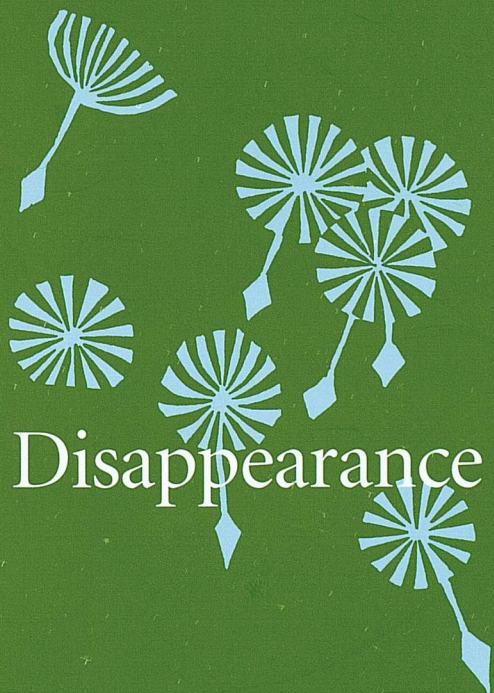


# *Canadian* Literature

A Quarterly of Criticism and Review Summer 2009 \$19.95

## 201



## Disappearance and Mobility

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## A Quarterly of Criticism and Review

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## Multiculturalism and the Formation of a Diasporic Counterpublic in Roy K. Kiyooka's *StoneDGloves*

Canadian multiculturalism, as the Canadian critic Smaro Kambourelli observes in the preface to her 1996 anthology *Making a Difference*, is not a recent phenomenon, since early colonial settlements included Black Loyalists—former slaves from the American colonies who came to Nova Scotia in 1783—and Chinese immigrants who were hired to work on the Canadian Pacific Railway in the 1880s. Yet even though the African, Caribbean, and Asian presence in Canada has a relatively long history, it was not until the late twentieth-century that writers of the African, Asian, and Caribbean diaspora were given a significant public voice in Canadian print culture, as Mark Shackleton has argued.<sup>1</sup> Significantly, the emergence of diasporic writing in English Canada is coextensive with the emergence of official multiculturalism in Canada, a policy that promised to recognize the cultural rights of different diasporic groups. And yet, the discourse of official multiculturalism has in effect worked to silence the histories and experiences of Canada's diasporic citizens. In response to this silencing, this essay considers how recent diasporic writing has questioned the liberal democratic claims of Canada's multicultural policies to recognize the history and culture of its diasporic citizens. At the core of the essay is a detailed reading of Roy Kiyooka's catalogue of poems and photographs, *StoneDGloves* (1970), which considers how Kiyooka traces a history of race-labour in the foundations of the Canadian nation-state, and attempts to redress state policies of racial exclusion and discrimination in Canada's national narrative. But the essay also supplements this reading with a discussion of the ways in which the history of race-labour migrancy and the discourse of racial

exclusion is figured in Larissa Lai's dystopian novel *Salt Fish Girl* (2002) and Roy Miki's poetry collection *Random Access File* (1995). In so doing, I suggest that these texts contribute to the formation of a diasporic counterpublic, or a rhetorical site for articulating histories of migration and racialization.

Counterpublics, as Michael Warner and Nancy Fraser have argued, refer to a subordinate social group who do not have the "privilege" of "public agency" afforded to the enfranchised, white European/North American citizens of the dominant, bourgeois public sphere. For this reason, Fraser's description of "counterpublics" as "subaltern" seems appropriate if subaltern is understood as a discursive subject position from which a sovereign speech act is not recognized as a form of agency within the dominant public sphere of a particular nation-state (123-5). This is not to suggest, however, that counterpublics are without agency because they are excluded from dominant structures of representation. As Fraser argues, "subaltern counterpublics have a dual character. On the one hand, they function as spaces of withdrawal and regroupment; on the other hand, they also function as bases and training grounds for agitational activities toward wider publics" (124). Moreover, by engaging with the rhetorics of a counterpublic, one can begin to trace the articulation of histories, experiences, and forms of agency, which are not recognized by dominant structures of political representation.

To situate the emergence of diasporic counterpublics in Canadian writing, a brief examination of the important role that literature and culture have played in the dominant public sphere is in order. The Canadian federal government's financial support for culture was intended to produce a coherent national public sphere in the context of Cold War geopolitics. Richard Cavell has argued that the 1951 Massey Report, the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, posited an explicit connection between culture and national defence: a connection that "in effect recommended that culture in Canada should be a bulwark of national security" (6). In a similar vein, Jody Berland has argued in "Writing on the Border" that the Canadian border with America has become an important symbolic site for distinguishing the cultural and political values of Canada from the hegemony of the free market associated with America. For Imre Szeman, the state's funding of the arts and culture in Canada from the 1960s led to a situation in which it sought to produce a "sense of national-cultural difference that can potentially be read as political difference" (196). As Szeman goes on to explain, this "active role of the state in using culture for its own 'war of position'" runs the risk of co-opting literature and the visual

arts for a broader geopolitical agenda (161). What is more worrying, however, is the risk that the production of a national culture could also homogenize the nation, and erase social and cultural differences between and among the different social groups who are deemed to constitute it. Yet, as Lynette Hunter has suggested in a study of print culture and the ideology of the nation-state in late twentieth-century Canada, the funding of alternative publishing venues for socially marginalized groups in Canada led to a situation in which the social, political, and cultural difference of that imagined community was foregrounded; and in which culture provided a rhetorical site for contesting the dominant ideology of the nation-state (31-54).

During the 1980s and 1990s, many critical and theoretical discussions in Canadian literary criticism focused on the question of Canada's postcoloniality: on the political and cultural legacy of British colonialism shaping Canada's national and political culture; and the increasing anxiety about losing economic sovereignty to the United States, particularly since the signature of the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement in 1994. Such discussions seem to echo the earlier state-funded initiatives of cultural nationalism,<sup>2</sup> which struggled to distinguish Canada internationally, and to establish a coherent national identity as Canada moved out of the colonial shadows (Derksen). Frank Davey has suggested that this coherent representation of a postcolonial nation disavows the global political and economic restructuring of Canada, as well as the cultural and political antagonisms "inside" the nation-state, which can enable social change. For Davey, such discourses of cultural nationalism place "Canada beyond political disputation" and risk "depriving Canadians of the only means they have of defending themselves against multinational capitalism: participating in the arguments of a nation that is being continuously discursively produced and reproduced from political contestation" (23-4).

In a critique that expands and complicates the terms of Davey's *Post-National Arguments*, Roy Miki emphasizes the Eurocentric history of postcolonial criticism in Canada. For Miki, the accommodation of postcolonial theory in Canadian English departments continues the Eurocentric cultural nation-building project established by Royal Commissions in the early twentieth-century, culminating in the Massey Report (1949-51), and the formation of the Canada Council in the late 1950s:

The institutionalization of CanLit with its twin CanCrit—since the nationalist zealotry of the 1960s—rather than articulating, has left unexamined the cultural conditions conducive to race elision. The "normally" benign rhetoric of "national

identity" has worked to cover over the nation-building role of an exclusionary "identity" in the neocolonial shadows of cultural sovereignty. (*Broken* 130)

By delinking culture from its historical and political determinants, Miki argues that postcolonial theories of Canadian literature appear to reflect the "vertical mosaic" of liberal multiculturalism: a policy that protects "white neocolonialist cultural representations" (*Broken* 150), while effacing the exploitation of racialized bodies in the political discourses which have stabilized the coherent representation of Canada.

While the policies of cultural nationalism have variously attempted to accommodate writing that is deemed to represent social and cultural difference either indirectly through processes of canon formation or more directly via the multicultural rhetoric of difference and diversity, this essay examines how the formal and linguistic strategies which writers such as Roy Kiyooka, Larissa Lai, and Roy Miki have employed can be seen to question and challenge the terms in which diasporic subjects are represented in the dominant national public sphere. If the study of diasporic literatures in Canada is to circumvent the biopolitical control of difference, which is aided and abetted by legislative multiculturalism, then the need for a critical approach that can articulate the singular position of diasporic Canadian subjects in the global economy is imperative. Sudesh Mitra has suggested that diasporic subjects or "transmigrants" are characterized as "being constitutionally different from subjects rooted in the national territory" and "constitute one in a number of vital symptoms that epitomise the transnational moment" (134). While this characterization certainly helps to elucidate the way in which diasporic subjects are viewed as foreign bodies in the terms of a conservative national imaginary, it does not explicitly emphasize the agonistic relationship of diasporic subjects to the exclusionary and often racist discourse of the national polity. It is partly in the context of this conflation of a discourse of transnational migration and the global circulation of capital described by Mitra that Diana Brydon has suggested that a trans-Canadian literary studies needs to address the ways in which the Canadian social and political imaginary has been historically complicit with globalization before it can identify spaces of resistance within the contemporary neoliberal global economic order (13). Invoking Gayatri Spivak's appeal in *Death of a Discipline* to "make the traditional linguistic sophistication of Comparative Literature supplement Area Studies (and history, anthropology, political theory, and sociology)" by approaching "the languages of the Southern Hemisphere as active cultural media rather than as objects of cultural study" (9), Brydon

stresses the need to read Canadian literature “in global contexts and in dialogue with Indigenous concerns” (16). This essay expands on some of Brydon’s insights by suggesting that Roy Kiyooka’s *StoneDGloves*, Larissa Lai’s *Salt Fish Girl*, and Roy Miki’s *Random Access File* contain formal strategies that encourage readers to engage with and learn from the subaltern histories and languages embedded in diasporic literary texts. In so doing, I argue that Kiyooka, Lai, and Miki contribute to the invention of a counter-public, or a site of reading which questions and challenges the social and political grounds upon which diasporic subjects are marginalized in the global economy, as well as the Canadian public sphere.

I  
In modern liberal states such as Canada, the management of the population according to racial and ethnic criteria is an example of what the French philosopher Michel Foucault calls biopolitics, or the state’s control over the life of the human population. If, as Foucault suggests, racism is “primarily a way of introducing a break into the domain of life that is under power’s control: the break between what must live and what must die” (254), official multiculturalism would appear to provide a liberal political solution to this biopolitical imperative to kill and wage war against races deemed to be inferior by legislating for the recognition, tolerance, and protection of people who are deemed to be different or foreign. Yet, as the political theorist Wendy Brown has argued, this use of tolerance as part of a liberal political practice of governmentality ignores the historical conditions of tolerance’s emergence as a discourse, and the powers that produce and define it (15). Tolerance, in Brown’s analysis, denotes “a mode of incorporating and regulating the presence of the threatening Other within” (27), a mode which also “sustains a status of outsidership for those it manages by incorporating” (28). As Brown proceeds to explain, “Designated objects of tolerance are invariably marked as undesirable and marginal, as liminal civil subjects or even liminal humans; and those called upon to exercise tolerance are asked to repress or override their hostility or repugnance in the name of civility, peace, or progress” (28).

Brown’s critique of the liberal political discourse of tolerance is helpful for clarifying the limitations of multiculturalism, but it does not fully account for the ways in which a multicultural discourse of tolerance can also serve the interests of the neoliberal global economy by defining subjects who are not only tolerable to the cultural norms of a particular nation-state, but also valuable for the economy. As Aihwa Ong argues in *Neoliberalism*

as *Exception*, neoliberalism is “merely the most recent development of . . . techniques that govern human life, that is, a governmentality that relies on market knowledge and calculations for a politics of subjection and subject-making that continually places in question the political existence of modern human beings” (13). In this context, multiculturalism can be seen as part of a broader system of biopolitical control, a system that defines the social and political rights of migrants in terms of their economic value in the neoliberal marketplace (Sharma 31-52).

It is precisely the structural inequalities of neoliberal globalization that Larissa Lai fictionalizes in her dystopian novel *Salt Fish Girl* (2002). Set in a futuristic Pacific Northwest in 2044, the novel depicts the way in which the social and political rights of migrant workers are determined exclusively by their employment in multinational corporations. When the protagonist assaults one of the Receivers General who protects the economic interests of the Saturna corporation, her father loses his job and is forced to move to the Unregulated Zone, a rundown part of downtown Vancouver with its “rows of the jobless poor sitting in dilapidated doorways or standing on street corners fighting over drugs or empty Coke cans” (111). In the Unregulated Zone, the first-person narrator asserts, many former corporate workers “could not work out ways to make a living,” and “people died in droves beneath the bridges and in the open-air rooms of half-collapsed buildings” (85). Such spaces of abject poverty are causally connected to the unregulated market forces of neoliberal global capitalism. Yet in the face of a stock-market crisis and the further devaluation of the dollar, the Unregulated Zone shifts toward an informal economic system in which people prefer to barter ancient televisions and bicycle parts. As the protagonist and first-person narrator Miranda explains:

My brother developed a side business in bicycle parts and continued to thrive. He worked quickly and cheaply and when his clients couldn't pay cash, he accepted other things—fresh meat, clothes, radios, eggs. He even accepted a few ancient and battered televisions, which were enjoying a sort of renaissance here in the Unregulated Zone. Several pirate TV stations had started up on a low-intensity broadcast that could be picked up for several blocks around each station. (84)

If Miranda's family demonstrates a capacity to survive in the Unregulated Zone without the economic benefits afforded by the Saturna Corporation, it is the cyborg collective known as the Sonias that actively plans to bring about the downfall of the corporate world. In a passage that recalls Joy Kogawa's representation of the Canadian government's policy of suspending

citizenship for Japanese Canadians during the Second World War, and the internment of Japanese Canadians in internment camps in the interior of British Columbia in her 1981 novel *Obasan*, the narrator describes how the "Sonias were in detention or had disappeared. Without a legal existence to begin with, they could not be reported missing" (249-50). While the Sonias exemplify the "bodies that capitalism does not want the dominant social narrative to see" (Lee 94), the corporeality of the Sonias is nevertheless highlighted by the smell of durian associated with their bodies. Lai uses this olfactory trope to evoke a double history of racialization and discrimination. As she explains in an essay published in *West Coast Line*, "'Foreign' foods are supposed to stink. So are women's sexual parts. So what appears contradictory in *Salt Fish Girl* is actually the working of two ways of relating to smell. A hegemonic, oppressive one that wants to deny and obliterate and a progressive, liberatory one that wants to acknowledge and reclaim" (172). Moreover, in spite of their exclusion from the legal category of citizenship, the Sonias are nonetheless able to organize a political struggle against the corporations by inscribing secret messages in the "moulds for the soles of a special edition cross-trainer they dubbed 'sabots.'" These messages include "the stories of individual Sonia's lives, some were inscribed with factory worker's poems, some with polemics, some with drawings" (249).

By inscribing narratives of labour and migration on the soles of commodities, the Sonias' subversive act of writing offers a crucial counterpoint to the exchange of commodities in the global economy, and to the regulation and control of migrant labour power. What is more, the Sonias' "desire to know their own origins, their history, to acknowledge the violence of their conception is analogous to the necessity of addressing the violent history of multiculturalism in Canada" (Mansbridge 130). By articulating the shared history of their experience of racial discrimination, the Sonias foreground the way in which the neoliberal Canadian state both racializes and commodifies their bodies. Such a subversive act of writing also comments on the political significance of contemporary diasporic Canadian writing. For if state policies of multiculturalism have tried to legislate for the tolerance of racial difference, writers such as Roy Kiyooka, Larissa Lai, and Roy Miki have developed linguistic and rhetorical strategies in their writing that not only challenge the democratic claims of multicultural policies and discourses to tolerate difference, but which also invent a public language to articulate histories of migration and to redress state policies of racial exclusion and discrimination. This is not to suggest that the language of literary texts such as

Lai's *Salt Fish Girl*, Kiyooka's *StoneDGloves*, or Miki's *Random Access File* can directly perform redress in the terms of the dominant public sphere; but it is to say that the challenge to representation and linguistic subject constitution instantiated in each of these texts contributes to broader efforts by writers and intellectuals to challenge and question the historical erasure of state policies of racial exclusion and discrimination under the presentist banner of multiculturalism.

## II

In *Scandalous Bodies*, Smaro Kamboureli emphasizes the historical amnesia of many media representations of multiculturalism. Referring to an article published in the *Globe and Mail*, Kamboureli notes a frequent tendency in media discourses about diversity where multiculturalism is dehistoricized and presented only as "a manifestation of the contemporary moment" (84). As a consequence, "the formidable historical legacy of racialization and discrimination" is disregarded (84). Such a tendency within the dominant public sphere to represent the liberal democratic nation state as a synchronic, homogeneous space also represses the historical experiences and cultural memories of those diverse groups it claims to represent. If the histories of racial exclusion and discrimination are repressed in the dominant public sphere, contemporary diasporic writing has sought to challenge and contest this historical amnesia by constructing counterpublic spaces for reclaiming these histories, as we will see.

In the contested geopolitical field assembled under the sign of "Canada," there has been a proliferation of state policies calculated to administer diverse populations of migrants since the end of the Second World War. In the earlier half of the twentieth century, demographic patterns reflected the political dominance of the British, whose presence in Canada for three centuries had led to the British North America Act of 1867, establishing Canada as a dominion. This political hegemony had been brought to a crisis by the influx of many migrant and immigrant populations as well as Quebec's demands for cultural sovereignty. Audrey Kobayashi describes how the struggle for articulation by groups such as the Canadian Jewish Congress and Ukrainian Canadians within the cultural and legislative institutions of the (Anglo-Eurocentric) Canadian state functioned as a dangerous supplement in the rational calculus of state administration. Such a struggle can be understood in part as an attempt to redefine the political grounds of inclusion in the dominant public sphere. For the originary disavowal of

non-British citizens—inscribed in the political foundations of the state—now threatened to undermine the terms of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, which had been established in 1963 by the Lester Pearson government (Kobayashi 214). Yet this struggle for political articulation was seemingly absorbed by the White Paper on multiculturalism in 1971, encouraging “immigrants to acquire at least one of Canada’s official languages in order to become full participants in Canadian society” (cited in Kobayashi 215). This compulsory bilingualism would appear to constrain the possibility of participation in the national public sphere for immigrants who do not speak Canada’s official languages. It is partly for this reason that diasporic writers have developed alternative modes of public address, which encourage readers to question the discursive and historical foundations of the Canadian nation-state. It is this dialogic space between diasporic texts and their readers that I call diasporic counterpublics.

Kobayashi offers an illuminating account of the limitations of multiculturalism as a policy, but she does not address the specific problems with multiculturalism as a system of representation, which have prompted diasporic writers to develop alternative forms of public address. Such problems include the assumption that political representation can be achieved by speaking the languages of the dominant charter group, which is based on a transparent model of linguistic communication, where the (ethnic) individual is predicated as a grammatical subject. Yet, this linguistic constitution of the subject as a national citizen erases the culture and history of the immigrant body. The synchronic constitution of the immigrant as a linguistic pronoun in the official languages of Canada thus worked to stabilize the institution of state authority. Collapsing political representation in a participatory democracy and mimetic representation within a transparent, linguistic paradigm, the legislative history of multiculturalism folds the histories and cultures of different ethnic and racialized groups into the abstract concepts of citizenship and cultural heritage. This conflation of political and mimetic representation perpetuates the illusion that the histories and cultures of ethnic and racialized subjects are represented in the dominant national public sphere.

Scott Toguri McFarlane, in a related discussion of the representational crisis in the legislative discourses of multiculturalism, argues that the “pedagogical spirit” of the Multiculturalism Act is continually haunted by its performative status as a speech act or event. For McFarlane, the state’s attempt to “transcend the racially and ethnically signified otherness of the performative within multicultural policy” is haunted by the ghost of a body it attempts to

forget. In the attempt to incorporate or assimilate the racialized body into an abstract model of Canadian citizenship (that has historically represented the white, anglophone subject), the loss of that body returns to haunt the state's structures of representation. This ghostly body links the visualization of a racialized, productive body during Canada's earlier phase of nation-building to the contemporary political representation of subjects who are deemed to be minorities or objects of tolerance by multicultural policies. Such a ghostly body is an example of how a multicultural nation such as Canada is haunted by its colonial past, a past in which thousands of migrant labourers from China, for instance, were employed in precarious manual work to build the Canadian Pacific Railroad. For many racialized groups, to be visualized as subjects within the systematic terms of the state does not guarantee that their cultural and historical experiences will be recognized. Rather, it accentuates the disparity between the relatively empowered subject of democratic representation and the historical exclusion of racialized groups in Canada. In this way, the Multiculturalism Act was stabilized by conflating the historically produced discontinuity between cultural representation and political representation, and by erasing this discontinuity through a constitutive amnesia, in which the racialized subject is re-inscribed as a Canadian citizen, anterior to the discursive act that produces them. Against this amnesia, the following section considers how Roy Kiyooka's catalogue of poems and photographs, *StoneDGloves*, pushes against the asymmetry of a diasporic bodily knowledge and the racialized constitution of that body, by withholding the body from representation. In my reading, this tactic of withholding a diasporic body from representation encourages readers to reflect upon the limitations of bilingual representation associated with multiculturalism, and in so doing, constructs a counterpublic space for articulating Canada's history of race-labour and its policies of racial exclusion.

### III

Roy Kiyooka's catalogue of poems and photographs, *StoneDGloves*, articulates the lack of fit between the historically excluded bodies and voices of racialized immigrants in the nation-building process at the beginning of the twentieth century, and the dehistoricized representation of racialized subjects as citizens. Based on an installation that Kiyooka was invited to produce for the Canada pavilion at Expo 70 in Osaka, Japan, this catalogue documents the multitude of decomposing workers' gloves discarded on the grounds of the pavilion construction sites.<sup>3</sup>

If the gloves are read in relation to their site on the grounds of Expo 70, then it could be argued that *StoneDGloves* offers an institutional critique of the exhibition because it foregrounds the productive labour necessary to build the pavilion. Indeed, for McFarlane in an essay on *StoneDGloves*, the workers' gloves that Kiyooka photographed contain a "silent *insistence* that Japanese labour resides within the foundations of the Canada pavilion." This insistence, McFarlane adds, "evokes the archaic anxiety and historic violence fundamental to the founding of the nation" ("Un-Ravelling" 135). As I go on to suggest, *StoneDGloves* also traces a history of race-labour in the foundations of the Canadian nation-state, which attempts to redress state policies of racial exclusion and discrimination in Canada's national narrative. What is more, Kiyooka's traumatic childhood memories of racial exclusion as a "Japanese Canadian" by the federal government seem particularly important for understanding the complexity of Kiyooka's position as a representative Canadian artist at the first world exposition to take place outside the West. Under the policy of "Japanese Canadian internment" during the 1940s, Canadians who were identified as Japanese were incarcerated, dispossessed, and stripped of their citizenship rights (Miki, "Unravelling" 72). Roy Miki further discusses the impact of this federal policy on Kiyooka's early life: "Kiyooka's formal education ended in grade nine, 1942, when he and his family, identified by federal policy as 'of the Japanese race,' were forced out of Calgary. They moved to Opal, Alberta, a small Ukrainian farming town" ("Unravelling" 73). Yet when Kiyooka was selected as a representative Canadian artist for Expo 70 in Osaka, his racialization as a Japanese Canadian would appear to be reconfigured as a positive sign of Canada's progressive values, and its emerging multicultural discourse.

*StoneDGloves* is thus situated between Canada's history of racial exclusion and the emergent discourse of multiculturalism in the early 1970s. Rejecting the administration of racialized bodies within political legislation, Kiyooka's photographic images and poems shift away from the mimetic representation of visualized bodies as a positive sign equivalent to political representation. The glove, signifying the absent productive body of a labourer, instead foreshadows the retroactive articulation of labour in the cultural memory of the nation.<sup>4</sup> Supplementing the absent bodies embedded within the fabric of the labourers' gloves, Kiyooka's poems do not simply recuperate the body and voice of a particular subject as a positive presence in representation; rather they stage the lack of fit between the glove and the hand it points towards.

if out of the ground suddenly—  
a pair of gloves suddenly appear on your hands  
use them to bury these words

then ask your breath “where” words come from  
where StoneDGloves go. (Kiyooka 62)

The disappearance of the body in *StoneDGloves* constitutes an active withdrawal from representation and a movement toward the vulnerable process of articulating the history of race-labour and racial discrimination in the formation of the nation, or, the place “‘where’ words come from / where StoneDGloves go” (62). The reader is thus invited to participate in the retroactive articulation of the absent productive body, and to interrogate his/her own complicity in its erasure, or burial. As the verb “appear” suggests, Kiyooka’s lines promise to visualize the body behind the glove. Rather than directly representing a body in the blank spaces on the page, however, the speaker encourages readers to trace the absence of a body in the composition of lines and line breaks. As the line, “ask your breath ‘where’ words come from” indicates, the rhetorical injunction to “use” the gloves “to bury these words” reminds readers of their own bodily location in the act of reading. This injunction also emphasizes that the body haunting the gloves cannot be forgotten or buried, even though the gloves are detached from a fixed corporeal referent.

By withholding the body from representation, Kiyooka foregrounds the repression of the productive body in the calculation of abstract labour as a dispensable resource for capitalism. This complex scene of writing recalls the double meaning of the labour contract in classic Marxian terms, where “[t]he worker exchanges [his] labour power, thinking it is existential private labour [while] the capitalist uses it as spectral abstract labour” (Spivak, “Ghostwriting” 77). Although the gloves are transformed into apparitions, they continue to signify a history of labour. By asking “where StoneDGloves go,” the speaker points towards an alternative rhetorical place for the productive body that is embedded in the fabric of the gloves.

The spectral inscription of a body is continued in “this is a poem,” where the speaker transforms a “cotton glove” into a site of corporeal articulation:

... if you put your ear  
to its cupt hand you’ll hear  
his echo re-echo through the poem  
like a naked hand—reaching  
out for its own shadow. (Kiyooka 64)

The ghostly appearance of the deictic shifter “his” in the third line traces the productive body who “re-echo[es] through the poem / like a naked hand—reaching / out for its own shadow.” In a rhetorical address to the reader, denoted by the repetition of the second-person pronoun, the speaker emphasizes how reading the poem can animate the lifeless body of the discarded glove. The resonating echo of the hollow glove almost materializes a body, or a “naked hand,” even though this body is withheld from representation. The abyssal structure of the poem does not simply fold back into its textual fabric, but re-echoes “how / the gloves fell / from the hands of work-men” (Kiyooka 91). This re-echo of the absent productive body may recall the exploitation of (racialized) productive bodies in nation-building regimes such as the Canadian Pacific Railroad. Yet, the ghostly reminder of a productive body also emphasizes how this body cannot be articulated within the state-defined terms of representation. By withholding the productive body from representation, Kiyooka’s text negotiates a rhetorical space for publicly articulating Canada’s history of race-labour and its policies of racial exclusion.

Such a strategy of withholding the singular identity of the productive body embedded in the glove encourages readers to carefully decipher the historical knowledge which is encrypted in Kiyooka’s poems. This tactic of encryption is further staged in “the poem reveals”:

the poem reveals

the thumb pointing  
towards the shadow the glove  
throws across the dirt  
the dirt under your fingernails  
hard-bitten evidence

parti-  
culars:

one part  
cloth

one part  
air

one part  
dirt (Kiyooka 65)

The size and font of the letters in the first line visually distinguish it from the main body of the poem. The line stands outside the poem as a title, yet can also be read as part of the main work, even though it doesn’t quite fit.

Reading the line as a title, as a clue to the meaning of the poem, suggests that the text will “reveal” the historical significance of the gloves from a contemporary perspective outside of history. Yet this search for “hard-bitten evidence” is not disclosed in “the thumb pointing” or the poem itself. Rather the “evidence” of an unrepresented body is contained in the “dirt under your fingernails.” The second-person pronoun in this line denotes the reader, and emphasizes her complicity in revealing the meaning of the poem and the identity of the spectral body haunting the gloves. By accentuating the lack of fit between the sign of the gloves and the productive body they denote, the speaker goes on to demonstrate how this “evidence” does not add up. For the hyphenated line breaking “parti- / culars” emphasizes how the particles or parts of the glove cannot be integrated into syntactic representation or historical “evidence” of a particular body. The material elements of “dirt,” “cloth,” and “air” may connote the singularity of the labouring body, but they do not visualize the identity of that worker.

The withheld identity of the body is also emphasized later on in the text, where the speaker lists an inventory of found objects:

1 pair of cotton gloves  
1 acre of grass  
1 pair of broken glasses  
1 dead blackbird  
1 wheelbarrow  
1 pair of ghostly boots &  
1 small poem

... hiding all the clues (Kiyooka 72)

Like the historical “evidence” of human labour described in “the poem reveals,” this inventory signifies the forgotten history of a productive body. Yet, the “small poem” refuses to identify the “ghostly” body haunting the “cotton gloves” and the “boots.” This ghostly body reappears in “4 Variations for Victor Coleman,” where the speaker dreams of “a long Sky Corridor / with numbered doors” (Kiyooka 66). In the dream, the speaker repeats the reader’s attempt to fix or nail down the identity of an absent productive body in representation:

in the Dream: a long Sky Corridor  
with numbered doors each door has a “glove”  
nailed over its number. (the number  
i’m seeking will reveal itself if i be diligent)  
the dream sd.—I’m running down that  
long Sky Corridor—lifting each glove to read

its plangent "number" beyond the very  
last door the number that withheld its secret  
a Neon Finger pointed to the EXIT sign . . . (Kiyooka 66)

The numbers underneath each glove on the doors have no specific denotation, although they may connote the memory of the six hundred Chinese workers who were killed during the building of the Canadian Pacific Railroad. Yet to reveal the identity of the body as the true meaning of the text is to "EXIT" from the singular location of the poem and to enter the state-defined terms of representation. Just as the gloves withhold the "secret" of the text and the identity of their owners, so the speaker points to the limits of truth in the false exit of representation.

By pointing to the limits of representation, Kiyooka's poems formally articulate the bodily experience of labour through the materiality of the gloves, without naming or identifying that productive body. For Kiyooka, the memory of the (racialized) productive body lives on in the fabric of the gloves. His poems, like the gloves themselves, do not disclose or visualize a representative identity but rather encourage readers to listen for the echo of the worker's ghostly body. The "secret" which Kiyooka's gloves withhold generates an ethical dialogue between the reader and the text, where the singularity of the body's location can be apprehended. It is from this singular point of ethical dialogue that the body embedded in the glove can be articulated and valued.<sup>5</sup>

*StoneDGloves* can thus be seen to articulate the body of the racialized labourer which the Canadian state has attempted to bury in its historical foundations. Whereas subsequent state policies of multiculturalism in the 1980s attempted to transcend the histories of migrant labour and racial exclusion, Kiyooka articulates a different, embodied memory through the temporality of the *decaying* gloves. Such a tactic creates a historical rupture within the liberal rhetoric of Canada's national culture, and anticipates the limitations of multiculturalism. The closed teleological structure of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act (specifically Clause 3[1][c]) represents the liberal democratic concept of participation as the inevitable goal of all Canadians: an abstract, universal *telos* which guarantees the rights and freedoms of all its subjects through the rhetorical structure of a promise:

It is hereby declared to be the policy of the Government of Canada to . . .  
(c) promote the full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins in the continuing evolution and shaping of all aspects of Canadian society and assist them in the elimination of any barrier to such participation.  
(Act 3.1.c)

Against this teleological movement, the temporality of the decaying gloves in *StoneDGloves* marks the impossible place of the absent labouring body in the foundations of the modern state: an absent body that is both embedded in and discontinuous with the democratic promises of legislative multiculturalism.

By tracing the evidence of race-labour in the historical construction of the Canadian nation-state, *StoneDGloves* could be seen to prefigure the role of multiculturalism in the administration and control of the migrant population for transnational capital. The state's historically shifting management of transnational labour migrancy (or "diversity") provided an economic resource that both anticipates and underwrites the contemporary multicultural logic of late capitalism. Kiyooka's refusal to visualize or name the productive body of the labourer does not simply render this body absent or invisible; rather it works towards the public articulation of a colonial history of race-labour in Canada's multicultural present.

#### IV

Another way in which legislative multiculturalism has worked to stabilize the coherence of Canada's state ideology is through the linguistic constitution of new immigrants as Canadian citizens. In his introduction of the multiculturalism policy in the House of Commons, October 1971, Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau announced that the government would "continue to assist immigrants to acquire at least one of Canada's official languages in order to become full participants in Canadian society" (Multiculturalism). In this respect, the conditions of citizenship are predetermined by the bilingual terms of Canada's political discourses. Despite its claims to recognize the heritage of different cultures, the Canadian Multiculturalism Act (1988) continues the bilingual precedent established by Trudeau's government by linguistically constituting the diasporic body of the immigrant as a citizen without history, culture, or language. Such a contradiction is implicit in the sub-section on language: "It is hereby declared to be the policy of the government of Canada . . . to preserve and enhance the use of languages other than English and French, while strengthening the status and use of the official languages of Canada" (Act 3[1].i).

This narration of subject formation is governed by a circular logic, in which the migrant's body is always already constituted as a citizen in the official languages of the state. Such circular logic is analogous to the rhetorical circularity that Judith Butler identifies in a critique of Louis

Althusser's theory of interpellation. For Butler there is an aporetic circularity in Althusser's account of how subjects are constituted in the grammatical structures of language: "[t]he grammar that governs the narration of subject formation presumes that the grammatical place for the subject has already been established. In an important sense then, the grammar that the narrative requires results from the narrative itself" (124). Butler's account of the "grammatical place" for the subject underpinning Althusser's account of subject formation is apposite for understanding the process through which immigrants are constituted as citizens because it highlights the way in which the subject's history and memory are erased in the formation of citizenship. Just as Butler's account of the "grammatical place" for the subject is an effect of the state ideology's narrative of subject formation, so the constitution of migrants as linguistic subjects of the English and French languages is an effect of Canada's official languages policy.

If the grammar of subject formation in Canada's political discourses is tied to the bilingual narrative of a nation, many recent language-focused writers have used poetics as a means to articulate and disentangle cultural genealogies of the diasporic body from its linguistic subjection. In a survey of recent writing by racialized writers, Fred Wah notes a critical tendency in racialized writing that resists the pull of the lyric voice and the identification of an ethnic or racialized body: "[F]or my generation, racing the lyric entailed racing against it; erasing it in order to subvert the restrictions of a dominating and centralizing aesthetic" (72). This resistance to the lyric voice signals a refusal to identify the voice of an ethnic or racialized writer in terms that are easily recognizable to an audience familiar with European literary conventions. In Roy Miki's "era sure," for example, the speaker reflects on the brutal treatment of a pregnant mother who is forcibly removed from her home. By splitting the word "erasure" into the morphemes "era" and "sure," Miki calls into question the historical erasure of Japanese Canadians, the suspension of their citizenship, and their internment by the Canadian government during the 1940s. Significantly, Miki proceeds to articulate the historical trauma of this state-sanctioned racist policy in terms of bilingualism:

a race to erase so long  
 we said so long so long  
 in the bye bye lingual of  
 falling from the pear tree (7)

Miki's transformation of the morpheme "bi" in "bilingual" into the homophone "bye" in this poem articulates the impact of the state's racist policies

as a form of separation and loss, which is signified by the repetition of the parting forms of address, “so long” and “bye bye.” Similarly, the metonymic phrase “falling from a pear tree” evokes an image of loss and separation, which suggests that bilingualism aids and abets the erasure of Japanese Canadians rather than giving voice to their collective historical trauma. By using such tactics, Miki articulates the pain of Canada’s racist policies and discourses in a poetic language that refuses to identify the racialized subject in the terms of Canada’s national narrative.<sup>6</sup>

The promise of the Canadian government’s Multiculturalism Act to recognize the cultural rights of different immigrant groups may seem to reinforce the democratic myth of Canada as a safe haven for refugees and immigrants. Yet, as I suggest, such a myth tends to efface histories of racial discrimination under the guise of a liberal discourse of tolerance that preserves intact the hegemony of English Canada. And with the emergence of neoliberalism as a ruling ideology that redefines the role of the state as an institution that enables the flow of capital and controls the mobility of people, the rhetoric of official multiculturalism in Canada can also appear to efface the systematic inequalities of contemporary globalization. In the face of such a myth, the language and idiom of diasporic writing offers a crucial counterpoint to the multicultural rhetoric of the neoliberal Canadian state. For in its public address to a national and transnational audience, diasporic writing encourages readers to engage with the repressed histories of racial exclusion in contemporary Canada, and to participate in the formation of counterpublics that challenge the language, history, and ethos of the dominant public sphere. Such a formation does not simply involve representing the unrepresented; rather, it involves articulating the singular histories, bodies, and languages of diasporic subjects in such a way that questions and complicates the very structures of representation that make things public.

#### NOTES

- 1 See Mark Shackleton “Canada” in *The Routledge Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, ed. John McLeod (London: Routledge, 2007), 83–94.
- 2 In 1949, for example, Vincent Massey headed an inquiry into the state of Canada’s cultural activities: from university syllabuses to musical composition; from scientific expertise to Aboriginal craft; from writing to contemporary art. The proceedings from the report of the Massey Commission reveal much about the context in which it was written: about (1) the need for a unified culture that would reproduce a coherent nation that is able to compete with the threat of American economic and cultural dominance, and (2) the concern

- to imagine a coherent community that is divided not only in terms of its physical geography, but also in terms of its social geography.
- 3 These photographs were originally displayed at the 'Expo 70' exhibition in Osaka, Japan, an exhibition/institution which was also contested by Japanese conceptualists mobilizing against ANPO (the political coalition between the US and Japan).
  - 4 In a catalogue essay on Sharyn Yuen's *Sojourner*, Monika Kin Gagnon identifies the hypothesis and perhaps the racist motivation behind Chinese immigration policies in Canada during the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She writes:

[I]t was with the contracting of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1878, that the British Columbia legislature voted that no Chinese were to be employed on any provincial public works (following the presentation of a petition signed by fifteen thousand B.C. residents). Despite this ruling, over fifteen thousand Chinese managed to immigrate to Canada to work on the railroad, undertaking the most physically hazardous labour. This large influx of new railway workers resided in temporary tent camps set up in areas close to worksites; one such temporary camp was at Savona, near Kamloops. By the completion of the railway in 1884, more than six hundred Chinese workers had died (a conservative estimate by Andrew Onderdunk, the American CPR contractor who 'imported' the Chinese workers between 1881 and 1884), equalling approximately four Asian lives for each mile of track. (5)

Guy Beauregard similarly notes "a crucial contradiction between exclusionary state policies [in early twentieth-century British Columbia] and the needs of capital" (60). Citing the historical work of Peter Li, he writes that

"The Chinese were considered useful to the development of western Canada, but were not desirable citizens"; this structural contradiction, Li writes, lies between the need to rely on "a racialized labour force for capital accumulation, at a time when the shortage of white workers rendered industrial expansion difficult," and the "subsequent public outcry against oriental labour and the response of the state through policies of racism and exclusion. . . ." (60).

- 5 Gayatri Spivak discusses the secret as a point of ethical encounter in more detail in her reading of Mahasweta Devi (xxv).
- 6 For a further discussion of transnational subjectivity in Miki's poetry and its resistance to global formations of power, see Kit Dobson "Transnational Subjectivities: Roy Miki's *Surrender* and Global Displacements."

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