into her great-grandmother, is a way of utilizing stage conventions and one's own racially hybrid body to physically and visually indicate the multiple genealogies that form the unique aspect of one's racial hybridity.

In addition to the use of multiple embodiment through this form of staging, the triadic structure of *Confessions of an Indian/Cowboy* highlights the third space of the protagonist. If we look at the movement from Kane's representation of racial identity in *Moonlodge*, with its use of a racial ideology that is grounded in an essentialist idea of an impulse to embrace an authentic Native identity, to Kane's *Confession of an Indian/Cowboy*, it becomes clear that Kane moves from an easy binary between the monoracial groups of Native and non-Native to foregrounding the triadic third space of a complex biracial identity. This is accomplished through the text and also through her transformation into these different characters in front of the audience. In *Confessions*, Kane's character finds resolution by accepting and incorporating both "Indian" and Cowboy" lineages that make up her totality and also performs all three identities on stage.

By using this triadic structure in an autobiographical play, Kane is literally placing her biracial soma text on stage and inviting the audience's racialized gaze to witness her transformation as her persona comes to embrace a third space paradigm that is both "Cowboy" and "Indian." In contrast, the biracial protagonist in *Moonlodge* resolves her identity crisis by finding a way to embrace her indigeneity. The dualism of biraciality is resolved in *Confessions* by use of a multiple casting in a one woman show, and by the use of a third-space paradigm which allows for these dualities to be incorporated in a sense of wholeness that recognizes the important contributions of both of these monoracial identities within the racially hybrid character.

Despite these differences in staging and the different paradigms that are reflected in these plays, the character of Ruby in *Confessions*, like the central character in Kane's earlier work *Moonlodge*, is on a quest for a stable identity. On stage, Ruby walks in different directions because her "thoughts are tangled underbrush" (283). Kane uses the metaphor of a journey to express her own mixedness. At one point she runs to the woods at the edge of town and shouts: "On the edge, the edge, the edge, the edge, on the edge. I'm, I'm on the edge!" (285). This divisive binary is cause for Ruby's confusion and the metaphor of the cliff edge suggests that Ruby's embodiment of racial hybridity is a liminal space that feels like being on the edge of both white and Native worlds.

In the course of the play Ruby learns that her biracial identity is complex and she is disturbed by the notion that she does not fit into the world of her parents. In coming to terms with her racial hybridity Ruby tries to understand where she belongs within her interracial family system and declares: "Oh great! I am a mutt! I was born an Indian but sometimes I wanted to be the Cowboy. I wanted to be the hero! And now it's not enough that I am a mongrel but my father is a cowboy and my mother an Indian. What does that make me? A Halfbreed!! Where do I belong?" (294). In this scene Kane identifies the racial essentialisms that she must navigate through as a racially hybrid woman.

Ruby implicitly addresses the audience which she represents as completely different from her and asks the rhetorical question: "Do you know what it feels like to have someone say" to set up the following speech:

Cowboy: You're an Indian? You don't look like an Indian.
Indian: Why you dressed like that? Who you trying to be?

Cowboy: Can't you tell us something about your culture and traditions that we haven't already read about?
Indian: You're not an Indian—you didn't grow up on the reserve.

Cowboy: Do you have any great chiefs or medicine people in your family tree?
Indian: You call yourself an Indian? You don't even like salmon.

Cowboy: You use the computer, that's not traditional.
Indian: You think like a white man.

Cowboy: I'm tired of all you Indians living on welfare at our expense.
Indian: You've never suffered. You've always lived off reserve.

Cowboy: Get off your butts and work for a living like everyone else in this country. (294)

This speech suggests that her experience of racial hybridity included being asked questions from both Native and non-Native people that qualified her identity. The implication here is that Kane assumes that the predominantly monoracialist audience has *not* had the experience of being asked these questions. In this moment Kane suggests that they are removed from a mimetic engagement with her racially hybrid experience.

In addition to this list of conflicting racialized stereotypes and interrogations, Kane uses the "warring blood" metaphor to describe her biracial identity crisis when she states: "I remember being caught in the crossfire" (305). She also refers to this indeterminate space as a battleground when she states: "I feel frightened. Tired of this

constant battle. Constant arguments / Constant refusal by both camps to listen / Constant refusal to lay down the weapons / I am despairing that the battle will ever end” (305).

This battleground metaphor signifies the difficult position she is placed in by virtue of her biracial identity. This difficulty stems from the fact that the world expects her to define herself as either Native or non-Native. Ruby states: “I live with this confusion, this tension in a world that wants me to declare allegiance to one side or the other. How can I when the blood of my ancestors flows like tributaries of that great river. Flows into the river of my blood” (307).

The play resolves Ruby’s identity crisis and closes with the idea of a “new frontier” represented on stage by the actor running and floating in new meadows in a syncretic and dynamic bodily engagement with both Native and non-Native musical forms by “jigging (Métis) and reeling (European)” (*DraMétis* 309). This jubilation is further reinforced at the close of the play as Ruby sings the song “Halfbreed” by the pop singer Cher. The musicians who sit upstage throughout the performance and punctuate the play with songs include a “fiddler, guitarist, and a percussionist [who]are dressed as a Métis voyageur, a Cowboy, and an Indian” (281). They play a mix of Western songs and provide the soundscape throughout the performance (**Illustration 28**).



Illustration 28. Kane's musicians are on stage playing music and in these costumes before the performance proper beings. This staging choice involves the audience in the central themes of the play (Cowboy and Indian fusions) from the outset.

In the final scene these musicians are well lit and finally interact with Ruby directly. In this humorous moment, the audience is able to identify with the struggle of the protagonist by laughing along with Kane's campy rendition of the song that is part of popular culture shared by Native and non-Natives alike. Like Ewen, Kane closes the play by unmasking the performance as a theatrical convention. The lights go up and she sings this song with the Cowboy/Indian musicians who have been on stage throughout the performance. This frontier space that opens the show (**Illustration 29**) is transformed into a contemporary performance space during the sing-along with the audience that closes the show.

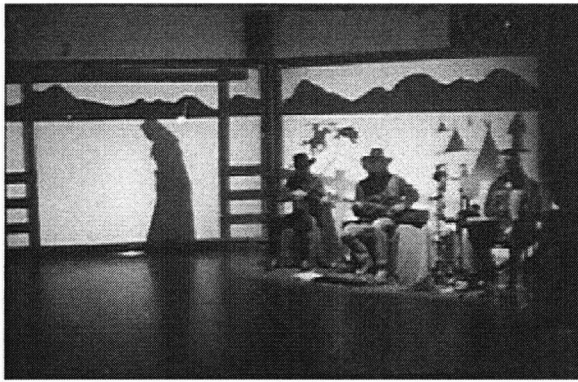


Illustration 29. This Kokum/OldMan character wearing a syncretic blend of costume consisting of a “Hudson’s Bay coat, gum boots, [and] Kokum’s skirt underneath” (*DraMetis* 281) starts the show by visiting with the audience and once he/she emerges from the scrim the play begins. The Cowboy/Indian musicians are in costume, on stage, and barely lit throughout the performance until the final climactic song “Half-breed.” In closing the play the lights go up, the audience sings along with Kane as Ruby and the theatricality of the performance is revealed.

What I am arguing here is that this single unified biracial voice in *Confessions*, which can be understood as a third-space paradigm for a racially hybrid identity, is a progressive departure from binary identifications. This paradigm shift is part of the larger movement within postcolonial studies and theories of hybridity, which seek to locate identity in a third space that defies “either-or” paradigms. The multiple casting for one performer, the syncretic blend of Indian and Cowboy characters, the Cowboy and Indian playing spaces on stage, the Métis, Cowboy and Indian musicians, and the musical choices all serve to reinforce the syncretism that Ruby finally achieves at the end of the play (**Illustration 30**).

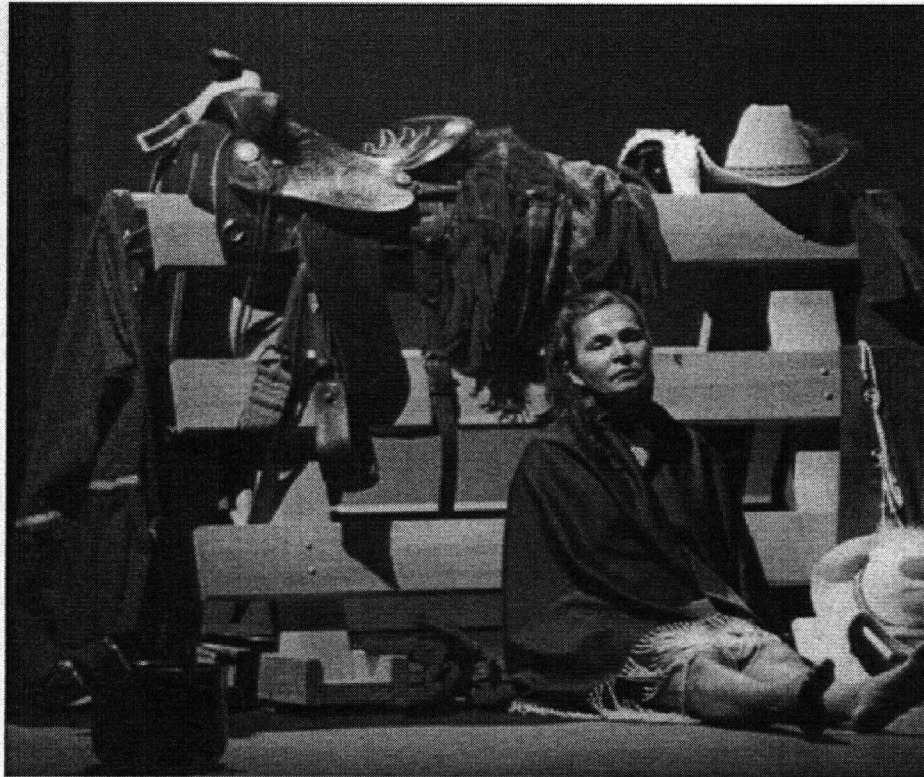


Illustration 30. The syncretic set suggests the frontier as a place of fusion between Native and European cultures. The hybrid costumes of the musicians, like the multiple roles that Ruby embodies on stage, all serve to reinforce the central tension of living in a racially hybrid body.

Unlike the Cowboy/Indian dualism in Kane's title, Ewen uses the title of her play to resist these easy binaries. Her reference to her body as "brown" suggests that her biracial soma text, and the play itself, is a conflation of Black and White. In this way, Ewen speaks from and to the issues of racial hybridity with a unified voice as a "brown" subject. Kane also presents a unified third-space protagonist in *Confessions* in that Ruby embodies a character that is both Indian and Cowboy—this character conflates the binaries suggested in the title through performing each of those identities. Ewen's title frames the performance as an understanding of brown which indicates that her character has resolved the dualism of her biracial identity from the outset, while Kane's title draws attention to the dualism that is resolved in the performance whereby the actor incorporates both Indian and Cowboy identities.

In autobiographical plays that chart a racially hybrid character's quest for a racial identity, the racialized gaze and moments of interpellation are often addressed and staged by the writer/performer. Evans, Kane and Ewen stage moments of being interpellated and defy the audience to read their soma texts, while simultaneously asserting how they have come to understand the signifying nature of their racially hybrid bodies. This allows the writer/performer to draw attention to the *performativity* of race through the *performance*, to control or destabilize the audience's racialized gaze, and to assert the writer/actor's own self-identifying mechanisms. These playwrights make the visual relations between the audience and themselves more evident by drawing them into an identification with the protagonist and simultaneously distancing them from a mimetic engagement with the biracial performer by highlighting the unique experience of biracial corporeality.

The plays that I have addressed in the first part of this chapter are written and performed by racially hybrid playwright/actors. Now I would like to analyze plays representing racial hybridity that are *not* performed by a writer/actor using autobiographical source material to dramatize aspects of their own racial hybridity. In these first few plays that I have analyzed, the racially hybrid body of the writer/performer verifies the truth claims of the plays. However, in the fictional plays that I analyze in the next section of this chapter, the racially hybrid soma text as a complex signifier, the power of the racialized gaze, are still central elements in the staging of racial hybridity.

Part Two: Staging Racial Hybridity

In his play *Boy in the Treehouse* (2000), biracial Native playwright Drew Hayden-Taylor explores racially hybrid identity by developing the theme of dis-identification between a biracial child and monoracial parent. As in Ewen's play, the racially hybrid child's journey to discover his "of colour" identity is complicated by the fact that his "of colour" parent is missing and this impedes the child's development of an "of colour" identity. Taylor states: "In this play, a young boy must deal with the anniversary of the death of his Native mother by trying to embrace her culture. He does this by fasting in a treehouse. His non-Native father tries to be supportive but watching your kid starve himself up in a tree tests the man's patience" (*Furious* 77). Taylor uses the metaphor of a tree to represent the wholeness that Simon seeks and he uses the tree as a means of exploring the complex aspects of biracial identity.

In exploring this need for wholeness, Simon says to his Father: "Dad, if half of this tree was taken away, do you think it would be able to stand?" (61). This idea of half a tree represents Simon's sense that half of his identity is missing. In this play, the biracial character's quest for wholeness is signified by a need for a connection to his indigeneity represented by his deceased Native mother and the location of his quest centers around his vision quest in a treehouse in his backyard. Taylor says the following about the play: "[It] deals with identity, parental longing, trying to honour one's relatives and vision quests" (*Furious* 76-77). Simon's need for a vision quest becomes a signifier of a larger quest for identity, making this play a quest for wholeness that explores and dramatizes a

biracial child's search for a racial identity that incorporates both his white and Native parts.

Taylor's opening stage directions refer to the character Simon as being "of mixed native-white ancestry" (9). The central dramatic movement of the play is based on the soma text of this actor and the questions of identity and belonging that are signified by this form of embodiment. Different directors and audiences have their own notions of what a person who is "of mixed native-white ancestry" looks like and this description suggests that the actor's body must be read by the audience as one that is a particular "mix" of Native and white phenotypes. In the course of the play, Simon is interpellated by his spirit guide Patty and a reporter, and he also questions the signifying nature of his racially hybrid soma text. Consequently the signifying nature of racial hybridity is central to this play in that it affects casting decisions, relations between the actor and other actors on stage, and the audience who is "reading" the racially hybrid actor's body for signs of its Native-white mixedness.

Interestingly, Simon expresses self-awareness of the signifying nature of his racially hybrid body by commenting on his sense of his own racial hybridity. He explains his position as a mixedblood as a unique form of embodiment that is distinct from his monoracial parents' identities—a theme I have charted in numerous works that feature racially hybrid characters. In the play *Boy in a Treehouse*, Simon tells his father: "I told you you wouldn't understand. Mom was Native, you're not. I'm somewhere in the middle" (14). Simon does *not* identify himself as Native like his Ojibway mother but rather as a hybrid subject who is caught between both Native and white racial identities.

Despite his dis-identification with his indigeneity, represented symbolically by his deceased Native mother, Simon feels compelled to follow the Native tradition of a vision quest. The impulse to indigenize oneself is a theme that I have identified in my discussion of fictional representations of biracial and bicultural characters in Chapter Three of this dissertation and a theme that appears in the autobiographical plays that I prefaced this chapter with.

Simon, like many biracial characters, tries to express his indigeneity and one of the ways he does this is by stating his knowledge of indigenous food customs.²⁶ Simon represents his awareness of his indigeneity when he tells the spirit guide Patty who visits him in the tree: "I know how to make pemmican. Do you know what that is? It's a combination of dried buffalo meat and berries" (50). Despite his knowledge of the process involved in making pemmican, through the course of the play it becomes clear that much of Simon's indigeneity has been gleaned from reading books and *not* from living in a Native community.

The central difference between *feeling* Native and *looking* Native is also addressed in Simon's dialogue with Patty. Simon asks her if he looks Native and she says: "You kind of look Native to me. But I think the important question is, with all these books you got, do you feel Native?" (63). Here one of the central racial ideologies in Native communities is articulated—a theme that was also central to Kane's play *Moonlodge*—the distinction between having a soma text or blood line that signifies a Native identity, and the learned or acculturated sense of Native identity that comes from living in a Native community and experiencing Native cultural traditions.

Like many racially hybrid characters, Simon expresses his self-awareness of the signifying nature of his racially hybrid soma text and explains the complicated biracial identity that results from looking Native but being removed from Native culture. Simon answers Patty's question by stating: "I don't know what I feel. I mean I always thought I looked more like my mother than I do my father, but I really don't know that much about being Native. But I try. I read a lot of books about it [. . .] But most of my mother's family live far away. So I have to do what I can by myself" (64). Here again Taylor dramatizes the distinction between living within a Native community and the dis-identification and trauma that can result when one is removed from people who mirror a biracial person's soma text.

When Patty draws attention to the somatextual signifiers of Native identity in this scene, the audience is implicitly invited to assess Simon's soma text for the exterior markings of indigeneity. Although it is important that Simon's body is interpreted as being both white and Native, this scene limits the casting options to an actor who clearly has the somatic signifiers of this form of racially hybrid embodiment. As I outlined in previous chapters, racially hybrid embodiment can involve numerous somatextual signifiers that are more or less in accordance with racial phenotypes. Because the actor who plays Simon is read as Native by another character within the course of the play, he must be mixed and simultaneously *look* Native. The audience must also read his racially hybrid body as "mixed" in order for them to believe that he is *both* Native and white, for the central tension of the play to work.

Simon's racially hybrid soma text stimulates discussions about essentialism, assimilation, and the performativity of race. Patty teaches Simon that although he looks Native, he acts white. Despite his insistence that he is following a traditional Native ritual, Patty suggests to Simon that he may be "doing this Vision Quest thing like a White person would do it" (74). She points out that even the books he has read on the vision quest suggest that "[t]he whole Vision Quest thing is supposed to be looking forward, not behind" (73). Patty also chastises Simon for trying to construct his own version of a vision quest because he has "no Elder supervision or training" (73), which Patty explains is part of the traditional protocol for vision quests. The location of his vision quest is also wrong according to Patty. While the two actors are up in the treehouse, Patty tells Simon that "what you're looking for is down there, not up here" (79). As a result of this conversation Simon starts to wonder if he is "Native enough" to involve himself in something as deeply spiritual and traditional as a vision quest, because he has mostly learned about being Native from books.

Simon's awareness of his tenuous ties to indigeneity and his growing acceptance of his own biraciality form the central movement in this play. When a reporter appears to question Simon about his vision quest in the tree, Simon is asked: "So, what does your mother's culture offer you that your father's doesn't?" (55). Although Simon does not answer the question, the reporter goes on to tell Simon the following: "You have embraced your aboriginal heritage. Obviously it means more to you than your father's culture." Simon replies, "I . . . I don't think my father has a culture?" (56). In this scene,

Simon learns that his father is in fact British and he slowly comes to realize that his father's identity is also a part of his own biracial identity.

This scene is the beginning of Simon's and his father's attempts to understand the differences and similarities in their racial identities. Simon says to his father: "Dad, you don't think I'm, like ashamed or anything about you for being White, or anything like that?" The father replies: "Then you'd have to be a little ashamed of yourself too." Simon asserts, "And I'm not. Sometimes I do wonder about it, me being half-White or Indian, but I never let it get to me. I like to think I have the best of both worlds" (58). Despite his identification with his father in this scene, Simon also refers to the irreconcilable division between himself and his father when he states that his father does not understand Simon's need to create his own vision quest because he is non-Native (59).

Eventually, Simon's father concedes that he is supportive of his son's quest but states that he wishes his son would adopt a balanced view of his racial identity by accepting that he is *both* Native and British. The father says: "I support my son in his decision to explore his Native half, but he should also be equally proud of his non-Native half" (56). It is Simon's father who finally realizes that Simon needs to have contact with a Native community and suggests that Simon go to the reserve to fulfill his need for knowledge and an experience of an indigenous culture. He tells Simon: "They'll teach you everything you need to know, and take care of you. And it will be a lot safer. It's better than doing this alone" (78). Simon comes to understand his racial hybridity as a gift and learns through his conversations with his white father that his father's monoracial identity does not have to be a barrier to his growing sense of his own indigenous identity.

Simon's mother is also represented in the play as someone who assists Simon in accepting the racial totality of his identity. Simon comes to understand his need for a cultural connection, and his father also grows to understand the dis-identification between himself and his son through the deceased Native mother's spirit guide. The ironic revelation at the end of the play is that Simon's mother was also named Patty. This suggests that during the whole vision quest, Simon was visited by his deceased Native mother in the form of the spirit guide Patty. So, although the play follows a common narrative pattern, in that a death results from an interracial alliance, it still suggests that identity for biracial Native people can be gained through moving away from *reading* about a lost identity to actually involving oneself with a Native community in order to learn about one's Native culture. This is the theme that was also represented in Kane's play (*Moonlodge*) and to a lesser extent in Evans' play ("She Stands Still"). Taylor's play also suggests that the initial dis-identification between a biracial Native son and a white father can be solved through the presence of a Native woman (even post-mortem) in the shape-shifting presence of a spirit guide.

The larger question about whether or not one *must* embrace a Native identity is not explored in Taylor's play. Simon does not understand himself as a racially hybrid individual, but rather, one who is indelibly Native and who must develop an indigenous sense of self that will be in accordance with his Native soma text.²⁷ This notion of an authentically Native subject limits the possibility for representing a Native identity that is not in keeping with a traditional notion of Native identity as *both* biological and learned. Other biracial playwrights like Evans, Kane, Ewen and Baines have explored the notion

of a third space of identity for their protagonists, and present a biracial character that is neither black nor white but both white and of colour or *both* Native and non-Native. This fluid identity assignment is not commonly represented in Native plays, fiction or autobiographies representing racial hybridity.

Racial hybridity is also used by Taylor in his later plays as a trope to comment on essentialist notions of Native identity and blood-quantum ideologies. In the plays *The Buz'Gem Blues* (2002) and *The Baby Blues* (1999) Taylor addresses the issue of racial hybridity in ways that are quite different from his representation of racial hybridity in *Boy in a Treehouse*. In these two of his "Blues Quartet" plays the character Summer claims to be 1/64th Native. In *The Baby Blues*, the first of these two plays, Summer's attempts to "go Native" are dramatized for ironic effect. Summer is duped by the playboy Skunk who uses her interest in indigeneity to flirt with her. The play ends with Summer gravitating towards Amos, the Native elder, in hopes of gaining some essence of Native cultural traditions as they go off to create hybrid food for the Pow-Wow circuit.

In *The Baby Blues* Summer is described as a, "non-Native woman who is traveling the pow-wow trail seeking knowledge, twenty-five years old" (10). In Act One of scene One we are introduced to Summer, who enters "looking vaguely hippie / new age-ish. She wears gobs of turquoise and beaded jewelry, and other Native adornments" (11). Summer carries a flower and a recorder and speaks about her desire to feel in tune with nature and Aboriginal people as part of her desire to indigenize. She declares that she does not want to be perceived as a "wannabe," but rather she wishes to be accepted "into their fold" as Native (12). Because the character is represented as a non-native

“wannabe” Native and is referred to as a non-Native woman in the character description, I am not going to go into much depth to explore her quest for an indigenous identity. However, I want to point out that Taylor represents Summer’s racial hybridity in a way that reinforces an essentialist position regarding Native blood-quantum. The way in which her body is read as non-Native by the other characters represents the effects of colourism and the difficulties involved with trying to pass as an indigenous person in an indigenous context, despite one’s best intentions, when one has only 1/64 Native blood-quantum.

In the second play, *The Buz’ Gem Blues*, Summer is also represented as a buffoon who is a Native wannabe but in this play she learns something important about her identity, about her need to indigenize, and about what it means to be Native. In this play, Taylor gives the relationship between Amos and Summer more focus and Summer constantly attempts to interpret Amos’ behavior in terms of her own idealized images and theories of indigeneity. Through the course of this comedy, set at an Elders’ conference, Summer comes to learn that she should *not* be trying so hard to appear to be Native and that she should accept the identity that she was born with.

Marianne, a Native elder, unmasks this racial drag performance and directly asks Summer: “Why are you so proud of those few strands of Native DNA? I mean, you are who you are but really, one/ sixty-fourth? That’s an awful lot of Caucasian genes to ignore” (65). Marianne tells Summer that the problem with her racial drag performance is that she is “trying to be Native. Maybe trying a little too hard” (65). Marianne tries to understand Summer’s impulse to indigenize and finally teaches her that wearing Native

jewelry does not make a person Native. Summer is silent when Marianne asks: “How many of those necklaces, bracelets and rings do you think it takes to be officially classified as a Native person?” (66). Marianne teaches Summer that she should also consider embracing the 63/64th of herself that is a white woman named Agnes. In this way, Taylor’s play suggests that Summer’s racial hybridity is *too* far removed from any authentic Native identity for her racial drag to be appropriate. The racially hybrid character is used for comedic and ironic effects and is forced to come to terms with being largely monoracial. Clearly blood-quantum in this play is essential for defining a biracial individual as Native, and Taylor suggests that a 1/64th Native blood-quantum is simply not enough.

The notion of blood-quantum is not represented as a qualifier for an indigenous identity in Monique Mojica’s play *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* (1991). In fact, she presents a very fluid racially hybrid subjectivity as a feature that unites racially mixed women. These women are located throughout the Americas from “halfblood” and Métis Canadians, to “half-breed” Americans, through to Latin American “mestizo” women. Mojica’s representation of a transcultural racial hybridity suggests a pan-ethnic “third-space” community founded on various degrees of indigenous blood-quantum.²⁸ Mojica’s representation of a unity that exists across cultural divisions for racially hybrid women of the Americas certainly invokes a strategic essentialism. While Taylor’s plays and the autobiographical plays I have analyzed in the first half of this chapter explore an *individual* racially hybrid character’s search for an identity, Mojica’s play offers a vision of a transnational and transhistorical racially hybrid identity.

In Mojica's play, "the blue spots" signify Native ancestry and authentic Native blood that link racially hybrid women from Canada to the United States to Latin America. The character Contemporary Woman explains the power of this metaphor of blue spots to represent indigeneity: "When I was born, my mother turned me over to check for the blue spot at the base of the spine—the sign of Indian blood. / When my child was born, after counting the fingers and toes, I turned it over to check for the blue spot at the base of the spine. / Even among the half-breeds, it's one of the last things to go" (20). As in Taylor's play, *Boy in the Treehouse*, the notion of an indelible sign of racial identity informs the racial ideologies that represent indigeneity in Mojica's play. Unlike Taylor's "blues plays," however, blood-quantum is not a qualifier for an indigenous identity in Mojica's play.

Mojica's play is not focused on any individual character's journey but rather gains its discursive power from the presentation of a pan-indigenous, transhistorical and transcultural racial hybridity. Mojica links the contemporary women characters with the historical characters in the play through the metaphor of the blue spots and also in her specific casting suggestions, in order to suggest the interconnectedness between racially hybrid people in the Americas and the history of colonization. For my own analysis I am interested in the staging of racial hybridity and the ways in which transformation and racial hybridity are used in this play. In her notes on the play, Mojica explains that the structure and "[t]he theme of the set, costumes and props is also transformation" (16-17). She has invoked a "hybrid aesthetic" throughout this play in order to highlight the transformative nature of racial hybridity. This thematic concern is manifested in the

staging and also in her casting decision to use actors in multiple roles. For example, Mojica has chosen to cast the actor who plays Pocahontas in multiple roles—she is variously Pocahontas / Lady Rebecca / Matoaka.²⁹ This transformational aspect to the casting also signifies the complex ways in which the racially mixed women in the play are informed by the presence of more than one identity. In performance, this conflation of characters, represented by actors playing multiple roles, suggests a panethnic, transhistoric, and transnational embodiment of racial hybridity.

Besides the physical representation of a panethnic, transhistoric and transnational racial hybridity through the casting, the characters are linked on stage through the dialogue. The contemporary women characters are in dialogue with the historical characters throughout the play. Both articulate and analyze racial hybridity, through the soma texts of the racially hybrid women, in order to comment upon individual and national stereotypes about racially mixed women in the Americas. Mojica's feminist, historical-revisionist play strategically rewrites the history of two important figures for racially mixed Native people in the Americas: La Malinche and Pocahontas. Mojica's play can be read as an satirical revision of the "Pocahontas" story from the perspective of Pocahontas, and a feminist revision of the Malinche story from her own perspective.³⁰ As one example of this revisionist agenda, *Contemporary Woman #2* refers to Pocahontas as "Princess" and "calendar girl, / Redskin temptress, Indian pearl. / Waiting by the water / for a white man to save" (21). Yet the play itself suggests that this myth about Pocahontas is not an accurate reflection of who she really was. In this way, the play is strategically feminist and revisionist.

Mojica's play is also a feminist revision of history in that she challenges the myth that Malinche betrayed her people and suggests rather that Malinche's people betrayed her. Malinche explains that she has been wrongly accused of betraying her people and that she was "a gift. Passed on. Handed on. Like so many pounds of gold bullion. . . Stolen! Bound! Caught! Trapped!" (24). In response to being insulted by the curses and spit of Contemporary Woman #2, Malinche asks: "What is my curse? . . . My blood cursed you with your broad face? . . . Eyes set wide apart? Black hair? Your wide square feet? Or the blue spot you wore on your butt when you're born?" (22-23). Here the idea of the indigenous body as cursed flesh is invoked and deconstructed by Malinche. She refers to the generations of racially mixed people born of contact: "You are the child planted in me from Hernan Cortez who begins the bastard race, born from La Chingada! You deny me?" (23). Mojica allows this female character to redress the historical abuse of her name by speaking to her own oppression as a woman in a war-torn country, in order to qualify her involvement with her country's colonizing oppressor, Cortez, and challenge the notion that she betrayed her people.

In a similar feminist revision of a historical figure, the character Princess Buttered-On-Both-Sides is used in this play to rewrite the myth of Pocahontas' desire to save John Smith. She ironically addresses the myth of the Native woman's desire to save a white man in this campy song:

Captain Whiteman, I would pledge my life to you
 Captain Whiteman, I would defy my father too.
 I pledge to aid and to save,
 I'll protect you to my grave.
 Oh captain Whiteman, you're the cheese in my fondue.
 Captain Whitemen for you, I will convert,
 Captain Whiteman, all my pagan gods are dirt.
 If I'm savage don't despise me,
 'cause I'll let you civilize me.
 Oh Captain Whiteman, I'm your buckskin clad dessert. . .
 Captain Whiteman, I'm a little Indian maid,
 Captain Whiteman, with a long ebony braid.
 Please don't let my dark complexion
 Inhibit your affection.
 Be my muffin, I'll be your marmalade. . . (26-27)

In this passage, Captain Whiteman represents both John Smith and all other white men who have adopted an ideology that frames Pocahontas and other Native women as ready and willing objects for their consumption, objectification, and ultimately exploitation. The character Princess Buttered-On-Both-Sides delivers this speech in an ironic tone in order to defy the mythology that has plagued Pocahontas. The character's overtly sexual name and the allusions to food and consumption in this speech deconstruct the ideology

that Princess Pocahontas and other Native women are eager to be consumed by white men.³¹

In addition to these feminist revisionist elements of the play, Mojica offers a new version of history by choosing to focus on the presence of racially hybrid populations as a fundamental aspect of many settler nations. Mojica makes historical allusions to two women who have been considered responsible for the presence of racially hybrid children in their respective nations: Pocahontas and La Malinche. This conflation of characters is staged by actors whom Mojica suggests should be cast in multiple roles that are both historical and contemporary. The Contemporary Woman's bodies are transformed into the historical characters in performance—a physical rendering that suggests the multiple embodiment and intricate connections between these historical women's stories and bodies and the contemporary racially hybrid women in the Americas.

Mojica inserts the historical figures of both Malinche and Pocahontas into the play to symbolically represent the history of interracial sexual contact between Native women and European colonizers. Both of these women represent transcultural mobility, and their intimate associations with the colonizers suggest that they have betrayed their monoracial communities of colour. Their bodies signify the legacy of racial hybridity that followed from colonial contact in the USA, Canada, Mexico and Latin America. These are two of the many ways in which Mojica draws attention to the gendered aspects of racial hybridity by focusing on the experiences of women who live, and have lived, within a racially hybrid female body or whose bodies have been charged with conspiring to give rise to the birth of racially hybrid nations through interracial sexual unions.

In Mojica's play, biracial children represent the Métis nation. Contemporary Woman #1 refers to Pocahontas as "[t]he woman who birthed the Métis" (20). Mojica makes the transcultural connection through Latina and Mexican women's bodies to suggest that they are connected with the birth of the Métis nation in Canada. In my reading of this passage, Mojica suggests that Canadian Métis people have corporeal links to the Mexican nation and Latin America, which were also built on sexual liaisons between Native people and European colonizers.³² Mojica's play stands out as a transcultural vision of racial hybridity that unites women from Latin America, America, and Canada through their soma texts. By placing these historical figures in relation to contemporary mixed race women, Mojica historicizes and rewrites the experience of racial hybridity in the Americas.

In addition to the theme of transformation as represented in the casting choices of the play, Pocahontas is transformed when she performs racial drag in Mojica's play. When she is assimilated into England by becoming John Rolfe's wife, she is transformed into Rebecca. At this point she begins to assess her own role in the colonization of her people: "I provided John Rolfe with the seeds to create his hybrid tobacco plants and I provided him with a son, and created a hybrid people" (31). The transhistoric and transcultural perspective on racial hybridity, the use of racial drag, as well as the casting choices, mark Mojica's play as postmodern and postcolonial. What sets this drag performance apart from the drag performances I address in Chapter Three and in the first part of this chapter is the fact that Pocohantas's drag performance is in service of the larger theme of transformation and Mojica's focus on the *transnational* and not simply

the *individual* experience of racially hybrid embodiment. Mojica chooses the third-space paradigm of a transcultural and transnational *hybrid people* rather than the either / or neither / nor dualism that dominated earlier expressions of racial hybridity in drama.

The contemporary Canadian plays I have analyzed thus far represent an individual experience of racially hybrid embodiment by using a triadic structure (Kane in *Confessions*, La Flamme and Baines), or through a third-space paradigm (Ewen), or through metaphors that represent racially hybrid somatextual encoding (Evans, Taylor in *Boy*), or by way of blood quantum (Taylor in *The Baby Blues* and *The Buz'Gem Blues*). George Elliot Clarke's opera *Beatrice Chancy* (1999) deals with the indelible corporeality of racial hybridity.³³ Clarke's play centers on the dramatic trajectory of a Canadian "tragic mulatta" (**Illustration 31**).

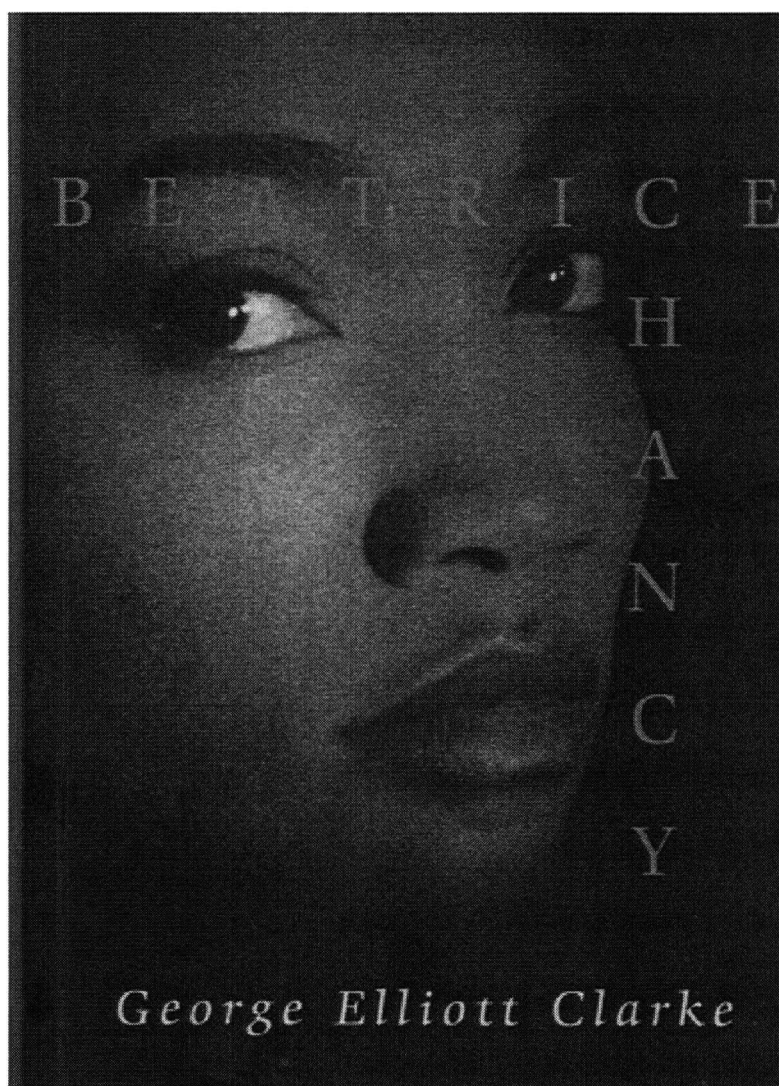


Illustration 31. The gaze of the racially hybrid woman on the cover of George Elliot Clarke's *Beatrice Chancy* (1999) is at once defiant, alluring and passive—qualities that define Clarke's revision of the tragic mulatta in this narrative. The centrality of her soma text and the power of the racialized gaze is suggested by the dominance of the photo on this cover.

According to Clarke, his play is based on the “often altered story of Beatrice Cenci, beheaded at the age of twenty for the crime of parricide, on September 11, 1599, in Rome, Italy” (*Beatrice Chancy* 152). Clarke transposes the Italian story of the main character Beatrice Chancy to a Canadian context in order to implicate Canada in slavery. His version of the story is set in Paradise in the Annapolis Valley of Nova Scotia in 1801. The story was developed from libretto to a verse-play and it is important to note that the opera is not a *performance* of the verse-drama but a production of a separately published libretto. The verse-drama is meant to be read and not necessarily a theatrical text. This is suggested because the publication includes photographs and the text itself is set on the page in ways that suggest this version of *Beatrice Chancy* was meant to be read and not performed (**Illustrations 32-36**). In addition the verse-drama has very few stage directions and contains very poetic descriptions of the characters and these elements indicate that it was meant to be read. These differences aside, I have still chosen to analyze the work as a play and a performance despite the existence of the two versions—the verse-drama and the libretto.

ACT I: *AMBIVALENCES*

The old enslavement was to nature, and the new one is of one individual to another, beginning with chattel slavery and proceeding to the modern kind, where enslavement has assumed the most grotesque form—not only wage-slavery, but also bondage to the financial institutions which, in the present period, hold the entire world in their grasp.

— BAINS



Illustration 32

ACT II: *VIOLATORS*

Ceux d'enfer nous qui ne sont pas venus au monde, armés d'orgues et de croix, portons perdants dans nos les combats.

— CORDE



Illustration 33

ACT III: *VICTIMS*

*I shall walk my lonesome valley,
I got to walk it for myself.
Nobody else can walk it for me;
I got to walk it for myself.*

— SPIRITUAL



Illustration 34

ACT IV: *REVOLT*

*She learns her lesson at once, to escape slavery
she shall embrace tyranny.*

— CARTER



Illustration 35

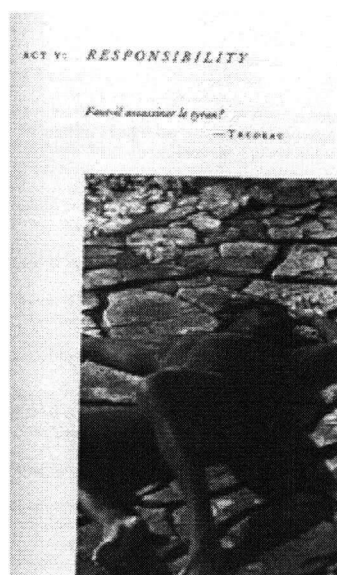


Illustration 36

Illustrations 32.33.34.35.36. These images reinforce the thematic issues of embodiment for the readers. The use of photographs, the allusions and the design elements in the text suggest that this version of *Beatrice Chancy* was meant to be read.

Because Clarke's work has been the most critically analyzed in comparison to the other plays that I address in this chapter and because it has received the widest public reception in its variant forms in Canada, I must trace some of the critical terrain before embarking on my own discussion of the work. While much critical interest in *Beatrice Chancy* is animated by the existence of the work in these two forms, other critical lines of enquiry focus on Clarke's choice of the *form* of the opera and the *style* of Clarke's writing. I will briefly address some of this critical discourse before engaging in my own close analysis of the content of the play in terms of the representation of the racially hybrid body, the role of the racialized gaze, and the impact of staging this form of racial hybridity in Canada.

Clarke has identified some of the contemporary benefits of opera in an interview with Linda Hutcheon where he discusses his choice of the genre of opera for telling this story.³⁴ Clarke has also been noted for his self-conscious referencing of theatrical performance and canonical literary works throughout *Beatrice Chancy*. His work has been analyzed for these allusions and its performative, literary and biblical intertextuality. As one example of this intertextuality, I would like to consider Clarke's dedication (Illustration 37).

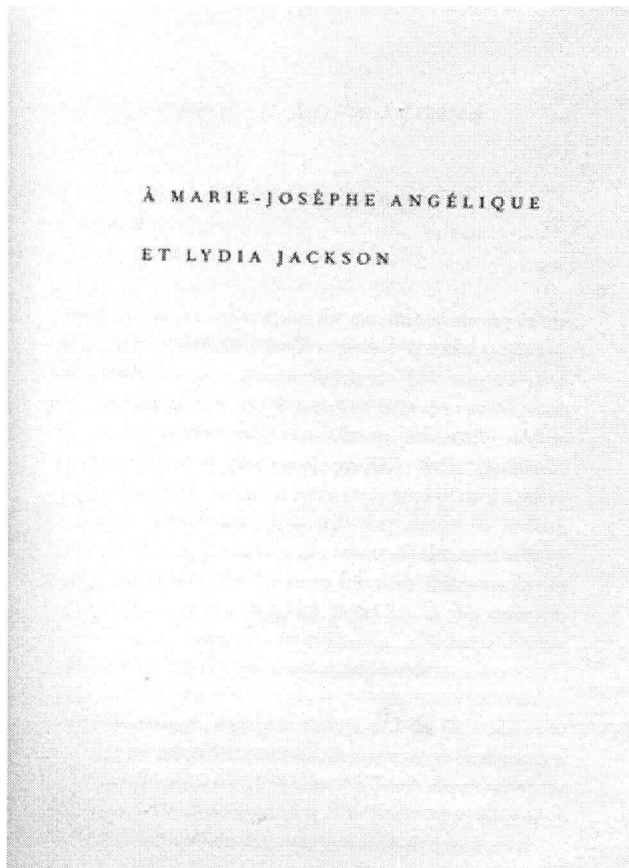


Illustration 37. Clarke's work is certainly a work of fiction but his self-conscious reference to actual enslaved African-Canadian women suggests that the issues that he represents also affected the lives of these African-Canadian women and others.

This dedication to Marie-Josèphe Angélique, who was enslaved in New France, and to Lydia Jackson who was enslaved in Nova Scotia, highlights Clarke's active retrieval of the names of two enslaved Canadian women who have been largely occluded from the historical record. By featuring them here, he implicitly challenges the idea that Canada was free of slavery. Although the play does not draw upon the biographies of these women directly, the conditions that he outlines in the play identify slavery as the social condition that oppressed these women and, by implication, many others like them. Again, the intertextuality and historical allusions suggest Clarke's conscious attention to the historical conditions of slavery in Canada and provide literary and historical scholars with ample work to analyze. My focus in analyzing this play is not along the lines of this other critical discourse but rather, is on an examination of the representation of the racially hybrid body on stage, the signifying nature of this soma text, and the impact of the racialized gaze on the actor-audience viewing relations.

Clarke's play examines the impact of slavery on African-Canadian people by combining a story of incest and patricide with the history of slavery in the province of Nova Scotia. Among many themes, Clarke's play identifies the resulting debasement of intimacy between Canadian Black men and women.³⁵ The opera received rave reviews in 1998 and has had at least three more stage productions. One review of the play, written by Anthony Joyette for the Black literary journal *Kola*, suggests that the setting is central to Clarke's play in that the history and allusions allow Canadians to relate to the narrative while Clarke simultaneously counters the myth of Canada as Canaan or the land free from slavery.³⁶ In this way, the writer argues that Canadian audiences may engage with

this story more deeply because it is transposed to Canadian soil. The presence of slavery in Canada is made palpable to the audience and manifest on stage because the musicians are *also* dressed as slaves in the production and are in full view of the audience. The Canadian setting and the visible presence of the musicians in period costume on stage, draw the Canadian audience into witnessing violence against an avenging woman, and the Canadian audience members are implicitly judged for their complicity in this historical violence.³⁷

The setting of Clarke's play and his insistent chronicling of Canadian Black history in his creative and theoretical writing have garnered much critical attention. The play is unique in giving voice to African-Canadian slaves, in particular the voice of a racially hybrid black woman.³⁸ In creating interaction and dialogue between white and Black people, a variety of views about race and a number of racial ideologies are represented on stage. This is one of the finest examples of a range of perspectives on the topic of slavery, written from the point of view of slaves themselves; in writing this way and choosing this setting, Clarke implicates Canadians in the brutally exploitative history of slavery.

Clarke's play features a racially mixed titular character who understands her identity as being part of a monoracial Black community. Here Beatrice's identity is formed according to the "one drop" rule that accords Black identity to racially hybrid individuals. Whereas Taylor's plays, *The Buz'Gem Blues* and *The Baby Blues*, suggest that "one drop" is not enough to define a racially hybrid character as Native.³⁹ These different views on blood-quantum and paradigms of racial identity are a consequence of

the different historical and ideological constructs that Native and African-American or African-Canadian communities hold.

Clarke's play, like Mojica's, is a historical revision that features racially hybrid somatextuality at the center of the drama. *Beatrice Chancy* reworks the classic American slave narrative in a Canadian historical context.⁴⁰ Where Mojica's play can be read as a Canadian version of the "tragic half-breed" story, Clarke's play can be read as a Canadian rewrite of the "tragic mulatta" story.⁴¹ Because Clarke writes the play with a sympathetic portrayal of Beatrice Chancy, she becomes the judge of the hypocrisy of Christianity, the (im)morality of slavery, the complicity of the men who condone her commodification and, in addition, she performs the role of the executioner. Because of this sympathetic portrayal of her condition, the tragedy in the play is removed from the tragedy of the mulatta per se and becomes the tragedy of slaveocratic system and a tragedy that stems from Canada's participation in slavery.

Clarke carefully identifies the race and gender norms which positioned the slave woman simultaneously as chattel, victim and temptress. Ann Wilson, in an essay entitled "Beatrice Chancy: Slavery, Martyrdom and the Female Body," argues that the actions and motives of Beatrice Chancy perpetuate notions of femininity and that Clarke's play is one of many of "the stories of women that are told by men, which cast them within the imaginary of femininity" (278).⁴² However, I read Beatrice Chancy's actions as progressive because she manages to rebel and defiantly states that Chancy will not "stud [her] until [she] calf[s] bastards-/" (109). Beatrice Chancy's views on gender are progressive and feminist and her views on emancipation are carefully wrought to

challenge both gender and racial barriers. In her conversations with the white plantation wife Lustra and the elder slave character Dice, Beatrice reveals her feminist views on gender through the assertion of her right to love whomever she wishes.

Beatrice Chancy defies the idea that women *must* be victims of male desire, but she also challenges a social system that had women as victims of patriarchy. These actions and her role as the morally victorious protagonist suggest she is not simply an enslaved body that is acted upon, but a woman who rebels against the easier life she could have had by “passing.” Of particular interest to my own analysis of Clarke’s play is his representation of Beatrice Chancy’s self-awareness of the signifying nature of her own racially hybrid body, the political ideologies that motivate her actions, her final assertion of her right to love Lead, and her dramatic killing of her rapist father. These elements suggest that Clarke’s play is markedly different from other tragic mulatto narratives in American literary history.

An interesting analysis of the play written by Pilar Cuder-Dominiguez entitled “African Canadian Writing and the Narration of Slavery,” analyzes Clarke’s play in relation to other Black Canadian writing in order to suggest the range of differences between African-Canadian writers and African-American writers and their common inheritance: slavery.⁴³ In *Beatrice Chancy*, the fear of miscegenation and the soma text of the racially mixed woman/daughter suggest that racial hybridity causes both desire and brutality in a slaveocratic setting, even in Canada. However, while Cuder-Dominiguez notes the ways in which Beatrice Chancy’s body is commodified, she does *not* address

the multiple encoding of that body as *both* black and white, and that is the point of entry for my own analysis.

Racial hybridity is integral to this play and the central tension between Black and white communities is signified by the soma text of Beatrice Chancy. At the centre of the play is Beatrice Chancy who is referred to as the “bastard mulatto” female offspring of the white slave master and a Guinean woman named Mafa. As a mixed race woman with light-skinned privilege, Beatrice Chancy has a body that allows her some mobility and agency. This representation alone suggests a departure from earlier representations of enslaved people as subjects who are simply acted upon by the forces of slavery. Beatrice’s fluid identity is evident in her mobility between the two communities, signified by the “big house” and the slave quarters, the plantation and the nunnery. In this way, her soma text represents an empowered challenge to the racial ideologies of a slaveocracy supporting the exploitation of Black women on the basis of gender and race.

Clarke gives Beatrice mobility in this play through the use of racial drag on two occasions. In the first instance, Beatrice is sent away to a nunnery with the expectation that she will conform more closely to the ideal of a white woman. Chancy states that his motive in sending her away is to “[s]hape her more like [the slave owners]—white, modern, beautiful” (52). Despite his reference to her “rare, Demerara skin” (53), Chancy tries to make Beatrice “white.” Beatrice’s enforced assimilation is the first instance of cultural and racial drag that is represented in the play.

The second use of racial drag occurs when Beatrice employs a disguise to enable her to deliver a key to her lover Lead when he is imprisoned. Beatrice dons a “gold-rimmed black cloak and a broad, shadowing hat” to hide her “mahogany hair” (116) and appears to her lover as Chancy. Here her racial drag is doubly subversive because it involves both gender- crossing and race-crossing as she transforms herself from black female slave to white male master.⁴⁴

Because she is able to move between different communities, Beatrice’s allegiance to either community is questioned. As Beatrice reaches puberty and returns to the plantation from her step-mother’s nunnery, both Black and white communities ponder the significance of her return and wonder how she will self-identify.⁴⁵ Her lover, Lead, questions her allegiance to the Black community and wonders: “[m]aybe she’s forgotten that she’s a slave / Like all us be. What if her heart’s frostbit? / What if she craves to bed down a white boy?” (18). The central tension between the two men, Chancy and Lead, is a power struggle over the body of Beatrice. Although she chooses to be with Lead, she is forced into submission and raped by her white slave-owner father. Through her interaction with Chancy, the brutality of slavery is exposed and the disempowerment and emasculation of her Black lover is evident. Here the central tension between these two racial groups, enslaved and free, is again enacted through the soma text of Beatrice.

The soma text of Beatrice Chancy also occasions the men’s fantasies about her as a commodity in ways that suggest the visual pleasure her soma text evokes. Lead refers to her as “balm” for his “hurt eyes,” “sweet queen bee,” and the very sight of her makes him “melt to honey” (35). Another character, Dumas, is also fixated on Beatrice’s soma text

and says “She’s honey looks wrapped in molasses silk” (35). Lead makes the association between Beatrice’s body and natural elements by describing her as a “[b]lack pearl. . . a dark / Black pearl. / Black strawberry.” He equates her soma text with his own racialized gaze so that the mere sight of her body is considered to be flavourful when he states she is “[s]ucculent t’ th’ eye” (43). Because the play draws so much attention to the visual pleasure that Beatrice’s soma text arouses, the actors and audience are involved in the voyeuristic enjoyment of *feasting* on her soma text throughout the play. In this way, the body of the actress is consumed visually by both the actors in the play and also, implicitly, by the audience who witnesses *the effect* that her soma text has on the desires and fantasies of the other characters.

Beatrice’s soma text is also continually represented through visual means by constant reference to her skin colour. Beatrice is first described as “[h]oney-tint Beatrice” (17), then variously as “a gold gal with violet hair” (22), “high-yellah gal” (102), and “dusky plum-true damson-” (18). For Lead, her “brown-bark hands” and “wine-colored hair” (65) mark her alluring Afrocentric qualities. Despite the black community’s admiration and respect for Beatrice, her racial loyalty is questioned. Lead, the most Afrocentric character worries about her loyalty to both him and her race in general because “She be half that chalk that dirties her ma” (19). Here the “dirty chalk” signifies the contamination of Beatrice’s mother by Chancy, the brutal rapist slaveholder, and it is clear in this line that generations of Black women have been victim to his sullyng touch.⁴⁶

Beatrice's soma text encodes rape and ultimately proves that "[s]lavery shackles whites to blackest crimes" (16). Although her soma text is used to arouse visual pleasure in the eyes of the male characters, Clarke also suggests that her soma text is linked with the violence of rape. Clarke's play, like Evans' and Mojica's, uses the racially hybrid woman's body to draw attention to the violence of rape and all three plays represent the rape of women of colour as part of the history of interracial encounters.

Although she is subject to both visual and physical commodification as a subject, Beatrice, like the racially hybrid characters I have analyzed in the other plays, expresses an awareness of the signifying nature of her racially hybrid soma text. Beatrice knows that her soma text is commodified, sexualized, and gives the men visual pleasure. This self-consciousness is evident when Beatrice tells Lustra that Chancy wants her body "for a piece of brown sugar, / And he wants you to watch him licking it" (109). As indicated previously, her soma text signifies something sweet and precious for most of the men in the narrative and is linked with their fantasized consumption of her throughout. This comment also suggests that Beatrice is *aware* of these looking relations between the men and her body. Such self-conscious attention to the power of the racialized gaze implicates the audience who is viewing the racially mixed actor referencing the visual delight that others take in seeing her body.

Like many racially mixed characters, Beatrice expresses her self-awareness and defies the ways in which her body is "read" by Chancy. Chancy's version of Beatrice's corrupt soma text is contrasted by *her* version of the corruption of her flesh. While Chancy refers to Beatrice's soma text as inherently corrupt, Beatrice only refers to her

body as corrupt *after* she is raped by Chancy. She tells Chancy, "I'm blood. The horrible blood" (86) and after she is raped, Beatrice refers to her soma text as "perfumed, ruddied / Carrion. Assassinated" (90) "impure" and "unclean" (97).⁴⁷ Clarke uses Beatrice's body and her self-awareness of its signifying nature to record the process of racialization and interpellation and to comment on the brutality and racist repression that ultimately fragments Beatrice's body.

In each play that I have analyzed in this chapter the soma text of the racially hybrid character is interpreted by way of the racialized gaze and is informed by the specific racial ideologies of the setting. In this play, Beatrice Chancy's body is both celebrated and reviled by women and men of both races. Clarke's representation of Beatrice Chancy is unique in that he creates a racially hybrid character who is aware of the power of the gaze and the way in which her body signifies transgression and a conflation of identities. Rather than create a character who is simply interpellated in the course of the play, Clarke has created one who is *aware* of the way in which her body signifies sexual transgression and is visually consumed. Her self-consciousness about the signifying nature of her soma text is evident when she describes her position of alterity within the community of women and men by declaring: "I'm molested / By white men's words and black men's eyes, / Pawed by white women, and condemned / By my dark sisters' blunt talk, hard looks. / They pick me apart" (72). In performance, when the actress draws attention to the signifying nature of her racially hybrid body, the audience must visually engage with the signifying nature of her biracial body, read this soma text,

and question the ways in which her body is being made available for *their* own visual consumption throughout the play.

In addition to being a fantasized object for the men, Beatrice is represented as the barrier to the successful relationship between Chancy and his wife Lustra, who claims “[s]lavery is splitting husbands from wives” (46). For the men in the play Beatrice’s racial hybridity has a negative stigma, while for the play’s white woman character it is her gender that creates the main problem with Beatrice’s soma text. In both cases, the major ideological battles are signified by the racially hybrid soma text.

The vulnerability of the racially hybrid body is manifest throughout the performance through direct reference to the ways in which it is visually consumed. In addition, in the typical slave narrative convention the mother is dead and thus the mixed race woman is even more vulnerable to being prey to lascivious white men.⁴⁸ Although Beatrice appeals to the two maternal figures in her life (the black character Deal and Lustra, the jealous white plantation wife), neither of them can offer her protection because of their gender. Again, the soma text of Beatrice is the thread linking the two racial communities, enslaved and free.

Not only does the racial hybridity of Beatrice’s soma text record the dualities of white and black, but it also is read as a signifier of her mother’s transgression and her father’s guilt. Lustra states that Chancy’s guilt is “inscribed in [Beatrice’s] flesh” (76) and she refers to Beatrice’s mother’s soma text as “criminal flesh” (73). Ironically it is Chancy who thinks of women as having corrupt flesh and yet, Beatrice refers to *his* corruption of *their* flesh as a sin. Chancy’s misogyny is clear when he tells Beatrice:

“Everything that comes puking / From between a woman’s legs is corrupt” (86). Chancy also tells his wife Lustra, “My eye slices women into commodities” and “[t]his hot thing below your waist’s the worst source of evil” (105). Clearly his misogyny extends to both black and white women’s bodies.

The body of Beatrice’s brother Dice also records the racial violence on the plantation, but in a way that highlights the signifying nature of the racially hybrid body and the different power associated with gender. The portrayal of Dice represents the role of colourism within slaveocratic societies. Dice, as a character, is a counterpoint to Beatrice because although they are both racially mixed, their response to this form of embodiment suggests different positions that a racially mixed individual may take with regards to his or her racial allegiance. Where Beatrice chooses to embrace her Afrocentricity, Dice’s privileged position as Chancy’s henchman reveals his complicity in the repression of his own community. Dice’s reflection on the significance of his own soma text is as follows: “The good that pinks my skin wells from the sap./ A white saint pumped into my ma’s black thighs” (22). Here Dice, like Ewen’s persona in “an understanding of brown,” shows the internalization of white supremacy despite his racially hybrid soma text. His assimilation is contrasted with Beatrice’s Afrocentricity and Lead’s hatred of white people throughout the play. Clarke uses Dice to represent a racially hybrid man’s hatred of his own Blackness that results from his acceptance of white supremacist ideals. The two racially hybrid characters, Dice and Beatrice, signify a range of responses to the condition of racial hybridity in slaveocratic societies.

According to Lead, whiteness is linked to brutality and his perspective is contrasted throughout the play with a positive and romantic view of Afrocentricity. Lead, the most Afrocentric male character, states: "I'm sick-sick of whiteness / White pine white spruce white sheets white wine / White lies whitewash white lightnin white / Verse white sugar white meat white smoke / White this white that. / Let black Death troop!" (80). His militant view of Afrocentricity is the force that eventually overthrows the white plantation owner, coded here as one of the "pale monsters" (81). The love that Lead and Beatrice feel for each other, an Afrocentric bond that transcends the horrors of slavery, is contrasted with the brutality that Chancy exacts upon their bodies through beatings and rape.

The play's revenge story ultimately asserts the power of an Afrocentric bond between a Black man and a racially hybrid (mulatta) woman. This Afrocentricity is represented most directly in the relationship between Lead and Beatrice but is also evoked in the play through linguistic associations. In a celebration of Blackness and Afrocentricity, Dumas refers to "Loving black smoke and black currants, / Loving blackbirds and black-eyed Susans, / Loving black sheep and black whisky, / Loving black rum and black pepper, / Loving blackest night and black women, / Loving black, black and blackish black, / Loving. . .Death grows clearer, clearer" (100-01). The play inevitably resolves the narrative tension, and acts as a judgment on slavery and whiteness by allowing the black characters to kill their white master. Although Lustra and Beatrice are hanged in the end, Lead and Dumas's words in these two quotes suggest the positive

associations with Afrocentricity that are ultimately at the core of Clarke's vision in this play.

The thread throughout all the major scenes, and the play as a whole, is the soma text of the racially mixed woman. Every scene involves the presence or absent presence of the woman's racially mixed soma text. It is not possible to address any of the central themes in Clarke's plays without reference to the centrality of Beatrice Chancy's biracial soma text. Desire, hatred, brutality, love poetry, jealousy, Afrocentricity, are all refracted through Beatrice Chancy's soma text. In this play Beatrice's body is central and must *appear* to be Afrocentric while simultaneously being mixed enough for the audience to believe that she is the result of an interracial sexual union. This imposes certain constraints on casting choices because the actor must appear mixed and be read as Black.

In addition, the other characters' continual reference to her embodiment implicates the audience in their own relationship to viewing a racially hybrid soma text on stage during the performance. They must also consider what it is that Beatrice's body signifies in order to see if they identify with other characters who refer to her as fantasized love object or sign of sexual transgression. It is through the signifying potential of the mixed race soma text that Clarke is able to craft a deep meditation on the gendered and racialized aspects of the racial ideologies that exist in this fictionalized early Canadian slaveocratic community.

A contemporary vision of a multiracial Canadian nation is presented in an entirely different way in George Elliot Clarke's *Québécois* (2003). In the context of post-colonial drama Clarke's play is inherently subversive in exclusively offering the physical stage presence of 'colored' actors. This feature alone indicates the counter-discursive possibilities of the racialized body in performance. In *Post-Colonial Drama*, Tompkins and Gilbert rightly argue that "staging the visibility of imperialism's racial other is in itself a subversive act since Anglo-European theatre has a long history of excluding non-white actors while maintaining representations of racial difference, usually constructed through costume, make-up, and/or mask" (207).

In addition to this counter-discursive staging of Canada's marginalized populations, this opera suggests a future vision of hybridity that is in keeping with contemporary discourse that examines racial hybridity in paradigms that are not predicated on white-and-other binaries. This work challenges the notion of Quebec as a solely white space because the libretto specifically casts only people of colour from different racial backgrounds. In the prelude to the libretto, Clarke uses the metaphor of alcohol to refer to the transcultural hybridity inherent in *Québécois*: "*Québécois* is an Absinthe-Amarula-Brandy-Champagne-Chartreuse-Chicoutai-Cognac-Grappa-Palm-Port-Pastis-Rum-Saki-Sangria-Scotch-Tequila-Vodka opera" (12). Clarke also invokes the spectrum of colour as a metaphor to explain the different racial and cultural amalgamation that he has brewed, when he refers to the opera as "one colored spicily with notes of ebony, dark-cherry, India indigo ink, and bronze-beige the shade of papyrus or bamboo" (12).

Clarke appeals to the audience's senses when he describes the act they will have to engage in order to appreciate the "of colour" elements in his play. In a direct address to his readers he asks that their eyes "savour lilies here—lilies laced in licorice; your ear must attempt African strings, Asian brass, European percussion, Aboriginal vocal" (12). In these ways, Clarke uses direct references to hybrid visual and aural elements in order to encourage the reader to appreciate the hybrid aesthetics implicit in this play.

With similar rhetorical flair, Clarke develops the colourism that informs his play by drawing attention to the different shades and tones of the *dramatis personae*: Laxmi Bharati is "Hindu, of Indian descent, born and raised in Montreal," Collette Chan is "[o]f Chinese origin," Ovide Rimbaud is "Haitian, of black-white ancestry, brought to Quebec by his parents in 1989," and Malcolm States is a "Montrealais jazz saxophonist of African-American and Mi'kmaq Nova Scotian heritage" (15). Of interest to my own research is the way in which the soma texts of these characters are referred to in Clarke's libretto. Their soma texts are central to the play because they enable Clarke to implicitly challenge the notion of Quebec as white, and they simultaneously suggest a multicultural, bicultural, and tricultural hybridity that is non-white. In his descriptions of the *dramatis personae*, Clarke suggests to his readers that there are many communities that are non-European, who find and make Quebec City and, by extension, Canada, their homes.

Clarke draws attention to crosscultural tension between communities of colour in order to suggest that discrimination is not solely the realm of Europeans but is also something that affects communities of colour especially when issues of crosscultural sex or marriage are concerned. This play contributes to current discussions around the

strategic essentialism that was employed during the 1980s and 1990s with regard to the collective grouping of brown immigrants as “people of colour.” *Québécoisité* challenges an easy assertion of a collective united front under the banner of “people of colour.”⁴⁹ Maria Root’s essay “Five Mixed Race Identities: From Relic to Revolution” published in *New Faces in a Changing America* points out that there has been a shift in the discourse on racial hybridity in that “dialogues on mixed race are no longer cast only in black and white; the proliferation of other racialized ethnic groups informs this discussion along with different histories” (6). This play is part of the continuing investigation into the ways in which racial and cultural boundaries are maintained *within* communities of colour. In fact, this play’s representation of a racially hybrid nation suggests a new paradigm for racial hybridity that is consistent with contemporary theoretical interest in paradigms of racial hybridity that go beyond black-white dualisms.

In each of these plays the soma text of the racially hybrid character is central to the performance and the racialized gaze is represented on stage in ways that draw attention to the performativity of race. In the first half of this chapter I have used plays written by racially hybrid writers who draw from autobiographical source material in order to demonstrate how the plays represent this unique form of embodiment and dramatize the impact of the role of the racialized gaze. When these playwrights write about racial hybridity from their own life experiences as biracial Canadians and then perform their work, they are engaged in a unique autobiographical pact with the audience. When one’s racial identity is staged, the *performativity* of racial identity is identified through *performance*. The inherent performativity of the theatre, the

performativity of race, and the complex looking relations based on the biracial soma text, become compounded by the performance element making the embodiment of racial hybridity doubly suggestive. My analysis of these plays suggests that racially hybrid playwright/actors use the stage, draw on autobiographical sources, and the conventions of theatre to draw attention to the performative aspects of racial hybridity by way of a theatrical performance.

Such performances often involve engaging the audience explicitly, through direct address, or implicitly, through references to scenes where the racially hybrid character is interpellated by the racialized gaze. These performances repeatedly require the audience to assess the somatextual signifiers of the racially hybrid performer's body. The mimetic engagement or identification with the actor can be compromised when the writer/actor draws attention to the *differences* between the largely monoracial audience and his/her own racially hybrid subjectivity. Sometimes the actor/playwright refers to experiences of being interpellated by monoracial people, and such scenes implicitly represent and dramatize the act of interpellation that is occurring between the racially hybrid actor and audience during the performance. As an example of this, I have discussed Evans' play "She Stands Still" to demonstrate her use of lighting, slides, scenes of interpellation and direct audience address to represent the performativity of racial hybridity, the multiplicity of her own corporeality, and to implicate the audience in reading her soma text.

When playwrights like Evans or Ewen refer directly to the staging of their own racial hybridity within the play, or engage the audience through direct address, the performativity of race is represented through the performance. The tension in these

autobiographical plays is predicated on the specific somatextual encoding of the playwright/actor. This specific reference to this writer/performers' soma text suggests that the performance is based on a particular somatextual *type* of racial hybridity. This autobiographical specificity compromises the possibility of another actor, even another biracial actor, playing this role. The plays are, necessarily vehicles for these specific playwright/actors, or for other actors who have the same somatextual encoding of racial hybridity.

In plays where racially hybrid actors perform their own racially hybrid identity and those of their monoracial parents, as is evident in Kane's *Confessions of an Indian/Cowboy*, the triadic structure complements the central character's acceptance of a third space paradigm for her racial identity. Ewen also uses a triadic structure and the metaphor of a brown sweater to represent her understanding of her racial hybridity. Taylor uses the image of the tree to represent wholeness and the site where the main biracial character achieves a syncretic fusion of his Native and non-Native self and begins a journey to further indigenize.

In the second half of this chapter I have changed my focus slightly by analyzing the racially hybrid soma text and the role of the racialized gaze in order to assess how contemporary Canadian fictional plays stage racial hybridity. When these plays dramatize moments of interpellation there is a doubleness in the performance because the racially hybrid actor is *also* on stage being interpellated by the audience. These plays, which are *not* based on autobiographical source material, are also constrained by references to the complex somatextual encoding of the biracial actor in character descriptions, or in direct

references within the plays to the somatextual encoding of the actor. As a result, casting considerations are necessarily informed by these specific references to the *type* of racially hybrid soma text that is needed for the racially hybrid actor to signify the form of racially hybrid embodiment that is central to the drama of the play i.e., Summer must look white (Taylor), Beatrice Chancy must have a certain skin tone (Clarke), Simon must be able to be “read” as Native—for the dramatic centre of each of the plays to work. In such performances, the audience is necessarily engaged in the reading of the biracial soma text of the character explicitly when direct reference is made to the complex readings of this form of embodiment. In this way, the body of the racially hybrid actor makes the viewing relations between actor and audience more visible.

In *Beatrice Chancy*, Clarke uses the concept of racial hybridity to address racial ideologies and essentialism. Racial hybridity is represented as the threat of contamination. In this way, racial hybridity is invoked as a trope to address the larger themes that are signified by the indelible corporeality of Beatrice Chancy’s racially hybrid body. Mojica goes beyond national configurations of racial hybridity to stage a transhistoric, transcultural racial hybridity. She uses multiple casting and the conflation of contemporary and historical characters to physically represent the theme of transformation and the ways in which racially hybrid women embody transhistoric and transnational ideologies.

Clarke’s play *Beatrice Chancy* is a revision of the tragic mulatto story, with the body of Beatrice signifying the major ideological battles in the play. Mojica also rewrites tragic stories of conquest and tragic half-breed stories in her play *Pocahontas and the*

Blue Spots. Mojica goes beyond national understandings of racial hybridity to suggest the transnational and transcultural links between racially hybrid people throughout the Americas. In these way these playwrights employ racial hybridity as a trope ways that offer different possibilities for racially hybrid individuals to map their identities.

Clarke uses bodies of colour in his play *Québécois* to challenge the notion of Quebec as white. By casting actors of colour in the principal roles, Clarke's play asks the audience to engage in the racialized gaze and consider the marginalized communities that make up Quebec and Canada. The tension between the different characters represents the differences between communities of colour in Canada and this representation of crossracial tensions and, consequently, the play critiques as easy alliance between "people of colour." *Québécois* suggests a new paradigm for understanding racial hybridity that does not privilege a racially hybrid nation that is predicated on a white and "other" binary, but rather one that suggests a multiracial amalgamated city, province, and nation.

The centrality of the racially hybrid soma text is evident in each of these plays. Each play in its own unique way uses somatextual encoding of racial hybridity to comment on the signifying nature of the soma text. Character descriptions and references to the specific form of somatextual cues within the plays themselves constrain the casting decisions for the director. In addition, the performance is used to draw attention to the performativity of race, and the theatrical conventions such as stage craft, simple props, slides or direct address assist the playwright in suggesting the impact of the racialized gaze on the soma text of the racially hybrid character/actor. Plays that refer to the embodiment of the racially hybrid actor within the play itself are doubly suggestive of the

way in which the body has been interpellated by the other actors on the stage and by the audience which is also reading the racially hybrid somatext of the actor for clues of authenticity in order to follow the drama of the play.

Performance is an excellent medium to highlight the signifying nature of the racially hybrid body. The inherent looking relations between actor and audience in theatrical performance become powerful vehicles for playwrights to explore the different ways in which racially hybrid bodies are subject to the racialized gaze, to dramatize the process of interpellation, and to revise, control or destabilize the power, impact and trauma of being interpellated by making the relations between the racially hybrid somatext and the racialized gaze visible. In autobiographical plays the racially hybrid body of the writer/actor verifies the truth claims that are presented in the text of the play. Taylor and Mojica's plays present racially hybrid characters that are removed from the constraints of autobiography and racial hybridity becomes a vehicle for them to explore racial hybridity at the communal and national level. Clarke's play is the most removed from autobiographical source material and the issues of racial ideologies and divisions between black and white communities are addressed through the trope of racial hybridity. In *Québécoisité*, racial hybridity becomes a metaphor for a new non-white of the paradigm of Canadian nation.

CONCLUSION

“D’ou viens-tu?” “Quelles sont tes souches?”

“Tes parents sont de quel pays?”

(Hill, *Black Berry, Sweet Juice*, 174)

Generally speaking, my dissertation is devoted to an exploration of the unique ways in which racial hybridity functions in contemporary Canadian narratives—be they in autobiography, fiction or drama. A close textual examination of racial hybridity across racial and generic divisions provides an important methodological approach to addressing literary representations of racial hybridity. I have developed this crossracial and crossgeneric methodology to posit some theoretical contributions to the growing body of critical mixed-race studies, hybridity theories and theories on autobiography.

In examining racial hybridity in the Canadian context and employing a crossracial methodology, I explicitly assert the importance of including Métis and “halfblood” Native literature and paradigms in the analysis of racial hybridity in Canada. In proposing the new category of biracial autobiography I argue that biracial identity necessarily demands a reconfiguration of autobiographical theories that are based on monoracial identity. By examining the numerous ways in which racial hybridity is coded in a number of different Canadian sources, and locating similarities that cross racial and generic divisions, I have outlined some of the narrative complexities involved in representing racial hybridity. The construction of an autobiographical voice affects the autobiographical pact that is developed between the writer and the reader and suggests that the truth claims are based on the lived experience(s) of the writer. I have also diverted my attention from the genre of autobiography in order to explore some of the complexities involved in using racial hybridity as a trope in fiction or drama, while still paying close attention to the construction of the autobiographical voice in these genres.¹

In autobiographies, the biracial autobiographical voice is utilized to document the epistemological and ontological ramifications of racial hybridity. The racially hybrid soma text is repeatedly referred to as a unique and complex form of embodiment. It is also evoked to detail the effects of racially hybrid corporeality on what is often represented as the traumatic experience of racial identity formation for racially hybrid individuals in Canada. In fiction, the racially hybrid autobiographical voice is utilized to articulate the ambulatory and contradictory nature of a racially hybrid somatic experience and the possibility of different readings of the racially hybrid soma text. In fiction racial hybridity can be framed by way of the trope of racial drag in ways that suggest the character's agency to self-define and to suggest the possibility that exists for hybrid characters to "fake it" and "pass" as monoracial.

In autobiographical plays, the conflation of the racially hybrid performer's experience of racial hybridity in Canada *and* the performative aspects of the soma text are central to the theatrical rendering of racial hybridity on stage. When a writer performs racial hybridity on stage by way of an autobiographical voice, he/she is using the theatricality and viewing relations inherent in performance to draw attention to the performativity of race through emphasizing his/her own corporeality. A performance based on a racially hybrid character presents some interesting complications in terms of casting, audience-actor engagements and complex autobiographical pacts in cases where the play is written and performed by a racially hybrid writer/performer. In my final chapter, I have argued that dramatic accounts of racial hybridity in contemporary Canadian literature represent the staging of racial hybridity by drawing attention to the

multiply-coded racially hybrid soma text and by demonstrating the impact of the racialized gaze.

In compiling this research into three distinct chapters I hope to have demonstrated that a critical analysis of biracial autobiographies can yield insight into the narrative elements that are present in “mixed race” fiction and drama. In particular, the autobiographies that I address focus on the representation of the racially hybrid soma text as a unique form of embodiment, address the impact of the racialized gaze that “reads” this soma text, and outline the way in which different readings of one’s racially hybrid soma text informs the development of a racial identity. These elements are also found in fiction and drama that feature racially hybrid characters. Thus, I have applied a crossgeneric analysis and conclude that there is a common thread that connects these primary texts, despite their generic differences.

Racially hybrid Canadians are a part of a growing demographic in Canada that consists of multiracial individuals who define themselves variously as hyphenated Canadians, biracial, crossblood, multiracial, Métis or as racially mixed Native people who do not identify themselves as Métis or half-breed. These writers often use an autobiographical voice and offer paradigms and metaphors that comment on the material experience of racial hybridity in Canada. When examined crossracially and across select genres, these new narratives suggest a growing awareness of discourse around the material effects of racial hybridity in Canada. Racial hybridity is one of the defining features that unites this work and each text, in its own way, addresses the Canadian socio-cultural, historical and legal contexts.

It is my contention that these narratives are unique and form their own canon because racial hybridity is represented *by* racially hybrid writers and not, as it has been in the past, by people outside of this community. The self-representational aspect of this literature represents a newly emerging voice in Canadian literature. In short, this new body of work represents racially hybrid people as subjects in their own narratives rather than as objects. The self-representational aspects of these narratives provide insight into the impact of interpellation and the numerous ways in which racially hybrid Canadians have been defined by, traumatized by and responded to multiple experiences of interpellation.

In Chapter One I outlined some of the key terms that address the complexity of racially hybrid corporeality—most notably my concepts of the racially hybrid body as *soma text* and the process of interpellation by way of the *racialized gaze*. In Chapter Two I applied these terms to the analysis of a particularly interesting contemporary Canadian construction of a racially hybrid autobiographical voice, considered the signifying nature of the racially hybrid soma text and explored the impact of the racialized gaze in terms of the trauma of interpellation. In both chapters I also considered the effect of such representations on the autobiographical pact that is established between the writer and reader.

As a transition to my third chapter, I considered the hybrid aesthetics involved in biotexts and (auto)biographies in terms of their representation of the racially hybrid soma text and the impact of the racialized gaze. I argued that the hybrid aesthetics of this genre are compounded by the racially hybrid character such that we may think of the hybrid

form of the narrative and the hybrid character's body as parallel and mutually informing constructs. In the main section of Chapter Three, I offered a sampling of hybridity theories and literary theories on passing narratives as a frame for my examination of representations of racial hybridity in contemporary Canadian fiction. I consciously chose novels written by Native writers to illuminate the narrative possibilities of representing racial drag in fiction. I suggested that these works are Canadian versions of passing narratives and offered the terms *racial drag*, *lateral racial drag* and *cultural drag* as ways of identifying the performative aspects of race as represented in this sample of fiction. I invoked these terms in my close analysis of contemporary Canadian fiction in order to address the potential for agency that the performance of racial drag offers in fiction.

In my final chapter I extended the notion of the performative aspects of racial hybridity and returned to the thread of autobiographical pacts in order to analyze the impact of racially hybrid writer/actors performing multiple identities in autobiographical plays. I opened this chapter with an investigation of the impact of staging one's own racial hybridity and considered the effect that this form of theatrical engagement may have on the autobiographical pact that is established between the writer/actor and audience. I closed this chapter by continuing with my central investigation into the representation of racially hybrid characters. I engaged in a close analysis of contemporary Canadian plays that represent the role of the racialized gaze, the signifying nature of the racially hybrid body, and the trauma of interpellation in ways that I had argued were also central to autobiographies and fiction.

What is, of course, notable in all of these representations of racial hybridity is the complex signifying nature of the racially hybrid soma text and the power of the racialized gaze. In short, I moved from offering terminology to map the experience of racial hybridity, to analyzing representations of the lived experience of racially hybrid corporeality in autobiographies, to offering narrative possibilities for representing racial hybridity by way of passing or performing racial drag, to exploring the complexities involved in the physical embodiment of racial hybridity on stage. I have chosen to divide this research into discrete chapters in order to move from concepts, to lived experience, to fictionalized racially hybrid characters, to physical bodies, all the while keeping focused on how these works represent racial hybridity in contemporary Canadian contexts.

In sum, my dissertation suggests that the representations of racial hybridity found in Canadian contemporary literature enable one to establish critical terrain that can be used to develop new theories on the literary uses of racial hybridity. These new models, methodologies and insights have great utility in the growing field of critical mixed-race studies, hybridity theories, hybrid aesthetics, and the field of autobiography. It is my hope that these terms can be usefully engaged with in the context of new courses that analyze mixed-race literature.

Much of the recent mixed-race literature and many theories of hybridity suggest a radical revision of the process of racialization for the twenty-first century because they draw attention to the differences between monoracial and multiracial identity formations. Previous paradigms that have been used to represent “of colour” and “white” racial identities need to be revised in order to accommodate the differences between the

monoracial and multiracial identities that these narratives identify. One of the many discursive and ideological ramifications of what I have charted includes an increased understanding of the complexities surrounding a newly emerging multiracial consciousness and its effect on literary aesthetics. In particular, the hypervisibility of the soma text and the visual elements involved in the racialized gaze—scopophilia and scopophobia—have important ramifications for critical theories about the gaze and looking relations in the disciplines of visual media such as film studies and performance theory.

I believe that the contemporary Canadian literary debates have gone beyond questions that animated earlier discussions of the canon. These debates will be affected by this growing discourse on racial hybridity. Many early Canadian canonical debates were formed by attempts to understand the character and geography of the nation and the ethos of these discussions was captured in the classic Frygian question: “Where is Here?” These canonical debates were extended in response to the emerging voice of “writers of colour” engaged in postcolonial resistance by “writing back” in the nineteen eighties and nineties. These writers critiqued the exclusivity of white privilege in early Canadian literary canonical debates and further animated discussions of the Canadian canon by adding questions of race to these canonical debates. In the nineties Peter Dickinson’s phrase “Here is Queer” was a cheeky response to the rhetorical question “Where is Here?” and this phrase was used to draw attention to the role of gender and queer identities in Canadian literature. In closing, I would like to offer the phrase that I used in the title page of my opening chapter, “I am what I am and I am here,” as a simple way of

thinking about the self-representational and autobiographical elements that are evident in contemporary Canadian literature and drama that features racial hybridity. This phrase is also offered as a response to the questions “Where are you from?” and “What are you” which, I hope to have demonstrated, are at the thematic center of contemporary work that represents racial hybridity in Canada. Looking forward, this research contributes new narratives of the nation, provides new and complex approaches to identity, offers new aesthetic considerations and represents racial ideologies in ways that go beyond earlier national configurations. It is my sincere hope that this research, my critical terms and this phrase may stimulate discussions of multiracial embodiment as represented in contemporary Canadian literature and drama.

AFTERWORD

“Here I am. Je suis ici.”:

Performing racial Hybridity/Performing self

Soma Text

Michelle La Flamme, March 2005.

I am
a
walking opposition
living in my skin
a contradiction.

a cyborg
an alien
an anomaly
a tradition
unrecognized
but rampant

the holy hybrid
the hybridity revolution
the wholeblooded halfbreed

I know you've heard it all before
Racial Mathematics
The tireless multiplicity
a dire complexity

But I *am*
a walking opposition
living in my skin
a contradiction.

this soma text is mine
through all my drag rituals

a spectre
a curse
a ghost
a liminal figure
a subaltern hybrid lily
and at times an amphibious creature

the soma text is read
lies and contradiction

a taboo,
peeks out from behind
an illicit affair,
indelibly etched
on my skin
a hieroglyphic
of
your worst nightmare
an abberation of purity
a third-space
signifier.

I *search*
for the caramel that is my skin
found on the ones with the knowing gaze
with the skin that has been punctuated
and
assailed with racial ideologies

I search
for the *caramel* that is my skin
signifying something familiar
a lost mirror
a thread
a bridge
a mixture
a hybrid
a hyphen
bloodlines

your greatest fantasy
and
your worst fear.

“Why, you’re a signifier!”
 they say,
 “of large proportions...
 endless intimacies.”

racial amalgamation
 the duality of
 yin and yang
 unity
 continuity
 or even the sign of the future
 or so they say.

interbreeding
 crossraciality
 synthesis
 junction
 they repeat.
 transculturalist
 post-modern
 post-race
 they theorize.
 walking assimilation
 they discuss.
 revisionist
 authenticity tester
 monoracial buster
 they argue.

meanwhile,
 I still
 search
 for the caramel that is *my* skin
 with a transcoded gaze
 wired to detect
 coyote
 legba
 trickster borderlines
 combinations
 alchemy

 fusion

conflation

soma text
the hidden
and
erect
nation.

I search.

Soma text
Fulblooded & Halfbred
forum for meditation

Ambiguously Hybrid Body
with your
Fulblooded & halfbred
Soma text.

I see you seeing me

Holy hybrid
Here I am
I say.

Read me.

The experience of growing up in Canada without somatextual mirrors and without access to writing that reflected my own experience as a racially hybrid woman has motivated my research. In conversations with Dr. Janet Giltrow, the Graduate Chair of the English Department, and Dr. Sherrill Grace, my Supervisor, I identified the strange position of my voice and the “Othering” that I was engaged in whenever I referred to racially hybrid Canadian in this dissertation—a move that necessitated distancing myself from my own narrative and my own embodiment despite my insistence on the importance of the autobiographical voice and the necessity of self-representation. Both of these women inspired and encouraged me to think through my own relationship with the material. They suggested that such a rhetorical move was an important scholarly exercise and one which might be very rewarding for me personally as a racially hybrid individual who is both subject and writer of this dissertation. So, in this afterword I have attempted to reconsider my own embodiment and write from my own voice as a part of completing this dissertation. At this point it is cathartic for me to write about the crucial events that have impacted my approach to this topic and have sparked my curiosity about certain dynamics that occur when one reads, writes or performs racial hybridity in Canada. In the following reflection I address my role as a racially hybrid Canadian, as a writer, a reader, a performer and as an audience member.

Throughout my decade of studies in English literature I have rarely had the pleasure of reading a text that features a racially hybrid character. I have never previously had the delight of analyzing literature that has been written by racially hybrid Canadians. Despite this lack of academic exposure to racially hybrid characters in literature, in my

creative writing I have often addressed my own corporeality. As a consequence of engaging in research for this dissertation, I have been profoundly influenced by reading contemporary Canadian autobiographies, fiction and plays and assessing the narrative possibilities for representing racial hybridity. Like the writers whose work I principally analyze, I believe that I have been actively contributing to the growing discourse that addresses this unique form of embodiment in my creative writing and experience as a performer. Now, all of these points of interest and experiences have come to bear on my first theoretical and analytical approach to mixed-race literature in Canada.

My insistent assertion of the importance of seeing people who mirror one's own soma text has been informed by my own search for somatextual mirrors in Canada. I was twenty-five before I saw the first racially hybrid woman outside of my own family system who mirrored my own racially hybrid soma text. We were locked in what felt like a frozen tableau as we inspected each other's bodies and quickly recognized a parallel in our somatextual configurations. This woman was Mercedes Baines and that initial moment stimulated copious writing and reflections on the impact of this unique form of embodiment. Two years later I found myself in Martinique and witnessed communities of people who, like me, were an amalgamation of French and Caucasian bloodlines. Again, I sat agape in open cafés watching people who could have been from my own family and noting the comfort of being invisible in this community. These two moments were the stimulus to my thought processes about the importance of somatextual mirrors and gave me much insight into the different folk readings of race that occur in largely monoracial sites like Canada as compared to largely hybridized sites like Martinique.

When I left academia with an M.A. in hand in 1994 I worked as an actor and filmmaker and traveled extensively. As an artist I found myself gravitating towards performances that dealt with questions of hybridity and began to think about the ways in which racial hybridity is represented by different artists of colour. Such work often addressed cultural hybridity and linguistic hybridity but rarely addressed racial hybridity. I turned to the American context, made frequent trips to the Marcus Garvey bookstore in San Francisco and began to hungrily devour anything I could find that spoke to issues of racial hybridity. I was still troubled by the overdetermined American preoccupation with “white” and “black” admixtures in much of this writing as it seemed to obscure and simplify the complexity of multiraciality that transcended these binaries.

In Canada, I was disturbed by the lack of discourse on racial hybridity and, in particular, the segregated ways in which specific festivals, conferences or communities addressed their own particular form of racial hybridity without extending the analysis to other representations of racial hybridity. This experience has informed my emphasis on the importance of crossracial analyses and has led me to believe that no *particular* experience of racial hybridity can stand in for others and yet, I could identify overlapping conditions that impact racially hybrid people that could be fruitfully addressed in comparative crossracial and crossgeneric analyses. This was the start of what would turn out to be my methodology for this dissertation.

I was struck by the centrality of the soma text in this contemporary writing and also by the representation of the need for somatextual mirrors, which was consistently represented crossracially. The mirroring experiences that have had the most lasting

impression on me were the times when I was an audience member witnessing performers who mirrored my own somatextual discoveries and complexities on stage. It is only in the last decade, as I approached the age of forty, that I have had the visual pleasure of seeing racially hybrid characters on stage who mirrored aspects of my own soma text and my own experience of racialization in Canada.

Just as my experience as a racially hybrid audience member was profoundly affected by witnessing these recent productions, I know that in staging my own racial hybridity and asking audience members to engage in their own racialized gaze, I have used my racially hybrid soma text to further elaborate on the transformative and potentially liberating genre of performance. As a contemporary Canadian racially hybrid writer/performer I consider some of my work as pioneer initiatives in that I strove to represent a racially hybrid character on stage as early as 1994, despite the lack of performances that might have mirrored my own experience of racial hybridity. In 2000 I was asked to present a paper for the Transculturalisms conference and decided to return to my performance background to write a play "Mixed Messages" instead of choosing an academic voice and distancing myself from the topic. By using the conventions of theatre to express our identities, racially hybrid writer/performers can address the daily performative aspects of racial hybridity and the somatextual semiotics that are so fundamental to the experience of racial hybridity.

As we have seen from the analysis of racially hybrid bodies on stage, many writer/actors write from an autobiographical source when staging racial hybridity. In sharing this corporeality, we reveal the complexities of racial hybridity. The

writer/performer often writes about the experience of having his/her soma text read but also, most importantly, the actor will often explicitly or implicitly invite the monoracialist audience members into an engagement with the racialized gaze. In these moments, the racially hybrid body of the actor is offered to the audience to be read for its semiotics. This self-conscious use of performance to directly address the audience's gaze makes the relations between performance and performativity more visible, as I have argued in Chapter Four. This doubleness in reading the racially hybrid body of the actor and the racially hybrid character he or she is performing has interesting impacts both on casting considerations and the autobiographical pact that is established between the writer/performer and the audience. When the audience understands racial identity through the prism of monoracial identification, there is an inherent gap between the audience and the actor on stage when the actor is drawing attention to multiracial or biracial identity.

I was aware that the raced body on stage had a particular history in the Americas and recognized that there was more to such a presentation than simply a theatrical exercise. The racially hybrid body has a history on stage that needs to be understood as a context informing contemporary theatrical representations of racial hybridity. Brown bodies have inherited a history of hypervigilance with regards to their soma texts. The legally enslaved body, the centrality of the raced body in discussions of emancipation, and the body as constituted by the law as a determinant of status for Native people, are some of the many ways in which racially hybrid bodies have been subject to legal and political "readings." The legal and genocidal repercussions of embodiment for Native and African-Americans is such that any discussion of these identities necessitates

an acknowledgement of the historical terror of genocide that is signified by bodies of colour, particularly one that is represented on a platform to be read by witnesses. I began to think of the ways in which these historical realities of being placed before an adjudicator or being evaluated on an auction block had parallels to the racially hybrid performer on stage before an audience. Self-representation of the raced body on stage can invert the power dynamic of being represented as "Other" on the auction block, or in front of the judge or legal authorities when the actor asserts the power of the gaze and privileges self-representation in order to claim the right to speak and move on stage at liberty. This particular line of investigation, the history of raced bodies on display for specific legal purposes and the relationship between the court docket and the stage, is beyond the scope of this paper but it is something that is always already the backdrop for my own analysis.

The visual relationships between the racialized body of colour and the onlooker, as well as the power of mirroring have had a profound impact on me as a racially hybrid Canadian. Only recently have I had the visual pleasure of viewing the racially hybrid character on stage speaking to her own subjectivity. This mirroring for me was an important stage in the development of my racially hybrid subjectivity based on crossracial affiliations.

In addition to my engagement with this set of looking relations as a performer, I have also been witness to other racially hybrid characters from the point of view of an audience member. The highlights of this visual pleasure in somatextual mirroring started with witnessing Margo Kane perform *Moonlodge* at the Vancouver East Cultural Centre.

I saw a Native mixedblood writer/performer work through the process of this complex racial identity and gained an intimate sense of a shared experience of racial hybridity. I began to notice the different ways in which audience members responded to this performance and became acutely aware of the times when the largely monoracial audience was distanced from a mimetic engagement with the racially hybrid character. We laughed and wept at distinctly different moments in the play and these experiences informed my analysis of the autobiographical pact between the audience and actor. This experience affected me in profound ways but, unfortunately, the next opportunity for me to witness a racially hybrid actor drawing attention to his/her corporeality would not come for some time.

Years later, I had the privilege of witnessing Margo Kane perform *Confessions of an Indian/Cowboy* and was struck by the ease with which her semi-autobiographical character performed both her parents' racial identities, and as a racially hybrid character. I recently had the visual delight of watching an actress perform in the first Canadian production of the play "Birthright" at the Jericho Arts Centre in Vancouver. I understood the dilemmas faced by the racially hybrid character in profound ways. I noted the ways in which the tragic half-breed story was altered by way of the central character exacting revenge, and felt excited by the ways in which the actress followed a narrative that resonated with my own experiences of racial hybridity in complementary rather than parallel ways.

Following this experience of somatextual mirroring, I had the profound experience of witnessing an actress perform Pauline E. Johnson's poem "A Cry from an Indian Wife" at the Vancouver Museum. During the recital of Johnson's work, I was filled with the visual delight of seeing an actor represent some of the complexities involved in the experience of racial hybridity in Canada. The occasion was the opening of an exhibit featuring Pauline E. Johnson's costume. I was deeply impacted by looking at the costume carefully laid behind glass and thought of the woman who created it and performed the duality of her racial hybridity on stage in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. As I gazed at this costume, I wondered how I had made costume choices in my own autobiographical theatrical *performances* and also in the daily *performative* gestures of racially hybridity that I enact. This experience sparked my own deep investigation into the role of clothing and gestures that mark a racially hybrid person as authentic or inauthentic depending on how they are read and gave me insight into the idea of performing racial drag.

Within the same time span I witnessed the complexities of racial hybridity being represented on stage through the character of Summer, in Drew Hayden Taylor's play *The Buz'Gem Blues* at the Firehall Arts Theatre. In this play, I identified with the Native characters who challenged Summer's ideas about being Native and showed her that indigeneity had everything to do with Native blood-quantum, soma text, community and, most importantly, lived experience. This theme I had also confronted many times in Native communities and Taylor's play seemed to use humor to explore this essentialism in a way that perpetuated rather than deconstructed it.

In the same theatre, a year later, I would witness another performance which staged the multiplicity involved in racial hybridity in terms of the same essentialist belief but this time from the voice of the character that could have been Summer herself. Racially hybrid writer/performer Tasha Faye Evans invited the audience to participate in assessing her link to an indigenous identity while simultaneously staging how she self-identified in "She Stands Still." I was deeply moved by her use of theatrical conventions to draw attention to her multiply-coded body and began to think through the different means that are available to an actor to represent multiple and conflicted or complex assignments of race.

I was equally moved by the candid ways in which racially hybrid writer/performer, Lesley Ewen asked the audience to engage in assessing her claim to a monoracial identity despite growing up as a white identified "brown" woman. When I witnessed the video production of Ewen's play "an understanding of brown" I saw yet another actor/writer/woman who, like me, was a racially hybrid Canadian whose performance on stage mirrored many aspects of my own racially hybrid subjectivity. Unlike Ewen, I had never considered taking the time before or after my own performances to engage with the audience and bring them into the story by way of their own reflections on the content. Ewen went further than the other actors I had witnessed to unmask herself as a racially hybrid performer and address the audience as a racially hybrid Canadian. I started to consider the impact of such a gesture in terms of its impact on the audience members who may have felt attacked or represented as part of a stereotypical unaware Canadian white mass. I also began to think about the importance of

speaking from and through my own autobiographical voice and not simply by way of my construction of a racially hybrid character.

The threads of my own investigation have been brought together in this dissertation and placed within a context that allows me to theorize about the representation of racial hybridity. In conclusion I must note that this research is profoundly influenced by my experience of living in a body that is indelibly coded with racial hybridity, and my self-conscious awareness of the signifying nature of my particular form of corporeality. In earlier drafts of this dissertation I wanted to bring my own voice into each chapter and I struggled to resist this temptation for fear that the research would be judged as too subjective. I trust that my insight into the various nuances involved in this form of corporeality has enabled me to speak about, and through, my own embodiment in a particularly intimate and productive way by choosing to adopt a more objective voice. In order to counter the tendency to make sweeping claims based on my own experience of racial hybridity, I have strategically engaged in a crossracial methodology and tried to locate and justify my own analysis by using sample texts from different genres and theoretical frames. However, although my subjective voice only appears explicitly in this afterward, my perspective and foci throughout this dissertation are irrevocably mine and are informed by my own subjective experience of living in the contours of this particular racially hybrid body in a contemporary Western Canada setting.

Endnotes

¹ Some recent examples of contemporary research that still invokes the term "race" include Parker & Song (2001); Tizard and Phoenix (1993); O'Hearn (1998); Funderburg (1994).

² I use the term race throughout this dissertation to refer to the ideological construct rather than to any biological notion of racial difference.

³ In Western Canada, Glenn Deer and Fred Wah have offered courses in Mixed Race Literature at the University of British Columbia and University of Calgary respectively. Maria Campbell recently informed me that Janice Acoose teaches Mixed Race Literature at First Nations University in Saskatoon and Dr. Kristina Fagan teaches Mixed Race Literature at the Department of English at the University of Saskatchewan. I have also taught a course in Mixed Race Literature as part of the UBC Humanities Course offered to women in the Downtown Eastside in a program called Women's Humanities Year (2002, 2003).

⁴ Disciplines such as English Literature, Theatre, Film, First Nations Studies, and Women Studies have increasingly been taking up issues of race and representation in Canadian art forms.

⁵ Interestingly, both Vizenor and Owens address the concept of racial hybridity from within Native paradigms of identity but do *not* include Métis identity in their analyses despite the fact that it is the most prominent and legally identifiable "mixedblood" identity in North America. My crossracial methodology seeks to rectify this omission.

⁶ In this way, I reconfigure Mensah's rather dualistic thinking about race and the process of racialization because even minorities who may experience racism from the hegemonic white center can also enact forms of discrimination. I refer to these acts as discrimination because without the larger superstructure of systemic racism, these individual acts cannot be called racism.

⁷ Another term that is important in the area of critical mixed race studies is "transracial" which, according to Root "indicates movement across racial boundaries and is sometimes synonymous with interracial. This term is most notably used in the context of adoption across racial lines" (xi). See Maria Root (ed.), *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the New Frontier* (London: Sage, 1996), pp. xiii-15.

⁸ In her analysis of biracial women living in Toronto, Critical Mixed Race theorist Minelle Mahtani makes the important point that “facialisation” is key to understanding how one’s soma text is read. See Minelle Mahtani. “‘I’m a Blonde-haired, Blue-eyed Black Girl’: Mapping Mobile Paradoxical Spaces among Multiethnic Women in Toronto, Canada” in Parker and Song (eds.) *Rethinking ‘Mixed Race’* (London: Pluto Press, 2001)173-190.

⁹ See Jayne Ifekwunigwe. “Re-Membering ‘Race’: On Gender, ‘Mixed Race’ and Family in the English-African Diaspora” in Parker and Song (eds.) *Rethinking ‘Mixed Race’* (London: Pluto Press, 2001)42-64.

¹⁰ See the autobiographical novel written by Charlotte Williams, *Sugar and Slate* (Wales: Planet Books, 2002).

¹¹ The last anti-miscegenation law was challenged in the Supreme Court in the famous Loving case (*Loving vs. the State of Virginia*) on June 12, 1967. This case became a precedent for challenging the anti-miscegenation laws in the United States of America. Because this case, in legal terms, involved a black-white marriage, the racial hybridity of Mildred Jeter was obscured. Maria Root argues that Mildred Jeter was “a Black Native American woman” (1996, xv) and in fact, the case involved a marriage between a racially mixed woman and a white man. Given that racially mixed people in America were considered Black, a number of *specific* experiences that racially hybrid people have had have been obscured by the racial ideology that “one drop” of Black blood makes an individual Black.

¹² For example, in Canada Métis people have often been referred to in derogatory terms as the products of rape. This common notion informs how many Métis people see themselves even if, in reality, their ancestors were not raped.

¹³ See also James F. Brooks (ed.) *Confounding the Color Line: The Indian-Black Experience* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2002) for an interesting discussion of other types of racial mixing in Native communities.

¹⁴ See Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963) for further elaboration on the idea of interpellation and an exploration of the relationship between the soma text and the process of racialization.

¹⁵ This concept will be explored more fully in Chapter Three, where I locate and analyze instances of Native characters performing different racial identities in contemporary Canadian fiction.

¹⁶ In the opening to *Diamond Grill* Fred Wah cites a passage from his poem "Waiting for Saskatchewan." This passage indicates the ways in which faking it can become a strategy for dealing with a multiply coded biracial somatext: "You were part Chinese I tell them. / They look at me. I'm pulling their leg. / So, I'm Chinese too and that's why my name is Wah. / They don't really believe me. That's o.k. / When you're not 'pure' you just make it up." In Chapter Three I analyze Wah's notions of faking it and I argue that the contemporary Canadian fiction that I analyze represents passing as a form of "faking it," which I prefer to refer to as racial or cultural drag.

¹⁷ See Minelle Mahatani. "'I'm a Blonde-haired, Blue-eyed Black Girl': Mapping Mobile Paradoxical Spaces among Multiethnic Women in Toronto, Canada" in Parker and Song (eds.) *Rethinking 'Mixed Race'* (London: Pluto Press, 2001) 173-190.

¹⁸ I suggest that racial hybridity may be understood as a signifier of, among many things, Bhabha's "third-space" paradigm.

¹⁹ One very obvious and specifically Canadian paradigm for hybridity exists within the Métis nation, whose very existence was founded on racial hybridity. By looking to Métis and other "half-blood" paradigms for racial hybridity I hope to illuminate some of the specifically Canadian paradigms for understanding racial hybridity.

²⁰ In *Performing Hybridities*, Joseph May draws attention to "new hybrid identities" and suggests that the idea of a third space "keeps interrupting the seamless narrative of oppressed and oppressor, colonizer and colonized, First World and Third World, dominant and subaltern" (9). See Joseph May, *Performing Hybridities* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1999).

²¹ For an elaboration on the theoretical and aesthetic considerations that Sneja Gunew has employed to analyze Canadian art that represents hybridity, see <http://transculturalisms.arts.ubc.ca>.

²² This notion of the Zebra is used in the work of biracial Canadian writer Suzette Mayr who published a chapbook called *Zebra Talk* (Calgary, AB: Disorientation Chapbooks, 1991) Mercedes Baines also

published a poem entitled "Half-Baked Zebra Cake," *West Coast Line* 31, no.1 (Spring/Summer 1997): 132-33. Lawrence Hill's protagonist refers to himself as "Zebra Incorporated" at the end of his novel *Any Known Blood* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1997). These writers are some of the key examples that Clarke uses to construct his concept of a "Zebra Poetics." Where Wah pays attention to the role of the hyphen, Clarke's metaphor pays attention to multiply-coded bodies. Many racially hybrid individuals do not frame their mixedness by way of a hyphen and this is one limitation to the transferability of Wah's spatialization. In addition, because racial hybridity suggests a range of identities that go beyond "black and white" admixtures, Clarke's metaphor is also inherently limited in its transferability to different types of racial hybridity. However, these theories indicate that there is a growing interest in understanding the aesthetics involved in writing from a racially hybridized position and in trying to map the effects of this form of embodiment in ways that are relative to the experience of racial hybridity in Canada. See George Elliot Clarke, "Canadian Biraciality and Its 'Zebra' Poetics" *Odysseys Home: Mapping African-Canadian Literature* (Toronto: U of T P, 2002) 211-237.

²³ Other Canadian work that deals with racial hybridity in Canada includes *Hyphenation* which was a special issue devoted to mixed-race issues in Calgary's *absinthe* magazine in 1996. Vancouver's *West Coast Line* also published a special double issue devoted to an examination of race entitled *Colour. An Issue* that was co-edited by Fred Wah and Roy Miki. Biracial Canadian Peter Hudson was the guest editor of a publication of *West Coast Line* in 1997 entitled "North: New Directions in African-Canadian Writing." These publications indicate an interest in issues of race and representation in Canadian literature.

²⁴ While the term "mixed race" is still used to identify racially hybrid people, it is more accurate to refer to such people as being racially mixed, if the term "mixed" is to be used at all. In this dissertation I prefer to use the terms racial hybridity or to refer to racially hybrid individuals in order to avoid perpetuating the idea of "pure" and "mixed" subjectivity. The term "mixed race" is still quite contentious and that is why I represent it in quotation marks. An important part of the debate around the use of this term is related to debates about the utility of using different racial categories on census forms and in official statistics. In the United States of America, the 2000 census gave respondents the option of ticking as many racial categories

as they felt applied. Also, in Britain, the April 2001 census question offered the new category of "Mixed" under the category of ethnic origin. For a further discussion of the use of racial categories on census forms, changing demographics and the utility of the term "mixed race" on census forms in Britain and America. See Charlie Owen, "'Mixed Race' in Official Statistics" in *Rethinking 'Mixed Race'* Parker and Song (eds.) *Rethinking 'Mixed Race'* (London: Pluto Press, 2001) 134-145.

²⁵ The important Canadian anthology *Miscegenation Blues: Voices of Mixed Race Women* (Toronto: Sister Vision, 1994) is also based upon what I am referring to here as a "crossracial methodology," in that women of colour who defined themselves as "racially mixed" were asked to contribute to this anthology on the grounds that the condition of racial hybridity was best examined across racial lines.

²⁶ Critical interest in feminist discourse has included an examination of women's journals and autobiographies in order to chart the embodied epistemology of women's subjectivity. I am applying the same argument here by suggesting that critical mixed race studies will benefit from research into the embodied epistemology of racial hybridity. Biracial and multiracial autobiographical accounts are important sources of information that can be used to chart and map the experience of racial hybridity.

²⁷ Notable exceptions in the field of theories of autobiography include Egan's chapter on Maria Campbell's *Half-breed* (1999) in *Mirror Talk: Genres of Crisis in Contemporary Autobiography* (Chapel Hill: U of Carolina P, 1999) and Francois Lionnet's *Autobiographical Voice: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture* (New York: Cornell UP, 1989).

²⁸ I consider the novel *Tay John* by Howard O'Hagan (1939) to be an early Canadian example of the use of a racially hybrid subject as a trope for larger thematic issues of hybridity.

²⁹ By passing I mean the attempt by an individual to disguise his/her racial identity in order to be perceived as belonging to another racial group. Most typically, narratives that feature passing are really about individuals who *attempt* to pass rather than those who can successfully pass. The attempt to pass forms the central dramatic tension in these narratives. Nella Larsen's novel *Passing* (New York: Penguin, 2003) is an excellent example of a passing narrative.

³⁰ Although Drew Hayden Taylor has been called “a blue-eyed Ojibway” he is marketed and represents himself as an Ojibway Native writer. This example alone suggests some of the complexities involved in how a biracial person’s soma text may be read (blue eyes=white) and yet, this may not be the way in which a biracial person self-identifies.

³¹ The cultural confusion of the racially hybrid person has often been used on stage for comedic effect, see Werner Sollors *Neither Black Nor White Yet Both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature* (New York: Oxford UP, 1997).

³² In the postlude to the play, Ajay Heble suggests that this work also addresses the “fraught role that ethnicity and race have played in struggles for Quebec nationalism” (97).

Chapter Two Endnotes

¹ Two other recent Canadian autobiographies that have interesting narrative structures deserve to be noted here. *Stolen Life: The Journey of a Cree Woman* written by Rudy Wiebe and Yvonne Johnson (Toronto: Vintage, 1999) frames the autobiography of a Native woman by use of Wiebe’s voice and his reconstruction of interviews with Johnson. Maggie De Vries’ recently published book *Missing Sarah* (Toronto: Penguin, 2003) is also written by a white writer about the life of a mixed race woman who was murdered. These works are beyond the scope of this dissertation but deserve to be mentioned here as recent examples of syncretic (auto)biographies that document the lives of Canadian women of colour through the voice of a white Canadian writer.

² In the American context, theorists have noted the prevalence of racial hybridity as an important contemporary issue. Bost refers to Maria P. Root’s argument that “the contemporary fascination with racial mixture is an effect of the ‘biracial baby boom,’ which followed the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1967 repeal of the last remaining antimiscegenation laws in *Loving v. Virginia*” (5). See Susan Bost *Mulattas and Mestizas: Representing Mixed Identities in the Americas, 1850-2000* (Athens, GA: U of Georgia P, 2003).

³ A significant event in the 1990s which addressed the position of writers of colour, the Canadian literary canon, and the Canadian nation occurred in 1994. The event was “Writing Thru Race,” which was the first

national conference aimed at bringing together “writers of colour” from across Canada to strategize, organize, and discuss the relationship between their writing and the Canadian canon. Roy Miki is currently writing about the effect of this strategic essentialism and the effect and utility of this conference.

⁴ In the American context this word has been used primarily in the context of “antimiscegenation laws” which were designed to prohibit Black and white intermarriage. In this context, a Black person was defined as anyone who had “one drop” of Black blood. Therefore, in reality, these laws prohibited both monoracially identified Black people and mixed race Black people from marrying white people.

⁵ Camper’s use of the word “miscegenation” and the “blues” signify upon African-American experience and thus suggests that these issues inform Canadian experiences of racial hybridity. Henry Louis Gates Jr. elaborates on the ways in which Afrocentric literature “signifies” upon certain tropes in African-American experience in *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford UP, 1988).

⁶ In addition to *Miscegenation Blues*, there is an increasing number of personal narratives, journals and anecdotes about racially mixed people in Canada. This fact indicates *both* a contemporary Canadian interest in biracial autobiography and an emerging demographic of people who identify as “mixed race.” Autobiographical accounts of racial hybridity in the Canadian context also appear in *Half and Half: Writers Growing up Biracial and Bicultural* edited by Claudine O’Hearn (1998), *Funny You Don’t Look like One: Observations From A Blue-Eyed Ojibway* by Drew Hayden Taylor (1998), in poems by Métis writer Marilyn Dumont (1996) and racially mixed Native writers Marie Annharte Baker (1990), Joanne Arnott (1994), and in prose by Maxine Hayman (1994). These writers identify themselves as racially mixed people and seek to articulate and address the impact of this form of embodiment in the Canadian context.

⁷ Autobiographies written by racially hybrid people in Vancouver may be markedly different. In one recent article that appeared in *The Vancouver Sun* (22 May 2004: C1-3) written by Chad Skelton entitled “Beyond Diversity: Why Vancouver is a World Leader” Chad Skelton argued that “Vancouver has become the most integrated city in Canada—perhaps the most integrated in the world—according to new research on everything from where we live to who we marry” (C1). The writer documents several instances of

interracial relationships and uses personal testimonies and recent census data to support his claim that "Mixed-race couples are more common in Vancouver than in any other city in Canada" (C2). While he argues that "there are signs that race is no longer an issue for most Vancouverites when they look for a mate" (C2), I would caution against an overly exuberant statement that race has been erased in people's decisions about a suitable marriage partner. However, it may be fair to accept his statement that "Vancouver is creating a whole new experience of Canadian identity" (C3). The instructive point here in terms of my own analysis is that the experience of interraciality and the effects of growing up as a racially mixed person in certain Canadian cities or suburbs must be seen in light of the specific local demographics in each region.

⁸ The Métis community in Canada is based on a paradigm of wholeness rather than a half-breed, either-or dichotomy. The Métis community is the only example in the Canadian context of a group based on racial hybridity that does not utilize the notions of "half" or "mixed" in the assertion of its communal identity. This issue is beyond the scope of this dissertation but this aspect of creating a monoracial identity based on racial hybridity may have great utility when it is understood in light of hybridity theories. It may be interesting to analyze the Métis racial construction of identity in contradistinction to mestizo identity and other forms of racially hybrid identity that are based on fragmentation such as "half and half" or "neither X nor Y" paradigms.

⁹ For an excellent examination of the definition of whiteness in relation to Afrocentrism see Toni Morrison's essay *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness in the Literary Imagination* (New York: Vintage, 1992). However, given that Morrison's context is primarily based on an American slaveocracy that was defined solely in terms of black-white binaries. Her theory is, therefore, less useful in the Canadian context because it excludes an examination of the impact that indigenous and other races have had on the formation of white identity.

¹⁰ Lawrence Hill addresses the issue of the "one drop rule" in his novel *Any Known Blood* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1997).

¹¹ Hill develops this African-American racial ideology in *Any Known Blood*, which uses the legal concept of according Black identity to anyone who had the presence of “one drop” or “any known [Black] blood.”

¹² For a discussion of the ways in which minorities have “written back” or revised, inverted, or deconstructed postcolonial narratives see Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (eds.) *The Empire Writes Back* (London: Routledge, 2002).

¹³ This classic African American phrase identifies the ways in which racial ideologies can become encoded in informal discourse. This phrase is also used in the title of another biracial autobiography. See Shirlee Taylor Haizlip *The Sweeter the Juice: A Family Memoir in Black and White* (New York: Touchstone, 1994).

¹⁴ For an interesting discussion of Hill’s fiction *Any Known Blood* in relation to other Black Canadian writers who also represent complex hybridized characters see George Elliot Clarke’s essay, “Canadian Biraciality and Its Zebra Poetics” *Odysseys Home: Mapping African-Canadian Literature* (Toronto: U of TP, 2002), 211-37. In this essay, Clarke argues that because the history of slavery and the immigration of Black people to Canada produced many mixed race Blacks, “mixed-race figures should be activating the imaginations of at least some African-Canadian writers” (212). Clarke analyzes the presence and signifying nature of mixed-race Black character by looking at the work of Hill, Suzette Mayr, Mercedes Baines and Wayde Compton.

¹⁵ Given that Hill has had a career as a journalist, it might be interesting to consider how this experience has affected his tone and register in the sections of his autobiography that utilize the voice and register of a journalist. Interestingly, the central character in his novel *Any Known Blood* (1997) is also a journalist and documents the events of his life by way of this distant voice.

¹⁶ The notion of the autobiographical pact as identified in the work of Lejeune informs my analysis. When a racially hybrid writer represents his or her life experience as distinct from their monoracial readers, what is the impact that this rhetorical distancing has on the writer-reader engagements and the act of identification. In Chapter Four of this dissertation I explore the ways in which racially mixed

playwright/actors stage their racial hybridity in ways that heighten the distance between their experience of identity and that of their largely monoracial audience.

¹⁷ In Chapter Four on drama, I return to this thread of my analysis (the autobiographical pact) when analyzing the ways in which racially hybrid performers write about and perform their racial hybridity and the impact that this has on the relationship between the actor and audience. The performers often utilize an autobiographical voice to draw attention to the incommensurable gap that they feel exists between themselves and their largely monoracial audiences.

¹⁸ Hill states that he interviewed “thirty-four Canadians who each had one black and one white parent. The mixed-race interview subjects ranged in age from eighteen to sixty-one” and were from the East and West Coast of Canada. Hill also interviewed “seven black and two white” people (*Black Berry, Sweet Juice* 8).

¹⁹ None of these writers refers to mixed race Native communities in any depth and this is a huge omission especially for writers whose work is grounded in the Canadian multiracial experience. This crossracial analysis is used in Chapter Three and Chapter Four of my dissertation but it is beyond the scope of my Chapter on Autobiography because of my interest in focusing on Hill’s autobiography. However, a future application of my analysis of Hill’s autobiography might include comparing his representation of Canadian racial hybridity to those found in Métis and mixed race Native autobiographies.

²⁰ Two other examples of these mixed messages are referred to in *Black Berry, Sweet Juice*. Hill’s father referred to “CPT” or “colored people’s time” as a “chronic propensity for lateness among black people” and he also refers to the saying “If you’re white / You’re all right. / If you’re brown / Stick around. / If you’re black / Stay back” (22). Hill suggests that these seemingly benign expressions encode specific ideologies about race and can have a profound impact on a young person’s development of a racial identity.

²¹ In the Afterword to this dissertation I consider Gilmore’s notions of the reader’s act of identification with the writer of the autobiography. I explore my own position as a racially hybrid Canadian in relation to the work I have analyzed in the dissertation and consider the effects of my own investment in the truth claims of these autobiographies.

²² Biracial Canadian playwright Lesley Ewen also refers to the impact of this childhood taunt on her sense of racial identity in her play “an understanding of brown.” The play “White, Dark and Bittersweet” written by me and Mercedes Baines also refers to the negative impact of this childhood rhyme. These two plays will be addressed in Chapter Four of this dissertation.

²³ Hill states that in Quebec he was asked the variant of the English questions which are simply: “*D’ou viens-tu?*” “*Quelles sont tes souches?*” and “*Tes parents sont de quel pays?*” (*Black Berry, Sweet Juice* 174).

²⁴ This article appeared in the *The Globe and Mail*, 20 May 2004: A24. Some of the “don’ts” that she lists for her presumably monoracial readers are: “Don’t talk to us on the bus; don’t consult us about the shade of your daughter’s baby’s skin. We don’t care. Also, do not resort to taking guesses as to the uncategorizable person’s nationality [. . .] do not start talking black to me.” Bogin identifies the way in which her soma text prompts these questions. She is offended by the line of questions that follow: “because my skin isn’t white, some people think it’s entirely acceptable to hound me about my so-called identity.” Like Hill and other racially mixed Canadians, Bogin is aware of the implicit assumptions that form the subtext to these questions—if your body is not read as pure white then you must not be from Canada. The writer also identifies the explicit demands that are made about a person’s ancestry as a consequence of having a racially hybrid soma text. It is my firm contention that racially hybrid people who are engaged in these dynamics over time develop a heightened sense of the gaze and numerous responses to the questions. Annoyance and hypersensitivity to the racialized gaze are two of the many effects of racially hybrid corporeality that I address later in this chapter.

²⁵ The terms half-breed and mixed blood appear frequently in autobiographies by racially hybrid Native writers. These terms suggest a fragmented body in similar ways to the racial mathematics and fragmentation that is evident in other mixed race autobiographies. Karen Baird-Olson documents the fact that “[a]s early as the 1500s, the terms *breed*, *half breed* and *mixed blood* appeared in historical records” (195). In her essay, “Mixed-Blood Identity,” Olson argues that for American-Indians “the use of fractions of blood degree as the primary means of categorizing special groups was legally recognized as early as

1705 and later supported by scientifically racist theories" (194-95). Olson refers to such statistical techniques as "statistical genocide" (195). See Karen Baird-Olson "Mixed-Blood Identity" in Loretta I. Winters and Herman L DeBose (eds.) *New Faces in a Changing America: Multiracial Identity in the 21st Century* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003). It might be interesting to compare blood ideologies within different communities of racially hybrid Canadians and document the ways in which legal ramifications affect racial ideologies within mixed race Native communities, Métis communities, and other racially hybrid communities in Canada.

²⁶ For an interesting poetic description of the moment of interpellation and a racially mixed woman's response see Baines' poem, "Mulatto Woman: a honey beige wrapper" in Carol Camper (ed.) *Miscegenation Blues* (Toronto: Sister Vision, 1994). In this poem, a racially mixed woman responds to the question about her identity by stating, "Hey I'm white / hey I'm white, Hey I'm white" (37). In this statement she claims her birthright to a white identity but the irony is that her soma text is both read by the interrogator and understood by her persona as a "honey beige wrapper."

²⁷ According to Werner Sollors the word mulatto is "of sixteenth-century origin, documented in English since 1595, and designated a child of black and white parent, was long considered etymologically derived from "mule"; yet it may also come from the Arabic word *muwallad* (meaning "Mestizo" or mixed)" (127-28). Sollors thoroughly documents the numerous ways in which this word was used in scientific racism to suggest that the racially mixed person was, like a mule, sterile. Sollors also suggests that this word, in the contemporary context, may be "undergoing a reevaluation" (129).

²⁸ Notions such as compulsory Nativeness and compulsory Blackness also constrain the potential range of identities that are available for a mixed race individual to claim. Hybridity theorist Jayne Ifekwunigwe defines "compulsory Blackness" as "a political institution wherein it is presumed that identification with Blackness is the implicit or explicit exclusive personal preference of most 'mixed race' women and men with one Black continental African or Black African Caribbean parent and one White British or White continental European parent" (57). See "Re-Membering 'Race': On Gender, 'Mixed Race' and Family in

the English-African Diaspora" in David Parker and Miri Song (eds.) *Rethinking 'Mixed Race'* (London: Pluto, 2001)42-66.

²⁹ Monoracist readers who have unwittingly caused trauma for biracial individuals by asking "What are you?" may understand the effect of this question by reading about the impact that this questions has had on racially hybrid individuals in autobiographies such as Hill's.

³⁰ This racial ideology is at the center of Hill's novel *Any Known Blood* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1997).

³¹ A fade is a slang term referring to a haircut that is common among men of African ancestry whereby the top of the head is left longer and the hair on the side of the head is shaved close to the scalp.

³² In Chapter Three I further explore the idea of hair as a qualifier in Richard Wagamese's *Keeper N' Me* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1994) where the central character, Garnet, appears on his reserve with an Afro and is greeted with ridicule because his hair is not read as Native. In this chapter I discuss this scene in terms of Garnet's performance of racial drag and ultimately I deconstruct the idea of Native authenticity that is at the core of the narrative.

³³ Such social isolation necessarily compounds the racially hybrid person's experience of familial isolation. This is one example of how the experience of racial hybridity in Canada and the United States may differ.

³⁴ See Fred Wah's work *Diamond Grill* (Edmonton, Alberta: NeWest, 1996) and/or Smaro Kamboureli (ed.) *Faking It: Poetics and Hybridity, Critical Writing 1984-1999* (Edmonton, Alberta: NeWest, 2000).

³⁵ Bonita Lawrence's recently published doctoral thesis offers a thorough analysis of the ways in which mixed race individuals are legally and otherwise identified as part of the Métis community. She also offers an interesting comparison of the legal requirements for "Indian" status in the USA and Canada. See Bonita Lawrence, *'Real' Indians and Others* (Nebraska: U of Nebraska P, 2004).

³⁶ Hill dedicates a whole chapter of his autobiography to a discussion of this case. He was quite informed of the particularities of the case because he was asked by the *The Globe and Mail* to write an opinion piece on this sensational custody battle that took place in British Columbia in 2000. The case was between Theodore "Blue" Edwards, a black basketball player, and Kimberly Van de Perre, a white woman, over the custody of their mixed race child, Elijah Van de Perre. This case was appealed and ended up in the

Supreme Court of Canada in June of 2001. Hill states that after Van de Perre lost custody in the B.C. Court of Appeal, Van de Perre's lawyer asked the Supreme Court of Canada to address the following question among others: "What role race should play in decisions regarding custody of a child of mixed-race relationships?" (164). However, Hill points out that in both trials a discussion of the child's racial identity was avoided. Hill states that "neither [court] explored the issue of Elijah's mixed-race identity, or how that might be factored into a consideration of his best interests" (166).

³⁷One of the most influential discussions and theories about mestizo/a consciousness was written by the late Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderland: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute P, 1987).

³⁸Minelle Mahtani uses the idea of a "paradoxical mobile space" to refer to the different, conflicting, and overlapping readings of biracial soma texts in her essay, "'I'm A Blond-haired, Blue-eyed Black Girl': Mapping Mobile Paradoxical Spaces among Multiethnic Women in Toronto, Canada" in David Parker and Miri Song (eds.) *Rethinking 'Mixed Race'* (London: Pluto Press, 2001)173-190.

³⁹Hill also refers to the impact that watching Flip Wilson and his cross-dressing routine as Geraldine had on his own racial identity (60). Other theorists such as Marjorie Garber and Judith Butler have referred to the relationship between cross-dressing and "passing." I explore some of their insights in Chapter Three where I develop the notion of racial drag.

⁴⁰I am thinking here of Canadian playwrights Lorena Gale and George Elliot Clarke.

⁴¹A recent essay analyzes this Bill of Rights and suggests that Root evokes many essentialist arguments in this declaration. See Stephanie Dunning, "Brown Like Me": Explorations of a Shifting Self" in San San Kwan and Kenneth Speirs (eds.) *Mixing It Up* (Austin, Texas: U of Texas P, 2004) 123-40.

⁴²This notion of faking it will be explored in Chapter Three when I apply Wah's notions of "faking it" to fictional works that feature biracial individuals performing racial drag and otherwise trying to assimilate into monoracial communities by "faking" their identity.

⁴³Further application of this research might include addressing filmic representations of interraciality and racial hybridity. Two important films for such research might include: *Jungle Fever* and *An Imitation of Life*. Spike Lee's film *Jungle Fever* explores different ideologies against interracial relationships by

focusing on an interracial relationship between an African-American man and an Italian-American woman. In this film racial hybridity is the absent-presence that signifies, among many things, the taboo of interraciality. An earlier film that dealt with racial hybridity is *An Imitation of Life* which follows a light-skinned mixed race character's attempts to "pass" as white and explores the emotional consequences for both her and her black mother.

⁴⁴ These terms and themes have different uses according to the cultural and historical representations of racial hybridity. In Canada the "one drop rule" by which persons who had African-American ancestry were classified as "Black" does not have the same legal history as it does in the United States. Although one may find this term in Canadian biracial autobiographies, its power as a signifier is distinctly different because in Canada we did not have the same policing of racial hybridity as that which occurred in the United States during slavery and Reconstruction. It might be interesting to compare the impact that these antimiscegenation laws have had on racial identity in America, to the impact that different legal prohibitions against racial amalgamation have had on Native and non-Native racially hybrid people in Canada.

Chapter Three Endnotes

¹ In *Auto/biographical Discourses: Theory, Criticism, Practice* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1994) Marcus suggests that a central issue in autobiographical theories is "the fundamental problem of the instability or hybridity of the autobiography as a genre" (7).

² Cited from an article written by Patrick Rengger for the *Calgary Herald*. (2 November 1996: E10). Wah has referred to this work in various publications but I have chosen this source because he refers to the impetus for writing *Diamond Grill*. He also states that writing from memory is inevitably an act of fiction.

³ Campbell has used her own community to stand in for the experience of Métis people in Canada despite the vastly different geographical and historical specificities that have informed a number of distinct Métis communities across Canada.

⁴ See "Wah vents anger and celebrates his father in book of biofiction" written by Patrick Rengger, *Calgary Herald* (2 November 1996: E10).

⁵ I take the concept of "writing back" as identified in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (eds.) *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature* (London: Routledge, 2002). The writers argue that "[i]n writing out of the condition of 'Otherness' post-colonial texts assert the complex of intersecting 'peripheries' as the actual substance of experience" (77). Although all of the primary texts that I examine give voice to marginalized subject positions in the postcolonial Canadian context, these transition texts reference specific histories of subjugation of their communities and, in this way, are the most overtly politicized primary works that I address in this dissertation.

⁶ Canadian writer and critic George Bowering coined the term "biotext" and argues that autobiography "replaces the writer" whereas a biotext is "an extension" of the writer (24). For an elaboration of his discussion of the biotext and its relationship to the genre of autobiography see *Errata* (Red Deer, Alberta: Red Deer College P, 1998).

⁷ Here I have chosen to look at the hyphen as one of the specifically Canadian ways of representing hybridity. One might also wish to chart different ways of representing hybridity, in Métis communities and/or French-Canadian contexts as other examples of Canadian hybrid communities.

⁸ Fred Wah's biotext *Diamond Grill* (1996) is ostensibly about his family's experience of hybridity and, most particularly, his own racial, cultural, and perhaps even linguistic hybridity. However, one might also argue that the novel's subtext is about interracial desire between his parents and grandparents. Young's notions of the interrelatedness between desire, hybridity, and sex could be utilized to understand the unspoken issue that is at the heart of the text, namely, the fear of interracial desire. Wah's biotext avoids this issue and focuses on the children that *result* from this interracial desire: Fred Jr. and his siblings. However, the larger questions of interracial policing of desire are hinted at in the text, although these elements are not the central focus.

⁹ This "zebra poetic" might be interestingly read against Fred Wah's "poetics of the hyphen" as complementary theories that stem from racially hybrid subjectivity in Canada.

¹⁰ Note here that Wah uses a binarism when describing mixed race “others” but alters this binarism when describing the (Black-white) configuration which would, in keeping with the food analogy, be an “oreo” with clearly defined inner and outer colors and not the “café au lait,” which is syncretically and thoroughly mixed. Also, note that Wah’s overall notions of mixed race configure whiteness with “something else” that is non-white. In addition, the use of food metaphors to refer to racial hybridity can be found in a number of narratives and may suggest the historical development of ideologies around racial hybridity, which stemmed from the creation of “hybrid” species of plants and animal husbandry. The use of different metaphors to map racial hybridity in a number of different Canadian narratives will also be given attention in each chapter of this dissertation.

¹¹ Wah elaborates on his poetics of ethnicity by arguing that the “culturally marginalized writer will engineer approaches to language and form that enable a particular residue (genetic, cultural, biographical) to become kinetic and valorized” (*Faking It* 51). He refers to such writers as Joy Kogawa and Rohinton Mistry, who operate “within a colonized and inherited formal awareness while investigating their respective enactments of internment and migration,” as opposed to other writers such as Marlene Norbese Philip or Roy Kiyooka who “have chosen to utilize more formal innovative possibilities” referred to as “alienethnic” poetics (*Faking It* 52).

¹² However, given that not all hybrid or “mixed race” writers use the “hyphen” to suggest their “mixedness,” Wah’s fixation on the “hyphen” may not be as useful to the groups of writers he identifies in this passage.

¹³ This quotation is from a paper given by Wah at the Transculturalism Panel at ICCS, Montreal, May 2003, found at the website <http://transculturalisms.arts.ubc.ca>.

¹⁴ This quote is taken from the <http://transculturalisms.arts.ubc.ca> site.

¹⁵ See Franz Fanon’s *Black Skins, White Mask*. Trans. Charles Lam Markmann. (New York: Grove Press, 1967) for an interesting analysis of the role of the gaze in rac(e)ing a subject.

¹⁶ See Sollors chapter 9 on “Passing; or, Sacrificing a *Parvenu*” in *Neither Black Nor White yet Both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature* (New York: Oxford UP, 1997) for an elaboration of this theme.

¹⁷ Early representations of “half-breed” identity include such work as Maria Campbell’s *Half-breed* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1973), Harold Cardinal’s *Unjust Society: The Tragedy of Canada’s Indians* (Edmonton, Alberta: M.G. Hurtig, 1969) and Howard Adams’ *Prisoner of Grass: Canada From a Native Point of View* (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1989). Also the drama of the Native mixed blood woman is represented in work by Louise Erdrich, Linda Hogan and Leslie Marmon Silko to name a few.

¹⁸ Passing for African-Americans was often linked with a need to survive physically because if a person could pass as white they could obtain mobility and freedom from being enslaved. In these novels by Native writers, the use of drag may be understood as motivated by a need for psychological survival. These Canadian forms of passing suggest that one of the ways individuals respond to structural racism, genocidal conditions and the tensions between assimilation and indigeneity may involve the desire to pass or perform racial drag.

¹⁹ It is most often the case that racially ambiguous characters choose to perform a racial drag that will bring them closer to a hegemonic ideal.

²⁰ In *Fugitive Poses: Native American Indian Scenes of Absence and Presence* (Lincoln, Nebraska: U of Nebraska P, 1998), Gerald Vizenor describes the term to mean “more than survival, more than endurance or mere response: the stories of survivance are an active presence” (15). This is one way of thinking about a Native character’s performance of racial or cultural drag.

²¹ While elements of Butler’s theories on drag are useful, much of her analysis suggests that there is never a fixed or stable identity. In other words, drag parodies the enforced enactment of heterosexual performativity: “In imitating gender, drag implicitly recalls the imitative structure of gender *itself*— as well as its contingency” (175). The notion that there is no stable identity beneath these enactments is not what these Native novelists suggest. Therefore, while elements of her analysis of the performativity of gender

and drag are useful, the conclusion of Butler's argument is not consistent with the representation of an indigenous essentialism that exists in these novels.

²² One might also argue that the characters in Sky Lee's novel, *Disappearing Moon Café* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1990) that represent themselves as Chinese, perform another type of natal duplicity. Because they do not know they are part Native, they are not aware that they are performing lateral racial drag by passing as "pure" Chinese. This novel represents what might be understood as another form of passing or what one might call unconscious lateral racial drag.

²³ While Cheryl also performs her version of indigeneity, she looks and is accepted as Métis and thus there is not the kind of complexity and doubleness associated with her performance of race. Although one might also argue that the codes and gestures that she employs in the presentation of her indigenous identity are equally performative, they do not cause the kind of identity crises that occur when one is engaged in the conscious adoption of a masquerade which is different from one's external encoding. Therefore, I have chosen not to examine Cheryl's performance of Nativeness within the scope of this paper.

²⁴ Sollors examines the warring blood trope in detail in chapter 8. In this chapter, Sollors examines Sterling Brown's "imagology" regarding African-Americans, and one of the images that appear frequently in passing narratives is the warring blood trope (225). The metaphor of warring blood is in contradistinction to a synthesis of identities or a synthesis of blood indicated in a blended third space of identity found in representations of racial hybridity. See Werner Sollors "Excursus on the 'Tragic Mulatto'; or, The Fate of a Stereotype" in *Neither Black Nor White Yet Both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature* (New York: Oxford UP, 1997) 220-245.

²⁵ One might consider a psychoanalytic interpretation of these narrative doubles and the ways in which a racially hybrid character expresses a need for a somatextual double. Because the notion of the mirror phase of childhood development has a specific psychological application it is beyond the scope of this paper. For the purposes of my own research I am interested in the narrative instability that occurs in a given text when somatic mirrors or doubles appear. I am also interested in the literary expression of a longing for a somatic equivalent or mirror that many racially hybrid writers express in autobiographies. However, psychological

theories on the mirror phase of childhood development could have great utility in the analysis of the expression of the need for a somatic mirror that is represented in the work that I analyze.

²⁶ In Chapter One I charted the material experience of racial hybridity by way of an individual's growing awareness of his or her multiply-coded soma text. Here I am developing this idea further but I am interested in considering the ways in which soma texts (biracial and monoracial) can be read for cues about "authenticity." My particular focus here is the effect of such instability on the narrative. I am arguing that racial border crossing evokes a narrative crisis. In this chapter on fiction, I am less interested in what individuals say about *the process* of racialization but more interested in *narrative effects* of crossing racial borders.

²⁷ Garber refers to light-skinned mulatto characters that "pass" in slave narratives by crossing racial boundaries and, at times, also cross-dressing. According to Garber "the possibility of crossing racial boundaries stirs fears of the possibility of crossing the boundaries of gender, and vice versa" (274). The focus of her argument is on the ways in which racial demarcations are crossed in addition to gender demarcations. While there are some interesting examples of such characters that perform racial and gender drag, a thorough analysis of the relationship between cross-dressing and racial drag is beyond the scope of this paper.

²⁸ This notion of the performative aspect of racial drag should not be confused with performance whereby racial drag is staged. What I am arguing here is that repeated messages about one's soma text, the repetition of certain gestures and codes, and the different readings of one's soma text highlight the performative aspects of identity. This distinction will be important when we get to the next chapter on staging racial hybridity where the performative aspects of identity are conflated with the performance of a hybrid racial identity on stage.

²⁹ One might also consider how this rape scene is a reconfiguration of colonial contact from the perspective of the Native subject. Rape is also central to the history of miscegenated subjectivity throughout the American slaveocracy and is the marker of many colonial encounters. Therefore, the occurrence of rape in

mixed race literature evokes these other colonial histories. In Chapter Four of this dissertation I return to this theme when I analyze the representation of rape in Clarke and Mojica's plays.

³⁰ See Sollors chapter 8, "Excursus on the 'Tragic Mulatto'; or, The Fate of a Stereotype" for a thorough elaboration on "The Six Elements of the 'Tragic Mulatto' complex." This chapter includes an examination of the literary representation of the tragic mulatto's spiral downward in passing narratives. Sollors examines Sterling A. Brown's initial outline of this type and he credits Brown as the founder of the concept of the "tragic mulatto" as a character type that is repeatedly represented in American passing narratives. Briefly, this character attempts to pass and usually after the point of revelation about the mulatto's identity the narrative focuses on the resulting social and psychological crises. The spiral downward that results from unsuccessfully passing as white often ends in the racially mixed character committing suicide. For an excellent example of this narrative trajectory see Nella Larsen's novel *Passing* (1929).

³¹ What I mean here by lateral racial drag is racial drag where a person of colour performs the racial identity of another person of color. As both identities are still part of a community of visible minorities, I refer to this as a lateral racial drag performance.

³² This notion of the indelible marking of the skin as brown will be explored later in this chapter.

³³ I refer to the early racialization process as a site of secondary trauma in Chapter Two of this dissertation. I am further developing this idea in this chapter by focusing not so much on the trauma of this experience but rather on the ways in which early messages about racial identity and stereotypes can inform an individual's desire to deny, obscure, or otherwise alter their racial identity through performing racial drag.

³⁴ One might also consider Garnet's desire to perform a part Apache identity as an indigenous version of lateral racial drag, a subdivision of the lateral racial drag phenomenon. Although he knows he is a Canadian Indian, he prefers to perform a mixed race Apache identity because he believes it is "rated pretty high on mainstream society's masculinity scale" (16). His desire to be "one of the top-rated prime-time kinda Indians" (16) as opposed to the less romantic Canadian Indians, suggests the extent to which there are rankings of Native identities within Native communities and also the extent to which fictionalized

representations of Hollywood Indians have been adopted by other Native people as markers of privileged status.

³⁵ Incidences of African-Americans performing Indianness and Native people performing Blackness are rare in literature. A historical anomaly is found in the character "Long Lance" who was born Sylvester Long. Vizenor suggests that although Long Lance was born Black he performed Nateness through his "fugitive pose." In *Fugitive Poses*, Vizenor describes this man as "The African-American who posed as Cherokee and wrote an 'authentic' autobiography as a Blackfoot" (100). One might extend my argument about the use of lateral racial drag to an analysis of indigenous people who perform what is considered to be a better, more romantic or more virile form of indigeniety.

³⁶ Garnet states: "Guess maybe us Indians have a lot in common with our black brothers and sisters when it comes to bein' blue about things" (14). This theme of Native cross-appropriation of the blues links this text to Sherman Alexie's novel *Reservation Blues*. The ways in which Blackness is performed by Natives and vice versa deserves much more thorough exploration than I can manage in this chapter. See *Reservation Blues* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1995).

³⁷ This notion of the racially mixed character's hypersensitivity to the white gaze appears throughout passing narratives. This is a condition that is based on the fact that the white gaze could lead to detection and consequently, death for individuals who were passing as white. Several cultural theorists have posited that people of colour gain an extraordinary awareness of the gaze due to the hegemonic privileging of whiteness. See Sollors chapter 5, "The Bluish Tinge in the Halfmoon; or, Fingernails as a Racial Sign" in *Neither Black Nor White Yet Both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature* (New York: Oxford UP, 1997) for an elaboration of the ways in which characters who attempted to "pass" in American literature were detected by the (usually white) gaze.

³⁸ Generally speaking, these narratives suggest that people of racially mixed backgrounds with ambiguous encoding learn to negotiate the dynamics of the racialized gaze from a very early age.

³⁹ In the Canadian autobiographies I analyze in Chapter Two it becomes evident that racially mixed people refer to the social isolation they experience in Canada because of the lack of racially mixed communities in

Canada. Often this social isolation prompts a deep need to seek a community of other racially hybrid people who mirror one's soma text. In this novel racial isolation for the indigenous character is the inevitable result of being adopted into a white home. Social isolation is compounded because Garnet is also isolated from knowledge of his identity because he has no idea that he is Native.

⁴⁰ Toni Morrison in *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness in the literary Imagination* (New York: Vintage, 1992) also examines the ways in which literary representations of whiteness require the establishment of a separate category of non-whites. However, her work fails to address the important role that indigeneity plays in classic American texts. In the Canadian context the largest community of colour is that of the First Nations so literary theories that address the effect of indigeneity on the construction of whiteness in the literary imagination could be very beneficial. See Louis Owens *MixedBlood Messages: Literature, Film, Family, Place* (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1998) especially pages 30-40 for an elaboration of this omission in Morrison's theories of whiteness in the American literary imagination.

⁴¹ Interesting connections can be made between April and Peola, the racially mixed daughter in the film *An Imitation of Life*. Both characters choose to pass as white, symbolically "kill" their parents, and both mothers die in the narrative. This may symbolize the contaminating influence of the mixed race character or the perversion of domesticity that the racially mixed figure represents. My insight into literary representations of passing in Canadian fiction may easily be extended to a comparative analysis of racially hybrid characters who pass in film.

⁴² April is concerned that the Raintree name would reveal her indigeneity and imagines what other spellings might obscure this association. She states: "Raintree looked like one of those Indian names, but if I changed the spelling to Raintry, that could pass for Irish" (46). Later in the novel, she resolves the problem of her indigenous name by marrying Bob Radcliffe and is pleased because she no longer has to worry about this semiotic marker of her indigeneity.

⁴³ It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to delve into the biblical allusions of these names. What is important here is the fact that the change from an indigenous identity to a white Christian identity is marked by a changed name. The issue of naming and its association with written language, the Law, the

biblical Word, and the process of colonization are all interesting areas which could be explored further in light of the phenomenon of the name changes that occur in these novels.

⁴⁴ This notion of the mixed race character being taught how to perform whiteness is also evident in the play "Birthright" by Constance Lindsay Skinner and in the play *Beatrice Chancy* by George Elliot Clarke. In each case, it is the racially mixed woman who is taught how to become more white and thus, gender dynamics as well as class and race are involved in this process. Passing narratives rarely feature a racially mixed man who is taught how to perform whiteness in order to more effectively pass as white and this may be due to the fact that racially mixed women have more possibilities of marrying "up" by performing racial drag.

⁴⁵ Another crisis that exists in the text is the crisis that homosexuality represents to Native and non-Native communities. Gabriel's closeted homosexuality may also be seen as his form of passing as straight for the purpose of survivance. While passing has been primarily understood as racially mixed people performing whiteness, passing in terms of gender in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* deserves further exploration.

⁴⁶ Cultural and racial drag may be understood as non-hegemonic people's response to the colonial conditions throughout the world whereby survival often depends upon one's ability to assimilate. Assimilation often requires the performance of racial or cultural drag. Likely there are a number of narratives that feature minorities passing in order to more closely approximate the dominant culture's ideals. My insight into these Canadian passing narratives might be fruitfully extended to a comparative analysis of other passing narratives in other postcolonial writing.

⁴⁷ I am assuming here that April's resolve to take care of Henry Lee at the close of the novel indicates her desire to reunite with her "dark blood" through an association with a blood relative. However, one might question April's ability to become more "Native" by accepting the role of guardian to her nephew when she has so consistently been the victim of an intense self-hatred of indigeneity.

⁴⁸ This idea of the use of the conventions of theatre as a liberating gesture to resolve tensions stemming from one's racial identity will be examined in more detail in the next chapter on the staging of racial hybridity.

⁴⁹ Often in passing narratives, one of the ways in which the racially mixed female character attempts to solidify her position of privilege is to marry “up.” April’s actions can be read in the larger context of passing narratives whereby a female mixed race character’s decision to pass is conditioned by dynamics of race, class, and gender. Although I have touched upon the element of class in this chapter, I have chosen to focus on the dynamics of race involved in Canadian passing narratives.

⁵⁰ This form of revelation in American passing narratives was rarely the result of a family member “outing” the racial drag, but was most typically the result of detecting traces of Blackness. The birth of a child could also reveal the “dark blood” that was most conventionally associated with the mother’s hidden geneology. See Sollors for a detailed list of these passing narratives and the ways in which blood-quantum is revealed in American passing narratives, see Wernor Sollors’ chapter “Incest and Miscegenation” in *Neither Black Nor White Yet Both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature* (New York: Oxford UP, 1997).

⁵¹ In Sollors’ account of the themes of interraciality in literature, he notes a distinction between passing narratives that focus on detecting the race of an individual and those which focus on the revelation of the “dark secret” evident in the offspring. In both cases, the revelation of the dark secret usually marks the downward spiral for the racially mixed character performing racial drag in American passing narratives.

⁵² In the usual tragic mulatto plot it is the “pure” white people who fear of the contamination of their blood by the dark Other. Interestingly, in this novel, Beatrice Culleton inverts this form of discrimination. Other areas of inquiry might include the ways in which whiteness and white blood symbolize contamination in First Nations’ or other minority literature.

⁵³ The notion of Black identity as urban, criminal and “cool” is also a stereotype that is reinforced by this novel. Lonnie Flowers’ Black persona may also constitute another form of racial drag for Black, urban “survivor.” If so, Garnet’s racial drag can be understood as is an enactment of an identity that is already constituted as a simulacrum of Blackness.

⁵⁴ In Chapter Four I analyze Drew Hayden Taylor’s plays and specifically his representation of a character, Summer, who is 1/64th Native. Like Garnet, Summer also believes that reading about being Native and

wearing Native jewelry or even loving a Native elder will allow her to be accepted as Native. In this play, as in Wagamese's novel, the character learns that indigeneity is tied to blood-quantum and community.

⁵⁵ It is this theme of reintegration within one's community that marks one of the differences between the American passing narratives, which feature escaped slaves, and First Nations' representations of "passing." Successful passing in the American context meant getting away from home forever whereas in this novel, passing is a temporary solution and there is still a community one can return to in order to reconstitute one's identity.

⁵⁶ A thorough examination of the endings of passing narratives is given in Sollors within the chapter entitled "Endings" in *Neither Black Nor White Yet Both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature* (New York: Oxford UP, 1997).

⁵⁷ Joe Christmas in Faulkner's *Light in August* (New York: Random House, 1959) is a classic example of this symbolism. The film *Birth of A Nation* by D.W. Griffiths is another example of the associations of violence with the mixed race character. Also see Patricia Riley's essay "That Murderin' 'Half-Breed': The Abjection of the Mixed Blood in Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*" Renee Hulan (ed.) *Native North America: Critical and Cultural Perspectives* (Toronto: ECW P, 1999) for an analysis of the literary association of the mixed race character with violence in American literature.

Chapter Four Endnotes

¹ As an example of the separation of discussions of Canadian theatre by way of cultural or racial groups, see the format that *Canadian Theatre Review* has chosen to address non-white performances. For a discussion of African-Canadian theatre see *Canadian Theatre Review* 83 (Summer 1995). For a discussion of Chinese-Canadian Theatre see *Canadian Theatre Review* 111 (Spring 2002). Although both editions of this important theatre journal occasionally include articles that address racial hybridity and performances of racial hybridity in Canada, the works are not analyzed in relation to each other nor are the performative aspects of this form of embodiment given any attention. I have identified a similar omission in the

Canadian Theatre Review 109 (Winter 2002), which addresses the body but does not address the performer of colour or the racially hybrid body on stage in contemporary Canadian theatre.

² The racially hybrid body on stage visually reinforces the truth claims of these autobiographical plays.

This effect that witnessing the racialized body has on the audience is similar to the effect that photographs of racially hybrid writers on the cover of autobiographical works has on the autobiographical pact between the reader and the writer. As noted in Chapter Two and Three, Hill, Wah, Taylor, and Campbell have used their racially hybrid soma texts on the covers of their works in ways that legitimate the truth claims about their racial hybridity.

³ Filewood uses this argument to address the controversy about the performance of *Show Boat* in his article "Simulations of Nationhood; Spectacles of Postcoloniality: The *Show Boat* Controversy as Imperial Pageant" in *The Performance Text* (ed.) Domenico Pietropoalo, (Ottawa: Legas, 1999): 41-56). I am using this central idea of "simulations of nationhood" and applying it to the work that I believe is also enacting simulations of nationhood but a nationhood that is based on racial hybridity.

⁴ There is also a contemporary play by Pauline Carey that represents Pauline Johnson as a character, see *Pauline Johnson: A Play* (Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press, 1981).

⁵ In the introduction to *Paddling Her Own Canoe: The Time and Texts of E. Pauline Johnson* (Toronto: U of TP, 2000), Carole Gerson and Veronica Strong-Boag refer to the popular interest in Pauline Johnson during the late nineteenth century. They claim that in the "high age of Anglo-Saxon imperialism and patriarchy" Johnson was considered "a figure of resistance, simultaneously challenging both the racial divide between Native and European, and the conventions that constrained her sex" (3). The authors also note two other early Canadian mixed race writers, "Amelia McLean Paget, the mixed-race author of *The People of the Plains* (1909)" and "Montreal-born Edith Eaton (Sui Sin Far), who started writing about the problems of Asian newcomers in the nineteenth century, and can now be called "a pioneer Canadian mixed-race writer" (78). These early Canadian representations of racial hybridity might be interestingly read against the nineteenth-century American writer Nella Larsen whose work *Passing* (1929) foregrounds

the intricate experiences that three racially mixed characters have with the racialized gaze and the dynamics involved with various levels of “passing.”

⁶ Gerson and Strong-Boag suggest that the “bleak fates of Pauline’s Mixed-race and native heroines, all betrayed by white men, tell a similar story of vulnerability and limited options” (51). They also suggest that in her life, Johnson was a part of the “world of Canada’s pioneering New Women and their efforts to enlarge opportunities for their sex” (68).

⁷ Gerson and Strong-Boag note that Johnson also performed her indigeneity according to market interests. It was after her first recital season that “Johnson decided to emphasize the Indigenous content of her poems by assembling an Indian costume, a decision that associated her presentations, however distinctive, with other Aboriginal performers familiar to many audiences” (109). The writers also draw attention to the eclectic nature of her stage costume, which included the famous asymmetrical buckskin dress, “fur pelts, Iroquois silver medallions, wampum belts, and her father’s hunting knife. From Ernest Thompson Seton she later acquired a necklace of bear claws; one photo shows her with a feather in her hair and a necklace of elks’ teeth” (109). The fact that this costume was stylized from a fictional representation suggests “Johnson’s collage approach to creating a recognizably Indian costume,” in itself “highlights the self-conscious and constructed nature of her stage identity” (110). To complete the transformation, in 1894 Johnson added her grandfather’s name Tekahionwake to her regular byline on the title page of *The White Wampum* (1895) (116). Gerson and Strong-Boag also note the ways in which Grey Owl and Long Lance also performed indigeneity to eager audiences. The discovery of their “fake” personas led to the public devaluing Johnson. Even today, the writers suggest “[a]t the end of the twentieth century, the lingering taint of the impostors continues to stigmatize Johnson, even in the view of commentators sympathetic to native peoples. Grey Owl and Long Lance thus provide the implicit context for the modernist devaluation of Johnson” (125).

⁸ Charlotte Grey has also analyzed the reception of Johnson’s work and the audience’s reactions to her performances. See *Flint and Feather: The Life and Times of E. Pauline Johnson, Tekahionwake*. (Toronto: Harper Flamingo Canada, 2002).

⁹ These writers link Johnson's increasing indigenization of her performance and set her unique stage persona in the context of other performances of indigenous identity by Buffalo Bill Cody (111) and imposters like Long Lance and Grey Owl (125).

¹⁰ This play is being published by Playwrights Canada Press in 2005 and may appear in print by the time my dissertation is completed. I have been asked to contribute an article that sets "Birthright" in the context of recent Canadian plays that explore racial hybridity. In the afterword to this dissertation I also consider my relationship as a racially hybrid audience member to the racially hybrid character in the performance of this play.

¹¹ It is rather curious to note that this play, which was set in British Columbia, was not produced in Canada until 2003 although it was successfully produced in the United States of America. This fact suggests that the longer historical use of racially hybrid characters in vaudeville and within abolitionist tracts hints at the more distinctly American preoccupation with this literary figure.

¹² As in the "tragic mulatta" narrative, the revelation of Precious' mixed blood status leads to her being scorned by the white lover. However, in this Canadian version, Precious kills her white lover rather than follow the typical spiral downward that would often lead to suicide in American passing narratives.

¹³ A recently published essay also analyzes the impact of the racially hybrid body on stage. The essay is "Keeping Up Appearances: Ethnic Alien-Nation in Female Solo Performances" *Mixing It Up* (eds.) San San Kwan and Kenneth Speirs (Austin: U of Texas P, 2004):163-80. In this essay, Cathy Irwin and Sean Metzger analyze two contemporary plays that represent racially hybrid characters: Paul Weston Solano's *Appearances* and Sandra Tsing Loh's play *Aliens in America*. These writers analyze these plays in relation to audience reception and interrogate the way in which a racially hybrid performer can appeal to, or challenge audience expectations and racial essentialism. They consider "Mixed-race performance" as a form that "creates a space for performers and audience members to rethink such facile attempts to apprehend the dissolution of the old racial categories of White, Black, yellow, red, and brown in hopes of creating new dialogues" (177).

¹⁴ This play has been not given much scholarly attention. For a review of the play see "Evans Mines Family Past for Poetic Tale" by Jo Ledingham in *The Vancouver Courier*, (6 June 2005: 32).

¹⁵ Ruth B. Phillips has written an interesting essay entitled "Performing the Native Woman: Primitivism and Mimicry in Early Twentieth Century Visual Culture," in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity* (ed.) Lynda Jessup (Toronto: U of TP, 2001)26-47, in which she addresses the impact of live performance, the visual arts, and modernity.

¹⁶ For an interesting discussion of early representations of Native people in Canadian theatre, see Daniel Francis' chapter six "Performing Indians" in *The Imaginary Indian* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

¹⁷ According to Ric Knowles and Monique Mojica the "tradition of contemporary theatrical performance" evolved from the "activist Native political, cultural, and spiritual movement of the late 1960s and early 70s, in part a movement of cultural preservation that paradoxically, in the case of theatre, meant creating something that didn't exist before" (*Staging* vii). The plays by Native playwrights that I address in this chapter must be seen in light of this emerging practice. Knowles and Mojica point out that in Canada "Native theatre artists only began taking control of their own representation on stage in the late 1970s and 1980s at such places as Northern Delights in Sioux Lookout, Native Earth Performing Arts in Toronto and De-Ba-Jeh-Mu-Jig Theatre group on the Wikwemikong Unceded Reserve, Manitoulin Island" (vii). The work that has been produced by this relatively new theatre community has only recently been addressed in critical discourse and will continue to have an impact on discourse on Canadian theatre practice. The first collection of Native plays to be published in Canada is *Staging Coyote's Dream: An Anthology of First Nations Drama in English* (Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press, 2003)

¹⁸ The narrative structure of this play is parallel to Wagamese's novel *Keeper N' Me* in that it follows the Native adoptee through a series of non-Native sites until the protagonist finally learns to embrace his lost indigeneity.

¹⁹ This play, while autobiographical, deals with cultural hybridity. Kane's later play addresses racial hybridity. For a discussion of the autobiographical impetus to write this play and the development process

see Kane's article "From the Centre of the Circle the Story Emerges." *Canadian Theatre Review* 68 (Fall 1991): 26-29.

²⁰ I make the distinction here between striving to "be" Native and striving to "go" Native. The former implies an ideology about the entitlement to claim a Native identity while the desire to "go" Native implies an inauthentic subject position. Kane's character strives to become indigenous while it seems that Evans' character and Taylor's Summer strive to "go" Native.

²¹ Kane herself has suggested that this play is not strictly autobiographical but based on the well-documented experiences of Native children who were taken away from their families by the Children's Aid Department in the 1950s. This play is also inspired by personal stories of women Kane has met. It premiered at the Women in View Festival in 1990 and has toured throughout Canada, the United States, Europe and Australia to much acclaim. It was also adapted for radio and published in 1994. For a video of a production of *Moonlodge* and to see reviews of the productions, go to Margo Kane's Full Circle: First Nations Performance website at <http://www.fullcircle.ca/moon/moon.html>.

²² As we saw in the analysis of Lawrence Hill's autobiography in Chapter Two, when biracial Canadians experience extreme social isolation they may turn to television to gain an understanding of their racial identity.

²³ While Insell suggests that this is an African-Canadian theme, in his essay "Canadian Biraciality and Its 'Zebra' Poetics," George Elliot Clarke suggests that "it is Western Canadian mixed-race blacks who limn, almost fetishistically, the 'zebra' consciousness" (212).

²⁴ Lawrence Hill and other biracial Canadians examined in Chapter Two and Chapter Three express a similar complex identity that stems from having both a racially hybrid body and light-skinned privilege.

²⁵ After her performance Ewen shares with the audience the autobiographical source material that inspired the writing of the play and has talked about her own process of gaining a positive sense of her biracial identity.

²⁶ I am thinking here of Fred Wah's biracial character Fred Jr. in *Diamond Grill* and also Maxine Hayman's short story "Shortbread and Oolichan Grease." In both cases, as in Taylor's play, food becomes a racial qualifier of identity.

²⁷ This essentialist argument is also represented in the novel *Keeper N' Me* by Richard Wagamese. See Chapter Three for a thorough analysis of the protagonist's quest for an identity in a narrative that presents the racially essentialist argument that he is somehow incomplete if he does not go to a reserve and learn how to dress, think, act, and be Native.

²⁸ I am referring here to the tendency in the Canadian "Multicultural Wars" of the 1990's for racial groups to present a unified identity by employing such terms as "women of color" or "people of colour." While this tendency assisted in stressing the commonalities of race discrimination, this approach has been criticized for glossing over the culturally-specific experiences of identity that this strategic essentialism denied or obscured.

²⁹ As another example of this multiple casting, Mojica has one actor play the roles of Marie/ Margaret/ Madelaine. In the character description they are described as "[t]hree faces out of the hordes of Cree and Métis women who portaged across Canada with white men on their backs and were then systemically discarded" (*Staging* 137). Like Campbell's (auto)biography, the voices of the Métis people are represented by way of a woman's voice. It may be that the impulse to use the individual voice to speak *for* or stand in for the community or nation is a part of an indigenous aesthetic that these two different writers evoke. Further explorations of such parallels in light of emerging discourse around indigenous aesthetics might provide new insights into the use of the "I" to signify communal or national issues.

³⁰ See also T. R. Fehrenbach *Fire and Blood: A History of Mexico* (New York: Macmillan 1973).

³¹ For further elaboration on the myth and impact of the Pocahontas figure, see Rayna Green's essay "The Pocahontas Perplex: The Image of Indian Women in American Culture" in *Native American Voices*, 2nd ed. Eds. Susan Lobo and Steve Talbot (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2001) 203-11.

³² Mojica uses the expression, "A Nation is not conquered until the hearts of its women are on the ground," as a central motif in this feminist, historical-revisionist play. This expression captures a pan-indigenous

notion that links all indigenous people in the struggle against colonial and patriarchal oppression by drawing attention to the way in which indigenous women have been used as part of colonial oppression. In her essays on *Indian Country* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfred Laurier P, 2005), mixed race native writer Gail Guthrie Valaskakis notes that “[a] poster that is common in Indian Country carries the warning of the Cheyenne Tsistsistas: ‘A nation is not conquered until the hearts of its women are on the ground. Then it is finished, no matter how brave its warriors or how strong their weapons’” (146). Valaskakis cites the second half of this saying and also suggests that this quote identifies the importance of women’s empowerment in postcolonial emancipatory processes.

³³ The use of the genre of opera to address national concerns might be interestingly read in light of Linda and Michael Hutcheon’s essay “Operatic Issues: Post-National Operatic Narratives” (Narrative 3:1 [January 1995]: 1-17), where they analyze Mavor Moore’s libretto of the 1967 opera *Louis Riel*, consider its content and the performance history in the context of operatic representations of the Canadian nation.

³⁴ Christl Verduyn has published “Opera in Canada: A Conversation,” which is based on an interview with Linda Hutcheon and George Elliot Clarke and explores both the situation of opera in Canada and the form of opera that Clarke has chosen to represent this story. See *Journal of Canadian Studies* 35.3 (Fall 2000): 184-98.

³⁵ In this way, Clarke’s play has parallels to Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, which also seeks to chart the emotional effects slavery has on expressions of intimacy between Black people.

³⁶ Cited in *Kola* 11.2: 70-74.

³⁷ *Beatrice Chancy* has also been produced in other media, specifically CBC Radio, and CBC-TV, which has increased its audience. The fact that it is one of the only Canadian operas to be broadcast on television in recent years suggests the central role this story has in representing the nation, because it has been legitimized within the nation’s major national broadcasting centres.

³⁸ Another play that features the voice of an enslaved African-Canadian character is the play *Angélique* written by Lorena Gale (Toronto : Playwrights Canada Press, 2000), but it does not feature a racially mixed woman and for this reason I do not consider it a rewrite of a tragic mulatto story.

³⁹ Clarke's and Taylor's plays address blood-quantum ideologies in ways that signify on the markedly different ways in which racial identity was policed in African-American and Native Canadian histories, in particular the historical impact of the Fugitive Slave Act and The Indian Act. The Fugitive Slave Act defined people as Black according to the "one drop" rule and yet, in Canada blood-quantum, has been used to determine who acquires Native status. For a thorough discussion of this see Bonita Lawrence, *'Real' Indians and Others* (Nebraska: U of Nebraska P, 2004). This difference in the legal application of blood-quantum ideologies may explain why the "one-drop" rule is rarely accepted as enough to define a person as Aboriginal and why "one drop" still allows Black people to identify and be accepted as Black. For the purposes of my study, in both cases the racially hybrid body is read for signs of authenticity according to legal means of defining identity. This particular legacy has had an enduring impact on the material effects of this form of embodiment as well as the representation of the racially hybrid body in literature.

⁴⁰ I'm thinking here of the classic slave narratives *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe (c.1852 New York: Modern Library, 1985) or Harriet Jacob's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Written by Herself* (c.1861 Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1987), *Our Nig* by Harriet Wilson (c.1859 New York: Random House, 1983), *Iola Leroy* written by Francis Harper (c.1892 Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), or *The Bondwoman's Narrative* written by Hannah Crafts that was discovered by Henry Louis Gates Jr. (New York: Warner Books, 2002). Many of the elements of these slave narratives are echoed here in Clarke's work. While it might be fascinating to explore the way in which Clarke fashions this Canadian slave narrative and how the conventions differ in these genres, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

⁴¹ One review simply entitled "Beatrice Chancy" by Norm Sacuta published in *The Canadian Forum* 78.882 [Oct. 1999]: 41-44 argues that the philosophies motivating the characters reinforce categories of difference, the characters are not well sketched, the language is clichéd and the play is didactic. Sacuta argues that Clarke's is not a revision of the "tragic mulatto" story but rather a play that reinforces racist stereotypes. My analysis of this play is not in agreement with his review but this discussion is beyond the scope of this paper; however, it is important to point out that not everyone has read Clarke's play according to my own analysis of its progressive departures from slave narrative conventions.

⁴² Cited from *Siting the Other: Re-Visions of Marginality in Australian and English-Canadian Drama*, eds. Marc Maufort and Franca Bellarsi. (2001): 267-78.

⁴³ Cited from *Essays on Canadian Writing* 80 (Fall 2003): 55-75.

⁴⁴ For an interesting analysis of the common pairing of racial and gender passing in literature see Marjorie Garber's *Vested Interests: Cross Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

⁴⁵ This idea of the racially hybrid character who returns after being socialized into the white world is represented in Canadian drama as early as "Birthright" (1905). This familiar theme is also represented in autobiographies and in fiction. The journey home after assimilation into the white world is also addressed in Wagamese's novel *Keeper N' Me*, Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* and Hill's return to Africa in his autobiography *Black Berry Sweet Juice*. See Chapters Two and Three.

⁴⁶ Beatrice's mother is also victim to Chancy's brutality, and his wife and others on the plantation suggest that he is constantly debasing the slave women.

⁴⁷ Tompkins and Gilbert argue that rape is a "prominent signifier in a number of plays, particularly in countries where settler's annexation of so-called 'unoccupied territories' disrupted not only the culture but also the livelihoods of indigenous peoples. Both native and non-native dramatists have featured inter-racial rape as an analogue for the colonizers violation of the land, and also for related forms of economic and political exploitation. Often such representations are designed to reveal less about the experiences of the oppressed than about the rape mentality of the oppressors" (213). It would be interesting to use a crossracial analysis to address this play by Clarke, Evans play, Mojica's play and Tomson Highway's plays and consider the representation of rape as a signifier in the terms that Tompkins and Gilbert offer. See *Post-Colonial Drama* (London: Routledge, 1996) esp. Ch 5 Body Politics.

⁴⁸ See Jacobs, Harriet. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. (c.1861) Ed. Jean Fagan Yellin. (Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1987).

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