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The Exotic Marketing of Canadian Minorities’ Internal Exile

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Abstract

This paper seeks to examine the act of marketing Asian-Canadian writers like Joy Kogawa, Hiromi Goto, Shauna Baldwin and Gurjinder Basran, and their narratives/imaginary homelands, sad histories, unforgettable memories, or let us say, commercializing the internal exile of diasporic identities. In fact, the subversive nature of the writing of Kogawa, Goto, Baldwin and Basran, encourages them to stigmatize the Canadian multicultural trick which reveals an external makeup of diversity, while it hides an internal political and economic control. One can say that these writers’ novels are politically not innocent; what interests us is the aesthetic interconnection between the Asian-Canadian poetics and the Canadian politics and the consumption of this ethno-racial art within the logic of literary marketplace.

Keywords: Internal exile; Canadian minorities; commercialized identities.

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1. Introduction

The choice of Kogawa, Goto, Baldwin and Basran, to embody an absolute otherness, through their transgressive narratives, makes them the enemies, as is mentioned in *Obasan*, “We’re the enemy” (*O*, 100), or more precisely the representatives of transgressive resistance. The problem, however, is that political power produces such resistance and contains it at the same time, or in Edward Said’s terms, “domination breeds resistance” [1:347-348]. So, it is possible to suggest that ethnic writers like Kogawa, Goto, Baldwin and Basran can be regarded as endangering the national unity that the Canadian state tends to preserve for the country’s national and international interests. The weapon of endangerment of the country’s unity that is used by these female literary artists is embodied in their literature through their female characters’ voices and homelands of imagination.

The fictional elements might be introduced, on the one hand, to avoid over-dramatizing their sufferings and on the other hand to protect their literary efforts from political restrictions. We can quote the critic, Manju Sampat’s words, in her article about the Indo-Canadian Bharati Mukherjee, to say that the writers, Kogawa, Goto, Baldwin and Basran, transcend the claim that diasporic writers “do not write too much about their adopted country, as it is very difficult to get behind the actualities of the mind of a new country” [2:145]. They also challenge Karl Marx’s statement quoted by Said, that, as Orientals, “they cannot represent themselves; they must be represented” [1:n.p].¹ They are the kind of ethnic writers who manipulate the Canadian mindset which has evolved from the garrison mentality to the ghetto mentality and at last to the unity-diversity multicultural policy. As postmodernist and de-colonized writers, they create interweaving narratives that seek explicitly to provide literary versions of their sad history and to exteriorize their internal exile about ambivalent imaginary homelands, but implicitly to attack policy-makers. They fight for their rights as silenced and marginalized minorities just by using their literary art and internal exile. This is mentioned by the character of Emily, “We’ve always faced prejudice [...] we were no military threat [...]. That’s scapegoatism. As long as we have politicians and leaders and media people who feast on people’s fears, we’ll continue making scapegoats” [3:42]. Canadian policy makers, however, strive to maintain the country’s balance in every single field. Once the politicians face intellectual resistance, they will react according to the standard of their political maturity. In addition to the “tricky” multicultural policy, the politicians follow certain strategies to extinguish the resistance of their unsatisfied opponents.

¹ Edward Said, “Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*,” *Orientalism* (USA: Vintage Books, 1979), page after the acknowledgements and before the Introduction.

For example, they expressed their apologies for the expulsion of the Japanese, as is mentioned by Roger Daniels in the following quotation:

Nearly four decades after their expulsion from the Pacific Coast and incarceration in the interior of the continent the status of North American Japanese has changed dramatically. From a pariah group which some wanted to expel they have become, in the words of one American sociologist, a “model minority”. In each country there have been formal, explicit apologies for the relocation. [4:195]

These apologies can be seen as “diplomatic” apologies. The most important thing here is that Joy Kogawa’s *Obasan* was one of the motivations behind the apology of two politicians. As is stated by the critic, Jessica Young, “*Obasan* played a critical role in the Redress Movement to obtain compensation and reparation for Japanese Canadians. Both Ed Broadbent and Gerry Weiner read passages from the novel during the official redress settlement and apology in Parliament in 1988” [5:n.p]. There is nothing for free or that is completely innocent, there are usually hidden economic and political goals behind political action. As was argued by the critics, Cuder-Domínguez, Martín Lucas and Villegas-López:

The reawakening of self-awareness among Japanese Canadians and the recuperation of their memories is masterfully described in Joy Kogawa’s *Obasan*, similarly, in *Itsuka* (1992), Kogawa portrays the obstacle-ridden development of the Redress Movement by emphasizing the disunity of a community that has lived under the weight of dispersal and silence for decades. The Redress Movement emerged victorious in 1988 with Prime Minister Brian Mulroney’s public acknowledgement of the racist treatment to which the Japanese Canadians had been subjected in the 1940s, and with the negotiation of an agreement with the National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC) to compensate the surviving victims, although such compensation could only be more symbolic than real. [6:95-96]

Indeed, these symbolic apologies as well as the “metaphorical” Redress Movement and multicultural paternalism cannot erase the melancholic past and the eternal sores of these minorities. It seems that the task of satisfying these immigrants is as complicated as their situation in multicultural Canada. On the one hand, diasporic communities dramatize the act of distancing them from their ethnic origins. On the other hand, they attack the multicultural effort to categorize them as “hyphenated Canadians”. What interests us in the following analysis is the kind of economic imperialism that is manipulated by Canada to control its minorities in order to prosper internationally. We can identify this economic imperialism as a system that is generated by the political regulations attempting to “seduce” the ethnic minorities to stay and also to absorb the previously discussed intellectual resistance embodied by authors, as is the case of the novelists studied. In Pin-Chia Feng’s terms, “even when ethnic women assert their difference positively, they are not safe from colonization by the dominant culture” [7:17]. Let

us discover the Canadian economic colonization of ethnic artists and their postcolonial imagination within a globalized literary marketplace.

2. Prestigious Literary Awards

It seems that the link relating Asian-Canadian minorities and Canada is an economic one. The ethno-racial minorities need Canada to survive and Canada needs them to thrive. In this respect one can talk about the place of postcolonial fiction within the literary market. As a matter of fact, we could not find critical sources dealing with the Canadian marketing of postcolonial authorship. This is why we will try to fill in this gap by referring to other sources that are not basically about the Asian-Canadian literature and its function within the globalized literary market but treating relevant themes to this paper.

The focus here is on “neocolonialism” in relation to Asian-Canadian literature. By referring to Elleke Boehmer’s words, we intend to explore neo-colonialism “as a term from economic theory that signifies the continuing economic control by the West of the once-colonized world in the name of political independence” [8:9-10]. Besides, we will show that for economic as well as political Canadian goals, this neocolonialism colonizes and commercializes not only ethnic minority literature but also the identities and eternal sores of minorities. In order to attain such a goal, we have to explore the act of bestowing awards on Asian-Canadian writers, especially as we have noticed during our research the scarcity of critical sources of these works, and this has been one of the challenging limits of our investigation. In the same context, Cuder-Domínguez, Martín Lucas and Villegas-López, point to the fact that “most of the Asian Canadian women writers have received important prizes and awards, but it is difficult to get copies of these texts from Europe since they disappear from the Canadian publishers’ catalogues soon after their publication” [6:xiii]. As was observed by the latter, “only on the Internet may we find scarce copies of these texts, and even those that make it into translation disappear soon after, thus the marketing of these texts as ‘exotic’ for consumption by global readers may favour a rapid ascent to popularity of the writer, but it certainly does not help the text’s permanence in the long term, within the canon” [6:xiii]. This is a serious problem faced by the readership of Asian-Canadian literature. We would like to shed light on the act of rewarding Asian Canadian authors and their narratives. Despite the shortage of critical attention, one cannot deny the fact that the novels of Kogawa, Goto, Basran and Baldwin have been highly appreciated to the extent of receiving various awards. After having learnt about the melancholic history of the Japanese and Indian minorities in Canada and how

they had been treated, it appears to be strange to reward these novelists and their narratives aiming at criticizing various aspects of Canada. By consulting their present memories as well as their absent present, they show that a big part of the white majority dislikes and segregates them. The very act of granting prizes to the ironical novels of these women seems to be very ambiguous. Certainly, it is not a coincidence that they have received the prizes that we will mention.

We will start with the Japanese-Canadian Joy Kogawa. In Cheryl Lousley's terms, "[p]ublished in 1981, Joy Kogawa's first novel, *Obasan*, has won numerous awards and international acclaim; its powerful re-telling of the internment, relocation, and persecution of Japanese Canadians during World War II has found a secure place in the canon of Canadian literature" [9:85]. According to Marlene Goldman, *Obasan* as "one of the first books to describe the victimization of Japanese Canadians, had a profound impact on both the Canadian literary and political scene" [10:364]. Goldman adds that this novel "has enjoyed tremendous popularity, receiving praise from reviewers and numerous prizes, including the Books in Canada First Novel Award (1981), the Canadian Authors Association Book of the Year Award (1982), and the Before Columbus Foundation American Book Award (1982)" [10:364].

In the same context of our study of the appreciation of the Japanese-Canadian authors and their literary imagination, we find that Hiromi Goto's first novel, *Chorus of Mushrooms*, as is indicated by Joseph Pivato, "received the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for best first book in the Caribbean and Canadian regions and was co-winner of the Canada-Japan Book Award" [11:n.p.]. Thus, contrary to the claim of Cuder-Domínguez, Martín Lucas and Villegas-López, saying that "compared to other racialized groups, Indian writers in Canada have received more critical attention and wider distribution in recent years" [6:xiii], we can observe that even the Japanese-Canadians like Kogawa and Goto have received wide distribution and honors.

From the Japanese Canadians, we move to the Indo-Canadian winner of various prizes, Shauna Baldwin, especially her novel *What the Body Remembers* about which Axelle Girard states: "Awarded the Commonwealth Writers Prize in the Caribbean and Canada region in 2000, Baldwin's oeuvre was [...] granted favourable reviews in the West, especially in England and the United States. Many critics praised it around the world" [12:ix]. In their article about Baldwin, Susanne Marshall and Emily Johansen state that Baldwin has "received India's Jawaharlal Nehru Award (Gold Medal) for Public Speaking and the Shastri Award (Silver Medal) for English Prose" [13:n.p.]. Moreover, Cuder-Domínguez, Martín Lucas and Villegas-López, assert that "Baldwin has received numerous awards and distinctions, including The Writers' Union of Canada award for short prose in 1995 and the CBC Literary Award in 1997;

her latest novel, *The Tiger Claw* (2004), was shortlisted for the Giller Prize”[6:7-8]. Marta Dvořák argues that *What the Body Remembers* was “awarded the Commonwealth Writers Prize in 2000 for its dramatic reconfiguration of the Partition of India, during which fifteen million people were displaced and half a million died” [14:113]. One can notice that the very few critics who try to enumerate the prizes, relate the act of rewarding the author to the basic theme that was treated in their literary works. This is the case of Kogawa, Goto, Baldwin and also Basran.

The Vancouver Writers Festival indicates that, thanks to her “award-winning debut novel, *Everything Was Good-Bye*, Gurjinder Basran was named by the CBC as one of ‘Ten Canadian Women Writers You Need to Read,’ for her book which details the struggle of holding to Indian culture while trying to adapt to Canadian customs” [15:n.p.]. Through Basran’s short online biography, one can learn that this novel was “the winner of the BC Book Prize and named as a Chatelaine Magazine Book Club pick in 2012” [16:n.p.]. Added to this, this Indo-Canadian novelist was a “Winner of the Ethel Wilson Fiction Prize” [17:n.p.]² in 2011 and as a manuscript, *Everything Was Good-Bye* was “shortlisted for Amazon.com’s 2008 Breakthrough Novel Award and earned [Basran] a place in the Vancouver Sun’s annual speculative arts and culture article” [17:n.p.]. Therefore, one can suggest that due to these prizes, these novelists are no longer marginalized and they are comparable to the writers from the mainstream. However, this success seems to be confusing. The cover of every single novel contains various compliments praising the writers and their works’ quality and content, but there are few critical sources dealing with this literature. What is more complicated is the scarcity of criticism treating the theme of awarding prizes to these diasporic writers. In order to clarify this point, let us take Gurjinder Basran’s novel, *Everything Was Good-Bye* as a stereotype of the invisibility of some ethnic novels in spite of their good marketing within the literary market.

On the front cover of *Everything Was Good-Bye*, it is written that this novel is “an achievement to be proud of, and has garnered the recognition and positive attention it is due” [17:n.p.] and also “it’s the kind of Book you won’t [want] to put down” [17:n.p.].³ This is evidently an acknowledgement of the creativity of its writer Basran. However, we have to confess that during our research, we have struggled to find critical sources on Basran’s novel. What is puzzling is that her novel has received various Canadian awards, but with simply one

² We have not found any single article about Basran’s awards, this is why we are obliged to take this quotation from the front cover of her novel: Gurjinder Basran, *Everything Was Good-Bye* (Canada: Mother Tongue Publishing Limited, 2010).

³ Gulf Islands Driftwood, G. Basran, *Everything Was Good-Bye*, the front cover of the novel.

critical resource. The case of Basran and her prize winning novel are the best example of the ethnic stereotype that is praised but invisible. Let us, then, examine the possible motivations behind the act of bestowing awards on Asian-Canadian literary works.

3. Canadian Selfhood

It is not very easy to find a justification for the act of awarding prizes to ethnic writers like Kogawa, Basran, Goto and Baldwin, whose past narrates harsh forms of discrimination and racism. Consequently, it is possible to suppose that these prizes are given in an attempt to hide discriminatory practices whether implicit or explicit. There is a possibility that the majority aims to deny what the minorities say about alienating and segregating them. It could also be a political plan to silence them. These women have shown through their literary works that they belong to the category of unassimilable minorities. Thus, the act of granting prizes to these Japanese-Indo-Canadians might be an effective way of artistic and economic assimilation. This simplifies the operation of deleting minorities' original identities in order to make Canada stronger thanks to multiculturalism. One can deduce that the literary prizes bestowed on minorities like Kogawa, Basran, Goto and Baldwin, hide another Canadian policy.

Canada has usually been accused of imitating its geographic neighbor, the United States, and the awards given to invisible groups other than the white Canadians can go against the idea of its imitation of America. There emerges another possible reason behind these prizes which is the "Selfhood" of the Canadian nation. We have taken the concept of "Selfhood" from Bhabha whose argument can be adapted to Canada:

[T]he sovereignty of the nation's *self-generation* [casts] a shadow *between* the people as "image" and its signification as a differentiating sign of self, distinct from the other of the outside. In place of the polarity of a prefigurative self-generating nation "in-itself" and extrinsic other nations, the performative introduces a temporality of the "in-between". The boundary that marks the nation's selfhood interrupts the self-generating time of national production and disrupts the signification of the people as homogeneous. The problem is not simply the "selfhood" of the nation as opposed to the otherness of other nations. We are confronted with the nation split within itself, articulating the heterogeneity of its population. The barred Nation *It/Self*, alienated from its eternal self-generation, becomes a liminal signifying space that is *internally* marked by the discourses of minorities, the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities and tense locations of cultural difference. (emphasis in original) [18:147-148]

We can borrow Bhabha's statement to suggest that Canada's "in-between" identity vis-à-vis the other Western countries reminds us of its ethno-cultural minorities' identity that is encaged in an internal exile caused by its struggle to identify its authentic "Selfhood". The very act of

encouraging ethnic writers can be another strategy to assert Canadian selfhood as a distinguished Western nation. We can enhance our hypothesis by quoting the white Canadian, Margaret Atwood, who argues that in Canada:

[T]he answer to the question “who am I?” is at least partly the same as the answer to another question: “Where is here?” “Who am I?” is a question appropriate in countries where the environment, the ‘here,’ is already well-defined, so well-defined in fact that it may threaten to overwhelm the individual. In societies where everyone and everything has its place a person may have to struggle to separate himself from his social background, in order to keep from being just a function of the structure. [...] A person who is “here” but would rather be somewhere else is an exile or a prisoner; a person who is “here” but thinks he is somewhere else is insane. [...] But when you are here and don’t know where you are because you’ve misplaced your landmarks or bearings, then you need not be an exile or a madman: you are simply lost. Which returns us to our image of the man in an unknown territory. Canada is an unknown territory for the people who live in it [...]. I’m talking about Canada as a state of mind, as the space you inhabit not just with your body but with your head. It’s that kind of space in which we find ourselves lost. What a lost person needs is a map of the territory, with his own position marked on it so he can see where he is in relation to everything else. [...] Literature is not only a mirror; it is also a map, a geography of the mind. Our literature is one such map, if we can learn to read it as our literature, as the product of who and where we have been. We need such a map desperately, we need to know about here, because here is where we live. For the members of a country or a culture, shared knowledge of their place, their here, is not a luxury but a necessity. Without that knowledge we will not survive. [19:17-19]

As a white critical figure, Atwood succeeds in drawing her reader’s attention to the fact that the Canadian is preoccupied with the question of “Selfhood” within a country that is unknown to its own people. According to her argument, we can understand that Canadians find in literature a map that can reduce their loss and can guide them to self-knowledge. We can use Atwood’s theorisation of the Canadian preoccupation with the concept of self-knowledge to explain the Canadian awards attributed to diasporic writers who participate in the reflection of the Canadian image and literary imagination. We will call this process as the system of “Understanding Canada”.

3.1. Understanding Canada

In her article about the dependency relationship between the center and the margins, Katalin Kürtösi focuses on the Canadian professor of political economy, Harold Innis and his depiction of the link between Canada and Europe as a relationship “between the centre and the margin of western civilization”, as is shown in the following quotation:

He was convinced that “the truly creative thinking and the indomitable human spirit always surfaced from the margins of civilization.” For him, “the center and the margin—the source of power and creativity respectively—were polar opposites”; therefore “Canada, a country

on the margin of power, had something positive to contribute to the modern world" [...]. Innis exercised a strong influence on many of his contemporaries (particularly Marshall McLuhan) and subsequent generations of artists, thinkers, and writers. David Staines sums up Innis's academic contribution to knowledge in his native country: he "considered his writings as an ongoing attempt to explain Canada to Canadians" (339). [20:125-126]⁴

We can use Innis's restated argument to say that Canada as a country on the margins of Western power employs its own center vs margin dichotomy with its ethnic minorities as a source of creativity. In other words, Canada might be manipulating the creativity of its minorities to explain Canada not only to Canadians and Western readership but also to the whole world. This idea is further explained by Smaro Kamboureli who assumes that "CanLit's desire and need to be recognized by others as a distinct yet equally valuable literary tradition undergirds the various attempts by the Canadian state to support Canadian culture within Canada and to promote it beyond its borders via different means of export" [21:10-11]. Thus, one can observe the significance of Canadian literature, including the Asian-Canadian literature, for the Canadian state.

Still, within the study of Canadian awards, we need to highlight the importance of the "Understanding Canada" program, from which comes the inspiration for this subpart's title, as, in Haynes et al. terms, " 'a web of forces, a multilateral manifestation of how cultural policy and politics interface with scholarship and transnationalism' " [22:xi-xvi].⁵ Christl Verduyn identifies the Understanding Canada program as a "government-sponsored program", and specifies that this program was "in place from 2008 to 2012 and was administered by the International Council for Canadian Studies (ICCS), on behalf of its sponsor, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT)" [23:23-29].⁶ Consequently, one can realize

⁴ The following quotation is taken from Kürtösi's presentation of Harold Innis and his basic works and themes: "Indeed, the work of Harold Innis [...] focused significantly on margins and centres. Elaborating on the 'dependency relationship between the centre and the margins' [...]. In *The Fur Trade in Canada*, he concluded that 'fundamentally the civilization of North America is the civilization of Europe' (Innis qtd. in Francis 217)." K. Kürtösi, "'Off the Highway': Margins, Centres, Modernisms," *Beyond "Understanding Canada"*, 125-126.

⁵ We find in the following quotation an explanation of the function of the Understanding Canada agenda according to Haynes et al.: "From the 1970s until 2012, the Canadian federal government [...] provided financial support to promote Canadian culture abroad and to encourage international scholars to make Canada their field of study. [...] There are twenty-three associations for Canadian studies worldwide that were eligible for UC's small amount of funding. Of these, fourteen are in Europe and North America, four are in Australia, four are in South America, and one is in Israel. [...] For this reason, the Canadianists we knew to invite to our conference were 'pre-selected' by the history of Canadian federal priorities." The UC refers to the expression "Understanding Canada," (see page xii). Jeremy Haynes et al., *Beyond "Understanding Canada"*, xi-xvi.

⁶ In the following quotation, Verduyn explains the distribution of awards under the Understanding Canada program: "In 2008-09, 259 awards were granted under the Understanding Canada program administered by the ICCS, with distribution as follows: 81 FEP grants of which 27 (33%) dealt with topics in literature. [...], in 2011-12, 229 awards were granted under the Understanding Canada program administered by the ICCS. Of 62 FEP grants, 14 (23%) dealt with topics in literature [...]. In conclusion for 2011-12, 12 per cent of the total 229 awards granted under the Understanding Canada program dealt with the topic of literature. [...] over the four years from 2008 to 2012 an average 12.25 per cent of grants awarded to applications presented a literary focus. Of these successful applications, their titles suggest that they were included primarily under the program priority theme of

the considerable significance of such a program when it defines Canadian selfhood and mirrors its cultural identity. Verduyn indicates that when the Canadian government “cancelled the program in May 2012, members of both the national and international Canadian literary community were among the most active in expressing protest, because the financial investment of this program generated not only tremendous returns in terms of knowledge about Canada and Canadians but also major economic returns” [23:23-34].⁷ We can see Verduyn’s addition of the economic aspect within her argument about the Understanding Canada program as a shifting point. This point encourages the reader to consider the commercial dimension of this program and to question the point developed by Margaret Atwood and Harold Innis that stresses the significance of explaining Canada to Canadians, and to think about what Smaro Kamboureli calls the “Canadian cultural policy”.

According to Kamboureli, the Canadian cultural policy is a “double process of correlation between politico-economic agreements, that is promoting the production of cultural citizens, and the regulation of cultural economy, or from the Canadian government’s perspective, Understanding Canada has been an investment policy” [21:12-15].⁸ He illustrates his discussion of this cultural-investment policy by referring to the statements of Philip Resnick and Ryan Edwardson, while the first “considers Canadian nationalism as a good business (174),” the

‘managing diversity’.” As is argued by Verduyn, the most successful applications are the ones addressing Understanding Canada’s basic topic that is the management of diversity. The loaded expression “managing diversity” reminds us of Asian-Canadian literature’s explicit call for cultural diversity; this leads us to observe that this could have been behind the act of bestowing awards to such literary imagination. C. Verduyn, “The Understanding Canada Program,” *Beyond “Understanding Canada,”* 23-29.

⁷ The following quotation shows C. Verduyn’s ideological identification of the Understanding Canada program that can help us to understand how Canadian authors, including the authors discussed, have been publicized as part of “Canada’s profile”: “John Meisel [...] together with John Graham, who developed the Canadian studies overseas program as part of Canadian cultural foreign policy in the 1970s, reminded readers of the purpose and value of the Understanding Canada program: ‘to rectify an image of Canada subject to more distortion than other countries of comparable political and economic weight. [...] The program was directed at educators and, through them, an enlarging body of students around the world with a focus on the distinctiveness, quality and innovations of Canadian society, science and scholarship [...]. The program provided platforms from which two generations of Canadian authors have been publicized, translated and sold in foreign book stores [...]. The value to Canada’s profile and to the enrichment of Canadian universities and scientific establishments through cross-fertilization has been incalculable. All this for an annual government investment of barely \$5-million’.” Verduyn, “The Understanding Canada Program,” 23-34.

⁸ In the following quotation, we find Kamboureli’s detailed identification of the Canadian cultural policy which tends to produce knowledge about otherness and to contribute at the same time to Canadian economic development, and the otherness that he evokes reminds us of the image of Asian-Canadian otherness: “As a policy, Understanding Canada [...] has functioned as a national episteme that calibrates in decisive ways the relationship between Canadian cultural production and foreign relations. [...] It has been a tool employed for the advancement of goals that are at best only peripherally related to culture in general and to literature in particular though this often depends on the ideological bent of individual federal governments. [...] Understanding Canada emerged from the recognition that knowledge economies could play a major role as much in producing knowledge about others as about contributing to economic development at large. I use ‘other’ here in both senses of the word: those who are different from us and those who, because of their particularities, are minoritized and/or seen as a potential threat or rendered invisible or inconsequential.” S. Kamboureli, “Beyond Understanding Canada,” *Beyond “Understanding Canada,”* 12-15.

second “perceives that those who have participated in the process of understanding Canada stood to [reap] economic benefits (139)” [21:14-15]. Kamboureli asserts that “by 2012 Understanding Canada generated an average of \$70 million a year for the country’s economy ... , a figure cited as evidence of Understanding Canada’s beneficial role” [21:14-15]. It is evident that the act of bestowing awards on Asian-Canadian novels and ethnic authors is part of the so called Understanding Canada program, which is basically a cultural-investment policy. Therefore, we can suppose that the Canadian awards are one of the mechanisms of what Sarah Brouillette calls, the creative economy.

3.2. The Creative Economy

After extensive research, we found that the study of the economic dimension of Canadian awards, attributed to ethnic minorities, only exists in this paper. This is why we have tried to balance our hypothesis by referring to sources that approach relevant points that we adapt for our purposes. Sarah Brouillette’s *Literature and the Creative Economy*, for example, is about Britain’s “creative economy” and we find her ideas very useful to apply to the case of Canada. Brouillette reveals that “Britain’s New Labour government, in power from 1997 to 2010, attempted an unprecedented incorporation of culture into governance, and at the heart of this effort was circulation of the idea that the UK was becoming increasingly dependent on the profitability of its creative economy” [24:1]. She specifies that:

The United Nations agencies have embraced the idea of the creative economy, while UNESCO’s Creative Cities Network, and designation of official Cities of Literature reflects its desire to help unlock the creative, social and economic potential of cultural industries, and this yoking together of cultural, social, and economic goals is at the heart of the creative-economy frameworks adopted by local and national governments in the UK and elsewhere. [24:1]

Thus, we can suggest that the Canadian government has adopted the British creative-economy framework, and in order to make the link between this adopted framework and our study of Canadian literary awards and Asian-Canadian literature, we need to quote Brouillette’s explanation of the creative economy, as follows:

For just as creative-industries frameworks have found legitimacy within government institutions in the UK and around the world, many policymakers, analysts, writers, and artists, including those on the left who had seen a progressive potential in the expanding recognition of the importance of culture, have experienced what Justin O’Connor calls “affective disinvestment from the creative industries imaginary.” [...] I stress the dialectical interplay between the discourse of the creative economy and the real world of cultural

economics [...]. Culture would be central to negotiating the symbiosis between economic and social goals. The research director of the premier New Labour [...] had written that it was only through culture that a “viable capitalist social order” would manage to “organise and sustain itself.” New Labour embraced this maxim to stress the usefulness of culture and the arts to securing individual and collective interests. It put forward a comprehensive creative-economy program to monitor and foster the economic value of culture and the arts. Its public and cultural diplomacy policies at times blurred into one another, as it trumpeted the use of culture, including literature, in nation-branding strategies that would encourage investment in the UK and sell British foreign policy decisions. Policymakers imagined that arts organizations could forward a social inclusion agenda by bringing minorities into a nation of happily multicultural communities. [24:2-6]

Before commenting on Brouillette’s presentation of creative-industries, we would like to say that, in Linda Hutcheon’s terms, Britain’s “cultural impact had been enormous in English Canada because the community offered by Empire (and then Commonwealth) was appealing since British institutions acted as a protective wall for the ‘garrison’ of colonial culture, but not even that was able to protect Canada from the immense cultural and economic power of the United States” [25:xvii]. Considering the ex-colonial identity of Canada and its adoption of the English language. We can suppose the adoption of the creative economic policy by the Canadian policymakers just like the paternalist UK and US powers. We can illustrate our hypothesis by referring to Brouillette’s statement above, to highlight the idea that the Canadian literary awards can be part of an adopted Canadian creative economy. As was the case in Britain, the Canadian policymakers might have seen the importance of culture being embedded as a creative framework serving political interests. By attributing literary prizes to their ethnic authors, they tend to show the usefulness of culture, literature and the arts in securing individual and collective interests. In Brouillette’s terms, that are adapted to the Canadian context, we can consider Canada as, using “nation-branding strategies”; the Canadian awards as part of an emerging Canadian creative-economy program to monitor and foster the economic value of literature in the name of the significance of culture. The creative economy inspires us to approach the Canadian literary awards from a “Neo-Victorian” perspective.

3.3. Neo-Victorian Canadianism

One can easily observe that the content of Asian-Canadian literature is very similar to the content of Neo-Victorian literature. In fact, both literatures contain didactic dimensions through their approach to historical facts. The similarity of Asian-Canadian literature to Neo-Victorian literature drives us to suppose that this could be one of the reasons behind the Canadian awards attributed as the ex-colonial Canada seems to mimic its British paternalist colonizer. Since Neo-

Victorian literature⁹ is very similar to Asian-Canadian literature, it is possible in such a case to talk about Neo-Victorian Canadianism, and in order to justify this hypothesis we have to highlight the points of similarity of both literatures, by referring to Christian Gutleben's article that questions the aesthetics and ideology of Neo-Victorian Fiction.

According to Gutleben the historic dimension is a fundamental aspect of Neo-Victorian fiction as is shown in the following way:

The angles of approach of this retroactive literature are extremely varied, ranging from emigration, colonization or wars of the nineteenth century to family suffering, emotional problems or individual destinies, but what is striking is that practically all include a work of historical documentation. [...] There is therefore a genuine desire to provide factual information to such an extent that criticism often associates neo-Victorian fiction with the category of historical novel. [...] Neo-Victorian literature therefore illustrates the inevitable textualization of the past theorized, among others, by Linda Hutcheon, and the ontological continuum between the fictional nature of historiography and the historiographic nature of fiction. [...] It is therefore by breaking the historic silence, by speaking for the one who could not speak, by telling unheard of stories that neo-Victorian fiction can legitimately claim an ethical function. Giving a story [...], this also amounts to opening up to the various forms of otherness and therefore to adopting the ethics of otherness advocated by Emmanuel Levinas, which consists of "speaking of the other, speaking for the other, speaking the other" [...]. This ethical and political work responds well to the call made by Paul Ricoeur who, in 2003, called for "a parallel story," a story of the victims which would counterbalance the story of the victors. From the point when he becomes specifically focused on this parallel history, the memory work carried out by Neo-Victorian literature is essentially prospective because it concerns the future, the aim of these historical revelations being, always according to Ricoeur, to enlighten future generations [...]. The act of recreation or historical amendment is therefore also an act of transmission directed towards the present and future recipient and, under these conditions, the ethics of justice which is also an ethics of sharing cannot be nostalgic. [26:120-124]¹⁰

⁹ The following quotation presents a general background of the Neo-Victorian literature, although it does not concern the similarity of this literature and Asian-Canadian literature: "In his study of the art of contemporary storytelling, A.S. Byatt, one of the most illustrious figures in Neo-Victorian literature, explains that one of the major attractions of this literature lies in the recovery of energy and narrative pleasure [...], the neo-Victorian literature of which Byatt speaks, that which developed massively from the 1980s, therefore returns to an earlier romantic practice, [...] and more oriented towards the pleasure of the reader. [...] As Ann Heilmann and Marc Llewellyn have rightly pointed out, a self-reflective consciousness and a specular gaze always accompany the neo-Victorian enterprise since it 'must in some respect be self-consciously engaged with the act of (re)interpretation, (re)discovery and (re)vision of the Victorians' [...]. This metatextual dimension, [...], gives contemporary stories an aura of reflexive knowledge and exonerates them from any purely mimetic naivety." The original quotation is as follows: « Dans son étude sur l'art du récit contemporain, A.S. Byatt, l'une des figures les plus illustres de la littérature néo-victorienne, explique que l'un des attraits majeurs de cette littérature réside dans le recouvrement de l'énergie et du plaisir narratifs [...], la littérature néo-victorienne dont parle Byatt, celle qui s'est développée massivement à partir des années 1980, revient donc à une pratique romanesque antérieure, [...] et davantage orientée vers le plaisir du lecteur. [...] Comme l'ont justement précisé Ann Heilmann et Marc Llewellyn, une conscience autoréflexive et un regard spéculaire accompagnent toujours l'entreprise néo-victorienne puisque celle-ci 'must in some respect be *self-consciously engaged with the act of (re)interpretation, (re)discovery and (re)vision of the Victorians*' [...]. Cette dimension métatextuelle, [...], confère aux récits contemporains une aura de connaissance réflexive et les exonère de toute naïveté purement mimétique » (italics in original). C. Gutleben, « Travail de Mémoire ou Travail de Marchandisation? », *Aesthetics and Ideology in Contemporary Literature and Drama*, 119.

¹⁰ The original quotation is as follows: « Les angles d'approche de cette littérature rétroactive sont extrêmement variés, allant de l'émigration, de la colonisation ou des guerres du dix-neuvième siècle aux souffrances familiales, aux problèmes sentimentaux ou aux destinées individuelles, mais ce qui frappe c'est que pratiquement tous incluent un travail de documentation historique. [...] Il y a donc une véritable volonté d'apporter des informations

Gutleben mentions that the Neo-Victorian authors enhance their works of fiction by the inclusion of documents containing historical and factual events and this is what we have noted in Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*. Through the diary of the word-warrior, Emily, one can discover in Kogawa's novel "real" letters. Even in Goto's *Chorus of Mushrooms*, Baldwin's *What the Body Remembers* and Basran's *Everything Was Good-Bye*, one can observe the factual events that drive the reader to doubt the fictive nature of these works. The slight difference between Asian-Canadian literature and the Neo-Victorian one, is that in the former the authors write about the ethnic communities to which they belong and with whom they suffered at a certain time, while in the latter, the writers do not forcibly belong to the same category as the victims about whom they write¹¹. In both literatures, one can realize the ethical dimension, where the novelists are devoted to conveying the voice of the voiceless Other.

factuelles à tel point que la critique associe souvent la fiction néo-victorienne à la catégorie du roman historique. [...] La littérature néo-victorienne illustre donc l'inévitable textualisation du passé théorisée, entre autres, par Linda Hutcheon, et le continuum ontologique entre la nature fictionnelle de l'historiographie et la nature historiographique de la fiction. [...] A force d'explorer les silences, les éliminations et les exclusions de l'historiographie victorienne, la littérature contemporaine, voix des parias de l'histoire, s'attaque à une série de doubles injustices puisque la souffrance dénoncée a non seulement été vécue mais aussi tue et oubliée. C'est donc en brisant le mutisme historique, en parlant pour celui qui n'a pas pu parler, en narrant des histoires inouïes que la fiction néo-victorienne peut légitimement revendiquer une fonction éthique. Donner une histoire [...], cela revient aussi à s'ouvrir aux diverses formes d'altérité et donc à adopter l'éthique de l'altérité prônée par Emmanuel Levinas, celle qui consiste 'à parler de l'autre, à parler pour l'autre, à parler l'autre' [...]. Ce travail éthique et politique répond bien à l'appel fait par Paul Ricoeur qui, en 2003, réclamait 'une histoire parallèle', une histoire des victimes qui contrebalancerait l'histoire des vainqueurs. Dès lors qu'il s'intéresse au premier chef à cette histoire parallèle, le travail de mémoire effectué par la littérature néo-victorienne est essentiellement prospectif parce qu'il concerne l'avenir, le but de ces révélations d'ordre historique étant, toujours selon Ricoeur, d'éclairer les générations futures [...]. L'acte de recréation ou d'amendement historique est donc aussi un acte de transmission dirigé vers le destinataire présent et futur et, dans ces conditions, l'éthique de la justice qui est aussi une éthique du partage ne saurait être nostalgique ». C. Gutleben, « Travail de Mémoire ou Travail de Marchandisation? », *Aesthetics and Ideology*, 120-124.

¹¹ What allows us to say that the Neo-Victorian novelists write about a category of "victims" to which they do not belong, is the following example from Barbara Chase-Riboud's *Hottentot Venus* within which she presents an African female stereotype called Sarah Baartman, as is revealed by Gutleben in the following way: "Chase-Riboud favors the perspective and the voice of the instrumentalised woman. The heroine of the novel is the historical character of Sarah Baartman, this African steatopyge who was bought and then exhibited naked [...]; however, this young girl from a South African village was illiterate and therefore left no written record. By imagining Sarah's feelings and voice, Chase-Riboud therefore immediately undertakes a dual enterprise, both ethical since she embodies speaking for others and poetic since it is about creating a language. This language which has no model cannot be pastiche, it is strictly speaking poetic and embodies, in its revenge against history, what Rancière called 'an aesthetic of politics' [...]. Experienced from within, Sarah's humiliations gain an emotional vigor and a pathetic charge that can only enhance the ethical experience. [...] From the author's point of view, what comes into play here is a double operation of resurrection insofar as it gives life to a victim of prejudice and human greed and where it shows that his spirit, the spirit of revolt and the spirit of witness, persists after his death, as the weight of injustice persists. With this squared prosopopoeia, Chase-Riboud shows the spectral nature of the victims of the past, whose very function, an eminently ethical function, is to haunt future generations, to link the past to the present, the other to me." The original quotation is as follows: « Chase-Riboud privilégie la perspective et la voix de la femme instrumentalisée. L'héroïne du roman est le personnage historique de Sarah Baartman, cette Africaine stéatopyge qui a été achetée puis exhibée nue [...]; or, cette jeune fille issue d'un village sud-africain était illettrée et n'a par conséquent pas laissé de trace écrite. En imaginant les sentiments et la voix de Sarah, Chase-Riboud

Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* is a literary work of art that teaches its readers about the existence of the concentration camps in Canada during World War II. Inside these camps, immigrants and foreigners had been treated as if they were savage animals needing to be domesticated. The only crime of these people was that they fled from the unpleasant circumstances in their home countries in an attempt to seek better life conditions elsewhere, but they end up sinking into blurred elsewhere, internal exile. Because of their "color", they were scattered. Later on, they found themselves forced to either forget their real identities or to go back home. The last choice was often impossible because they could not return easily. Ever since they have been living in an internal exile, and are torn between two uncertain and conflicted identities. *Obasan* is a Japanese-Canadian work that educates its readers about the ambiguous identity of this displaced minority, its history and struggle.

Through the character of Naoe in *Chorus of Mushrooms*, Hiromi Goto stigmatizes the Japanese invasion of China as well as the American intervention in Japan. Naoe explains to Murasaki how she and her husband left Japan for China for war's sake. Later on, they were obliged to move on from "Pekin ... to Hong Kong to Japan" where they heard some rumors saying that the Americans were about to invade Japan:

During war, there are no thoughts forever. Three things only: Is there water? Is there food? Who is still alive? [...] But we are not fine. There are rumours that Americans will soon invade Japan by boat, and the people, the villagers, the old people, the children, the wives, we chop bamboo from the groves and slice them at an angle [...], to spear the enemy when they land, only they come, they come, not from the sea, but thunder in the sky above us, B-29s, huge [...], dropping destruction. Fire bombs, pitching sheets of incredible heat, melting everything, even metal, even stone ...

And when the fire dies
We creep from the shelter
We stand in the embers of our homes and only ask,
"Is there water? Is there food?" and who is still alive?"

Cisei. That is what we called Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Those people. The children, the infants, the elderly, the women. Sacrifice. [27:50-52]

entreprind donc d'emblée une entreprise double, à la fois éthique puisque elle incarne le parler pour l'autre et poétique puisqu'il s'agit de créer un langage. Ce langage qui n'a pas de modèle ne peut pas être du pastiche, il est à proprement parler poétique et incarne, dans sa vengeance contre l'histoire, ce que Rancière a appelé 'une esthétique de la politique' [...]. Vécues de l'intérieur, les humiliations subies par Sarah gagnent une vigueur émotionnelle et une charge pathétique qui ne peuvent que favoriser l'expérience éthique. [...] Du point de vue de l'auteure, ce qui entre en jeu ici c'est une double opération de résurrection dans la mesure où elle redonne vie à une victime des préjugés et de la cupidité des hommes et où elle fait voir que son esprit, l'esprit de la révolte et l'esprit du témoignage, persiste après sa mort, comme persiste le poids de l'injustice. Par cette prosopopée au carré, Chase-Riboud montre la nature spectrale des victimes du passé, dont la fonction même, une fonction éminemment éthique, est de hanter les générations futures, de relier le passé au présent, l'autre à moi ». Gutleben, « Travail de Mémoire », 126-127.

This is how Naoe shares her sad experience and sorrowful memory about the war with her granddaughter and the reader as well. This is what urged them to emigrate to Canada in an attempt to escape the American attacks. The grandmother tells her granddaughter about such traumatic facts that were and always will be unforgettable memories caused by wars. Naoe criticizes the Japanese aggressiveness to their Chinese “cousins”, and she doesn’t hesitate to express her disdain toward the Japanese efforts to build their empire at the expense of others’ lives and freedom. The problem is that even the Japanese soldiers were also the victims of the Japanese empire.

Throughout the texture of Shauna Baldwin’s *What the Body Remembers*, one can witness a continuous network of connection between the female’s subordination to her husband’s power and the male’s weakness in front of the colonizer. One can see the case of immigrant characters like the Japanese Keiko in *Chorus of Mushrooms* or the Punjabi Harpreet in *Everything Was Good-Bye* who are pushed to integrate within the Canadian mainstream in order to avoid racist attacks and alienation. However, the male character, Sardarji, in *What the Body Remembers*, alienates his Self in an internal exile that contains his identity crisis. Baldwin shows that Indian patriarchy dismembers the female body, while the colonizer dismembers and re-members the male body as is the case of Sardarji. These facts about this character denounce the weakness of Indian patriarchy in front of the colonizer, and attack the patriarchal subjugation of women. Added to that, the Indian mentality urges its people to strive to get rid of the colonizing system but it cannot dispose of its religious segregation which led them into an internal tragedy, a massacre which ended with a division of the nation. Because of religious division, the country is turned into a slaughterhouse marked by indiscriminate killing of civilians, particularly men and children. They were “refugees” in their home country. These dispersed Indians experience the sense of dislocation, alienation and internal exile in their homeland. One can notice, through *What the Body Remembers*, the split identity of Baldwin as an Indo-Canadian writer, of the narrative voices, the characters and even of the nation.

The Indo-Canadian Gurjinder Basran uses literature to attack the hegemonic ideologies that are imposed by the Canadian mainstream and the Punjabi community. She addresses the issue of postmodern racism from a Punjabi-Canadian point of view; we have chosen the label of postmodern racism because the plot of *Everything Was Good-Bye* takes place in postmodern Canada. She evokes the causes of racism and its impacts on minorities’ lives, and sometimes this could affect negatively the majority, as in the case of the male character of Liam. Moreover, Basran gives a lot of importance to the issue of Indo-matriarchal power that could be more dangerous than patriarchy. She shows the problems related to the blind practice of some

traditional rituals and the stubborn nature of the Indian people concerning their values. Through the stereotypical image of Meena's mother, Basran attacks many useless Indian practices that threaten this dislocated ethnic community. Added to the fact that these Punjabi immigrants are objects of racism that traps them in an internal exile of split identity, they are victims of their traditions. Meena's mother-in-law demonstrates that according to the Indian mentality, the female body must imperatively produce children. While Baldwin in *What the Body Remembers*, portrays how the Indian female body is marginalized and dismembered in its homeland by patriarchy, Basran's *Everything Was Good-Bye* reveals how the Indian female body is made invisible, oppressed and psychologically dismembered by matriarchy outside India. Hence, one can note that the internal exile of the Indian female body has nothing to do with being unhomely or geographically displaced, it is rather the outcome of the Indian mentality inside and outside India. Such a mentality constructs the female body as a fixed and unalterable identity; this creates a split identity and an internal exile of loss for Indian women like Basran's Meena and Baldwin's Satya and Roop who are not totally convinced by this shaped identity. Indeed, Basran's female characters undergo a double suppression; as members of a Punjabi minority in Canada and of a feminine minority dominated by the Indian mentality. This is how Basran uses literature to attack such hegemonic ideologies.

Thus, it is possible to perceive Asian-Canadian literature as a Neo-Canadian literature. This is why we have supposed that the similarity between the Asian-Canadian literature and Neo-Victorian literature might be behind the act of rewarding Kogawa, Baldwin, Basran and Baldwin. These literary prizes inspire us to suggest that they are part of a Neo-Canadian policy. This Neo-Canadian policy funds the literary works that focus on the concept of belonging, nationalism and manage the notion of cultural diversity. Considering the significance of the notion of nationalism for Canada and the dominance of the Loyalist Canadians, who are of English origin, it is possible to suppose that these Loyalist Canadians would appreciate minorities' Neo-Canadian art, which is similar to Neo-Victorian art. According to Benedict Anderson, who is quoted by Manolescu and Sturgess, "nationalism focuses on the notion of community and relies on 'narratives of identity', collective imaginings of a group's supposed origins" [28:6-7].¹² This is exactly the case of the Canadian community and its interest in the imagined communities represented through Asian-Canadian literature.

¹² Anderson qtd. in M. Manolescu and C. Sturgess, Introduction, *Imagined Communities*, 6-7.

4. Conclusion

Through their exilic narratives, the Asian-Canadian writers, Kogawa, Goto, Baldwin and Basran, represent their sense of diasporic internal exile marked by traumatic past. Kogawa, for instance, achieves such a literary mission through the diary of one of her female characters, about which the narrator says, “the book feels heavy with voices from the past” [3:56]. There is a link between the pluralist makeup of Canadian society, its hybrid identity, its interest in cultural Otherness and the act of bestowing awards on the corpus studied as a manifestation of the postcolonial literary imagination. Through our focus on Asian-Canadian authors as the primary producers, and even consumers, of their postcolonial narratives, we find that their novels, on the one hand, exteriorize their exotic internal exile, but on the other hand, commercialize ethno-cultural minorities’ eternal sores and encage them in an economic exile. However, this does not erase the humanistic side of the Asian-Canadian imaginary homelands represented by Kogawa, Goto, Baldwin and Basran. They succeed in creating female characters who tend to question injustice and war and to address “our” future as human beings regardless of our differences. This is what we called “internal exile”.

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