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“A Ghostly Twin Struggling for Its Own Place”: Biological Twinship, Homes and Hauntings in Canadian (Sub)Urban Spaces

Abstract

Kristen Den Hartog's The Perpetual Ending (1998) and Susannah Smith's How the Blessed Live (2002) consider how biological twins negotiate the urban, rural and suburban spaces that form the contexts in which they relate to each other and their parents. The conceptual boundaries between city spaces as well as the rural and suburban spaces in these novels are envisioned through family dynamics and the concept of home which, according to Rosemary George, bears some scrutiny: "The politics of location come into play in the attempt to weave together a subject-status that is sustained by the experience of the place one knows as Home or by resistance to places that are patently 'not home'. Locations are positions from which distance and difference are formulated and homes are made snug" (George, 1999: 2). With such scrutiny in mind, this paper deploys intersectional readings of whiteness, gender and racialised bodies to chart the twins' relationships to the spaces they travel to, in order to deal with traumas of violence and loss that have contributed to fragmented senses of selves, by reconstructing homes for themselves which may or may not have room for their twinship. At the same time, the Asian Canadian positions evoked in the twins' stories in both novels function as 'ghostly twins' of white Canadianness, struggling to take up their spaces in Canadian cultural and national imaginaries. Thus postcolonial textual hauntings of exclusionary white Canadian politics regarding 'not quite white' and non-white presences require equal attention.

Résumé

The Perpetual Ending (1998) de Kirsten Den Hartog et How the Blessed Live (2002) de Susannah Smith explorent comment les jumeaux biologiques gèrent les espaces urbains, ruraux et suburbains constituant les contextes dans lesquels ils communiquent entre eux et avec leurs parents. Les frontières conceptuelles entre les espaces urbains, ruraux et suburbains dans ces deux romans sont abordées à partir de dynamiques familiales et le concept de foyer qui, selon Rosemary George, doit être étudié de plus près : « The politics of location come into play in the attempt to weave together a subject-status that is sustained by the experience of the place one knows as Home or by resis-

tance to places that are patently 'not home'. Locations are positions from which distance and difference are formulated and homes are made snug » (George, 1999 : 2) Dans ce sens, cet article propose des lectures intersectionnelles de la blancheur, du genre et de la classe pour saisir les relations des jumeaux aux espaces qu'ils visitent. Leurs voyages ont pour but de les aider à gérer leurs traumatismes de violence et de perte qui ont contribué à leurs perceptions de soi fragmentées, et de reconstruire des foyers où leur jumellité peut ou ne peut pas avoir sa place. En même temps, les positions canado-asiatiques évoquées dans les histoires de jumeaux des deux romans servent également de 'spectres jumeaux' d'une canadienité blanche. Elles luttent pour assurer leur place dans les imaginaires culturel et national du Canada. Ainsi les 'poursuites' textuelles postcoloniales d'une politique canadienne exclusivement blanche concernant les présences 'pas tout à fait blanches' et de couleur méritent, elles aussi, notre attention.

[...]*Suburbia*
where the suburbs met utopia
What kind of dream was this
so easy to destroy?
And who are we to blame
for the sins of the past?
These slums of the future? [...]
 Pet Shop Boys, 'Suburbia', *Please*, Parlophone, 1986

Kristen den Hartog's *The Perpetual Ending* (1998) and Susannah Smith's *How the Blessed Live* (2002) consider how family relations are negotiated in urban, rural and suburban Canadian spaces.¹ Both texts address migrations from suburban areas and isolated rural islands to cityscapes, whereby the protagonists engage in modes of self-reinvention entailing the confrontation of the loss of home. Hence both novels stage forms of displacement and distancing from suburban and rural homescapes contingent on the disillusionment and thwarted desire evoked by the song lyrics in the epigraph to this essay. The conceptual boundaries between city spaces as well as the rural and suburban spaces in these two Canadian novels are represented through how family relations (e.g. spousal and parent-child attachments and estrangements) shape, and are imagined in the home space.

This essay attempts to read two understandings of home against each other: (1) the home as an intimate family space, and (2) the home as country or nation

1 Both novel titles will be abbreviated hereafter as *TPE* and *HBL*. Reviews of both novels are available on *Quill and Quire.com*, a Toronto-based online literary magazine (<http://www.quillandquire.com>, accessed 29 August 2017). Critical scholarship on the novels is currently unavailable and since the novels are not very well-known, short synopses of each text have been provided in the corresponding sections of this essay.

which encompasses the geophysical, cultural, historical and political. Both these concepts of home inform constructions of the city spaces in these two novels, whereby the idea of twin space – posited through the use of biological twinship – could be read as a form of radically open Thirdspace that allows for the complex connections between space, time and social being (Soja, 1996: 7)². In their journeys of self-reinvention, it is notable that the twin protagonists move to Canadian urban spaces firmly aligned with multicultural contexts marked by racial and ethnic difference. Here I put forward that both texts construct Canadian contexts as predominantly white, while implementing Asian Canadian frameworks as tools for the white protagonists in navigating the suburban/rural – urban binary. The Asian Canadian frameworks (Chinese Canadian and Japanese Canadian) accessed are set up as shadowy spectral urban resources, whereby their histories and contemporaneities are not given currency or valency in the conception of Canadian spaces, thus ‘un-homing’ these cultural presences, while ‘re-homing’ white subjectivities in urban spaces.

Biological twinship is a prominent similarity: Jane and Eugenie Ingram are identical twins in den Hartog’s text, while Lucy and Levi Morgan are opposite-sex fraternal twins in Smith’s text. The bodies of the twins themselves are read as twin spaces where modes of sameness and difference are interrogated – hence offering templates of individual selfhood with very close (second?) simultaneous selves. The condition of twinship demonstrates how these protagonists perceive themselves as either two halves of a whole unit or a doubling of one entity. Both sets of twins use urban spaces to reinvent themselves as individuals, rather than as one half of a twin dyad. Their childhoods are associated with rural and suburban spaces marked by loss, violence and forbidden desire, which continue to haunt the adult twin protagonists in their respective city spaces where they produce new homes. While the certainty of twinship is grounded in the notion of having a reliable second self in the twin, the novels gradually reveal, how their home spaces become threatening to the twins’ selfhood in which their sense of twinship is imbricated. Both novels have plots that are driven by twin separation – through disruptions of family relationships due to spousal conflict, death of a parent or sibling, and parent-child estrangements. Both texts offer variations on the absent or lost twin returning to haunt the surviving or abandoned twin, as revenants that function as catalysts to deal with loss. While these memories of family dysfunction furnish necessary sites of haunting to produce twin urban spaces for new homes, additional historical and cultural hauntings of Othered, unbelonging forms of Canadianness can be traced,

2 In *Thirdspace* (1996), Edward Soja posits a ‘trialectics of space’ based on Henri Lefebvre’s ‘conceived’, ‘perceived’, and ‘lived’ space models in order to disrupt binary categories (60-70). I put forward that twin space can be read as a form of Thirdspace that is open to intersectional readings of spatialization that considers political exercises of power especially in the context of racialised, gendered, disabled and classed positions – this is part of my research agenda in the context of my larger project on biological twinship in Anglophone literatures.

which will hopefully instigate rumination on representations of Canadianness in fiction produced by white-identifying Canadian writers.

Producing Cityspace – Creating Twin Space

The analysis of literary and other cultural representations provides valuable insights on how urban and suburban spaces are produced and maintained. As such, creative works allow for critical engagement with discourses and practices that shape lives and spaces. Hence urban writers produce city spaces in their works, by mapping and charting social interaction, memory, myth and desire in their stories (Deer, 2008: 120–121).

And indeed den Hartog and Smith both can be read as mapmakers of the Canadian cities they address in their works, whereby myths, desires, memories and twin bodies all have their specific (if messy!) functions in creating such spaces and being created by them in turn. In both novels suburban and rural spaces are marked as home spaces, by memories saturated with family relations and interactions. Here I am mindful of Annette O’Connell’s observation that both fantasies of and interrogations of Canadian rural (and I would add, suburban) spaces as viable familial spaces are often presented as identifying as white:

[...] the safety, watchfulness, and orderliness of a rural community was complicated by equal investments in freedom, anti-order, non-regulation and at times, illegal acts, for those understood to belong. Again, this more contested regulation of rural life was available to those who were able to position themselves as white. (2010: 544)

At the same time, O’Connell’s caution that ‘[w]hile the urban rural binary exists, this must not impede insights into the differences within rural spaces’ (544) indicates the necessity of intersectional readings which question homogeneous categories and subjects by locating them in networks of relations that complicate their social situations (See Bailey, 2011: 54). The twin protagonists draw the reader into their private home worlds where forms of ‘anti-order’ and ‘non-regulation’ can be traced in familial relations, that are not quite in keeping with the frames of ‘safety, watchfulness, and orderliness’ expected of ideal families and communities. Both novels also portray the potential of these families’ isolation within the rural and suburban communities which also constitute and generate these home spaces – thus illustrating levels of (voluntary?) integration or exclusion of the families in these communities. The ostensibly intact family home spaces in suburban and rural contexts represented in both novels are evocative of traditional portrayals of Canadian literary space as bucolic, as Nancy Burke observes:

The city was rarely a setting of choice for Canadian writers until the last half of the 20th century. [...] While Canadian literary space had tended

to be bucolic – the Prince Edward Island villages and farms, the wilderness and arctic, which so captured the imagination of Europeans from the time they appeared in Canadian writers' narratives as well as the vast prairies and the ubiquitous small town [...] – this has been Canadian space for most writers. [...] Even later, when the population began to live in urban agglomerations, the setting of texts, fueled perhaps in part by nostalgia, was often rural. (Burke, 2003: 303)

What is notable here is Burke's emphasis on a specifically Anglophone production of Canadian rural and small town spaces as contingent with islands and prairies, peopled by Canadians of English and Scottish descent, as can be noted by her citing of Prince Edward Island contexts (likely alluding to L. M. Montgomery's well-known *Anne of Green Gables* series), invested in producing coherent portraits of Canadian family and community life. Such portrayals promote idyllic notions of Canadian space, referred to by O'Connell as 'thick rural spaces that are safe, family friendly and caring' (2010: 544). Den Hartog's and Smith's texts, however, demonstrate how especially the parents' investments in certain forms of domestic order and watchfulness in their rural and suburban homes are complicated by acts of disorder, violence, neglect and personal desire, thus belying the fantasy of rural and suburban Canadian landscapes as 'safe, family friendly and caring'. This idyll is interrogated in both novels with regard to domestic security for women and children – whereby the commitment of the communities in these spaces to safety and care is not clear.

Along similar lines, in her 1999 essay 'Bodies-Cities', Elizabeth Grosz elaborates on cultural linkages between the body and the city:

The city in its particular geographical, architectural and municipal arrangements [...] affects the way the subject sees others [...], the subject's understanding of and alignment with space [...]. Moreover, the city is also [...] the site for the body's cultural saturation, its takeover and transformation by images, representational systems, the mass media, and the arts – the place where the body is representationally reexplored, transformed, contested, reinscribed. In turn the body (as a cultural product) transforms, reinscribes the urban landscape according to its changing (demographic, economic and psychological) needs, extending the limits of the city, of the sub-urban, ever towards the countryside which borders it. (1999: 385-386)

While Grosz elucidates on how the city functions as one constituent of the social identity of the body, through its architectural, spatializing and geographical arrangements, she alludes to the significance of the family as extending the social geography of the city. In light of this understanding of the contingency of bodies and cities, charting the construction of families across the rural, suburban and urban

spaces in these two novels would be a necessary exercise. Here the twins' consciousness of their twinship is contiguous with their perceptions of their own bodies as essential to how they negotiate the city spaces they encounter. This is effected in their readings of how the arrangements of homes in accordance to the distribution of bodies (their own and those of their parents) in these homes affect the relations between these bodies. The twin protagonists' movements into city spaces often entail confronting forms of cultural shock at the kinds of difference, perceptions of disorderliness, defamiliarization and familial fragmentation. At the same time, the protagonists' socialization into the dominant English Canadian context does not entertain a multicultural or transcultural understanding of Canadian demographics – a circumstance that is attributable to a particular understanding of their childhood suburban space as exclusively white. In this light, I access Baldwin, Cameron and Kobayashi's observation that "[o]ne of the operative assumptions in whiteness studies is that both forms of race thinking – race as biological difference or race as cultural difference – are conceptualized against some assumed white norm" (2011: 5), to consider the implicit binary of white Canadian identity / non-white Asian Canadian identity in both texts.

In *The Perpetual Ending*, the 10-year-old narrator Jane Ingram is explicit in her reading of Toronto as urban space where difference congregates – this is marked in racial terms using the parameter of skin colour:

Yonge street, old street, goes on forever, no street stops it. [...] Here people come from everywhere. In shades of pink and brown, some so black there is purple in them. At home, with the odd exotic exception, people come in white only. Peachy pink, the colour of me, of you [...] (TPE, 81)

This description of a main thoroughfare in the heart of downtown Toronto from the young Jane's perspective underscores the perception of this urban space as a racialised and exoticised space for the (fatherless, fragmented) white family from the suburbs, thus alluding to a predominantly white demographic in Deep River that is more familiar to the Ingram twins. The twins' self-description addresses the childish understanding of whiteness as shades of pink (which Jane aligns firmly with herself and her twin) as part of a plethora of differences that congregate in the city – thus setting the twins apart from "home", where "people come in white only".

In *How the Blessed Live*, while this explicit form of racial distinction is not as easily discernible – the comparatively isolated home space of Ontario island society is implicitly understood as white. Of the few references to physical indicators of whiteness, one is found in a letter from Daniel Morgan to his dead wife Wren, the mother of the twins: at this point the twins have left home and Daniel is alone with his memories of their childhood:

“Wren, down at the beach this afternoon, I found a turtle shell. Empty, [...] Disappeared from its home. [...] Tonight, reading one of their old books, stories by the brothers Grimm. Remembering how blonde their hair was. How they glowed sometimes with a light that didn’t seem entirely earthly. [...] I am hollow from all this missing” (*HBL*, 124-125)

The empty turtle shell on the beach (itself a threshold space) and the book of fairytales allow the father to reflect on the absence of his family – and the immense sense of loss that marks his home space. The description of the blonde³ twins locates them in a mythic space of memory, yearning and fantasy connecting them to afterlife spaces, which Daniel imagines his dead wife as inhabiting. The blondness and halo-like glow of the twins, reminiscent of European representations of angelic beings, thus reify mythic understandings of twins as semi-divine beings; there is the sense of the father being haunted by his absent twins who were reminders of his dead wife.

Both novels then foreground the crises of white Canadian family structures and values against the backdrop of rural/suburban space: such spaces are home to seemingly intact families, while the urban spaces are presented as fragmented family spaces, in which the twins work through the estrangements experienced by their families. Interestingly, the twins in both texts do not undertake these measures together; rather each twin encounters and shapes these urban spaces on their own in their efforts to reinvent themselves as individuals – at the same time, urban space is envisioned in both texts as twin space, because of the protagonists’ consciousness of their twinship as inextricable aspects of their identities. The urban spaces are negotiated and navigated using the memories of the twin who is either dead or absent; hence these twin spaces are marked by loss since the twin dyad is halved. Such urban navigations are fraught by haunting, where, according to Tiina Kirss, ‘[w]hat haunts is not subject to conscious memory: unbidden, it comes back for visits, and recurs through uncanny phenomena, personified or atmospheric’ (2013: 21). Twin bodies, by virtue of their twinship, can be considered doubled forms of visible and emotional haunting for each other and for their families. The uncanniness of two such similar bodies makes differentiating between them fraught with uncertainty. This is manifest as personified and atmospheric haunting, while the protagonists’ private twin memories work to maintain and/or sever twin connections, in their oscillations between identities coloured by twinship and desires for individuality.

At the same time, other forms of familial loss and estrangement are constantly evoked: In *The Perpetual Ending*, the absent abusive father David haunts Jane and

3 Elsewhere, after a day out on the lake near their home, Daniel describes his twins: “Their faces glowed pink [...] in the firelight” (54) – thus resonating with Jane Ingram’s descriptions of shades of pink contingent on racial understandings of whiteness as associated with suburban home spaces in *The Perpetual Ending*.

Eugenie in their new home in Toronto, while they try to acquaint themselves with the city – Jane yearns for her father, while Eugenie is indifferent to his absence. As an adult, Jane later moves to Vancouver, carrying memories of her twin's coeval experiences of Toronto with her, but is unable to communicate this story to her lover Simon, who invests Vancouver with new meaning for Jane. In *How the Blessed Live*, Lucy and Levi consistently reflect on their estrangement from each other in their separate cities of Vancouver and Montreal, while their dead mother's absence from their lives underscores their absence from each other's lives. While Lucy instigates this twin separation due to her pregnancy after an incestuous encounter with her brother, Levi (and their father) are ignorant of the pregnancy. Thus the twins' sense of the urban spaces they choose as new homes are marked by hauntings of lost and estranged family members; both Jane Ingram and Lucy Morgan are the twin sisters whose narratives are marked by their secrets, their untold / untellable stories – which in turn haunt their later urban home spaces of Vancouver.

Homes and Hauntings

Home spaces contingent on normative ideals of the family unit bear scrutiny with regard to how belonging is envisioned and how identities are generated. While the home is often read as the quintessential family space, Rosemary George argues that the home is a space of power relations relating to the management of difference:

[...] the basic organizing principle around which the notion of the 'home' is built is a pattern of select inclusions and exclusions. Home is a way of establishing difference. Homes and home countries are exclusive. Home, I will argue, along with gender/sexuality, race and class, acts as an ideological determinant of the subject. [...] The politics of location come into play in the attempt to weave together a subject-status that is sustained by the experience of the place one knows as Home or by resistance to places that are patently 'not home'. Locations are positions from which distance and difference are formulated and homes are made snug. (1999: 2)

Here I see George conceptualizing home on two levels: on the microcosmic level of an intimate family space housing its members, as well as a macrocosmic understanding of a country and a nation as a home space. The twin protagonists are themselves space-producing agents in their respective city spaces: the childhood memories of the past are mobilized in the twins' adult decisions to relocate to their chosen cities to pursue their own dreams, desires and yearnings. In following one twin's story then, the reader is tempted to imagine a parallel narrative of the missing or absent twin, in order to compare their trajectories and thus map out similarities and differences. Hence the fascination of doubled bodies bearing the same genetic make-up opens up possibilities of two selves pursuing alternate paths in life, based

on different choices, whereby one notes that the identities of twins include considerations of bodily and psychic spaces firmly rooted in the concept of twinship itself as home.⁴

In line with Rosemary George's microcosmic understanding of the home as intimate family space, parents have the responsibility of shaping home spaces conducive for functional family relations. The fathers in both novels are instrumental in imbuing the home spaces (an unnamed rural island on Lake Ontario and the suburban town of Deep River, Ontario) with forms of patriarchal authority (one is a hermit widower and the other is a xenophobic alcoholic). The mothers of these families are absent (through death at childbirth) or ineffectual (a failed attempt to escape domestic abuse). This begs the question then of how both paternity and maternity work to shape home spaces and which normative structures are involved in producing families – here lived environments of suburban and urban spaces would be contingent on decisions influenced by the gendered arrangements within families, with regard to childcare, travel to work spaces, schools and centres of social interaction in communities, among others.

The Perpetual Ending offers a particular reading of how gender contributes to shaping homes (whiteness and class are unmarked parameters intersecting with gender, demonstrating how patriarchal norms work in this home space). The small town of Deep River is a suburban space, invested with heteronormative values aligned with a middle class nuclear family ideal. This ideal is disrupted when the Ingram twins' mother Lucy decides to leave her husband David and move to Toronto to escape her husband's abuse – and to pursue her personal dream of becoming an artist. The mother's promise of home in two spaces is aligned with the parents' love for their twins – but which is marked by their own estrangement from each other:

“Twice as much, half as much.” This is splitting up. It doesn't mean the love is halved, in fact it might be doubled, because love for a child – for two children – is a whole different love story. We will live in two homes, she tells us, Deep River and Toronto. In a way, we'll be lucky. (*TPE*, 60)

This description of two homes with twice as much love available for her twins is aligned with Lucy's desperate attempt to reinvent herself, to move beyond the prescribed roles of motherhood and wifehood imposed on her by her husband – and normative societal expectations. The twins' childhood experience of the urban space of Toronto is designated as a space of twinship where what might be consid-

4 This would be applicable to twins who have not been separated at birth, while it is debatable in the cases of twins who have been raised separately and are ignorant of each other's existence – in which instance, such twins may experience the lack of the twin either as a phantom haunting or may not feel any lack at all. For in-depth study on this phenomenon, see *The Minnesota Study of Twins Reared Apart* (1990) by Thomas Bouchard et al.

ered a doubled, two-in-one perspective, exhibits divergences into individuality (“[...] there are people in between us, noticing our sameness. They look from me to you, you to me, as though they are seeing double. This at a time when we could not be more different. [...] irritation prickles off me like electricity” (*TPE*, 45)). This urban space is also rendered as a radical maternal Thirdspace of uncertainty and possibility through their mother Lucy’s attempts to realize her artistic ambitions and to set up home in more unconventional ways free from patriarchal control. At the same time, the ‘twoness’ of the home space, doubled now in two different locales, with the parents separated, furnishes an additional dimension to the idea of twin space in the novel, which vacillates between doubling and halving (‘twoness’ and ‘oneness’).

This actual halving of the home where Lucy is suffocated by her husband’s erratic emotional violence, resonates with Caroline Rosenthal’s comparative reading of US and Canadian urban fiction at the millennium⁵, where she remarks on how women’s experiences are often elided in imaginings and representations of national identity:

While Canadian urban fiction at the turn of the millennium explored those myths and groups that national narratives and canons had excluded, literary criticism in the United States looked back at earlier definitions of city fiction and reexamined modernist paradigms and modes of its representation. [...] In the twenty-first century, urban critics further claimed that the term and concept of city fiction is so closely connected to modernist perceptions of space and of the subject that it eclipsed the specific urban experience of women and of groups that were racially and ethnically different [...]. (Rosenthal, 2014: 250)

Rosenthal’s reading of Canadian fiction set in urban space adds another dimension to George’s reading of the home space (both as private domestic space and as national spaces of cultural (un)belonging), where power is exercised, to include and exclude certain experiences (i.e. those of women and racialised groups). Both novels demonstrate how women’s experiences are eclipsed in the construction of suburban spaces which are conceived of as family spaces – but also show how uneasy homes are set up by the female characters in cities chosen as new home spaces, in order to effect recalibrations of themselves, as family members and as individuals. While *The Perpetual Ending* foregrounds female experiences of domestic abuse in the figures of Jane and her mother Lucy, *How the Blessed Live* pays equal attention to the experiences of the fraternal opposite sex twins, Lucy and Levi. What is significant in both novels is that the mothers of these families demonstrate forms of ab-

5 The pairing of these novels can be considered a form of Janus-faced textual twinship, since *The Perpetual Ending* was published in 1998 and *How the Blessed Live* was published in 2002 – i.e. two years before and two years after the turn of the century marking the millennium. Both novels allude to racial and ethnic difference in Canadian urban spaces – while foregrounding a hegemonic understanding of Canadian cultural and national identity as predominantly white.

sence which disable normative family dynamics, engendering troubled relationships between the children and their fathers, and contingently between the twins themselves. This inability to generate coherent and constructive relationships later extends to other people outside the twins' family constellations: Jane is unable to tell her partner Simon about her mother's experience of her husband's abuse nor talk about her twin's death; Lucy gets pregnant after an incestuous encounter with her twin brother – and leaves home without telling him or her father about her condition. Both these female twins in the two stories carry memories of their twins as ghostly texts with them to their new city homes – in Vancouver.

Framed against George's macrocosmic reading of home as contiguous with cultural spaces of citizenship, both novels deploy frameworks of race alongside questions of gender in conceptualizing Canadian cityscapes as inclusive (or exclusive?) spaces in the protagonists' attempts to reinvent themselves, through recreating home spaces. While both novels are invested in exploring women's positions which have traditionally been elided by national narratives (as Rosenthal has observed), they clearly foreground whiteness, underscoring Linda Peake's and Brian Ray's observation that:

[...] the one enduring meta-narrative in Canadian society is 'whiteness'.
 [...] In the national imaginary the 'real' Canada – Canada as the great white north – lies beyond the nation's largest cities in the countryside and small towns (also overwhelmingly white). (Peake/Ray, 2001: 180).

While Asian Canadian identities are constructed as Other in both novels, white Canadian identity is the normative unmarked racial designation. Thus, in line with Richard Dyer's observation that: "[t]he sense of whites as non-raced is most evident in the absence of reference to whiteness in the habitual speech and writing of white people in the West" (2005: 2), both den Hartog and Smith have positioned themselves clearly as speaking exclusively from and for a white Canadian social space, by implementing mainly white narrators and focalizers in their works. At the same time, the portrayals of Asian Canadian subjectivities are rendered in shadowy insubstantial contours, meant to serve as props denoting urban space.

While, as Eleanor Ty has observed "[m]uch has changed [...] with the changing demographics and immigrant patterns, especially in the medium to large cities in Canada" (2006: 63), these two texts demonstrate a curious non-recognition of Japanese and Chinese Canadian histories as part of greater Canadian historical and cultural narratives. This lacuna contributes to 'shaping narratives of 'absence' and 'presence', which demand that 'people of colour [...] internally and externally (un)belong' (see Peake/Ray, 2001: 181), rendering the Canadian cultural spaces constructed in the novels markedly monolithic in their imagination of Canadian cultural identity. Instead these histories appear subliminally (and firmly!) aligned with urban spaces where non-white Others are reinscribed as unbelonging sojourners. They are spec-

trally mobilized in the literary mapping of these city spaces, to provide screens to reconstitute fragmented white twin selfhoods into whole individuals with unique stories. Asian Canadian spectral positions then occupy the ambiguous border terrain of the 'outsider within' the Canadian imaginary, conditionally sanctioned by whiteness in these narratives, as long as they are useful in reconstituting and reinforcing white belonging.

The spectrality of Asian Canadian presences in these two texts can be read as forms of postcolonial haunting, which reference the ways in which the narratives of transition from long periods of colonial rule to independence in former colonies reverberate with colonial power relations in the postcolonial phase of history (see O'Riley, 2007: 2; cited in Kirss, 2013: 25; see also Joseph-Vilain/Misrahi Barak, 2001: 17-26).⁶ The concepts of ghostliness and spectrality in the context identified here are contiguous with cultural narratives that are marginalized and unintegrated into the larger cultural and national narrative – thus Othered histories are seen as irrelevant to the dominant historical and contemporary contexts:

Spectrality may be seen as a threshold phenomenon rendered potentially and intermittently visible between what Jan and Aleida Assmann have called 'communicative memory' and 'cultural memory', before official versions of history solidify, often minimizing and erasing the traces of violence [...] (Kirss, 2013: 22).

Thus in den Hartog's and Smith's literary mappings of the twins' journeys to selfhood, I find Asian Canadian bodies being spectralised in the city spaces of Toronto and Vancouver illustrating George Elliot Clarke's observation that "non-whites have often served as a kind of phantom resource" in white Canadian literary texts (1998: 108). Such mappings in these novels contribute to producing cultural narratives aligned with a certain solidification of 'official versions of history' that edit out Asian Canadian narratives. Such reductions of Asian Canadian presences to manageable, palatable forms of difference are designed to furnish white selves with non-threatening new home spaces. Chinese Canadians and Japanese Canadians are represented as never quite having arrived in the Canadian cultural imaginary in both texts, despite their geophysical presences. This non-arrival allows a nuanced reading of the term 'revenant', which is valuable to the concept of postcolonial hauntology, based on Gayatri Spivak's definition of the ghost as an entity that "co-ordinates the future in the past, the ghost is not only a revenant (a returner, the French for 'ghost'), but also an arrivant, one who arrives" (Spivak, 'Ghostwriting',

6 Such haunting is the return of the spectre of colonialism in new incarnations – which then begs the question if there is such a 'post'-colonial phase when taking into account the contemporary conditions of indigenous North Americans and the current manifestations of racialised discourses, attitudes and behaviours, which complicate discourses of gender, sexuality, religion and class.

1995: 71 cited in Kirss, 2013: 23). Hence I advocate reading Chinese and Japanese Canadian contexts as diasporic narratives, where the actions of leaving, arriving and returning would be salient to understanding how homes are made (im)possible in diaspora. In this light, the concept of the revenant would be pertinent to Rosemary George's reading of home as an exercise in inclusions and exclusions, which in turn is contingent with Avtar Brah's reading of diasporic space as:

the point at which boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, of belonging and otherness, of 'us' and 'them' are contested. [...] the concept of diaspora space [...] includes the entanglement [...] of the genealogies of dispersion with those of 'staying put'. (1996: 209)

Thus while the twins are haunted by their memories of suburban/rural home spaces and missing siblings and lost parents in the process of reinventing themselves in urban homes, other forms of textual haunting take place in the narratives where some histories and identities are not allowed to arrive and make home in Canada. In the following sections, I demonstrate how the twin protagonists in both novels (with the exception of the dead Eugenie in *The Perpetual Ending*) claim these spectral diasporic bodies, thus accessing non-white unbelonging positions on a temporary basis to negotiate their own unbelonging and crisis in their relocations to urban spaces. Notably these spectralised Asian Canadian bodies are feminized in both texts and rooted in city spaces of Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal. They function as sites of displacement for violence, sexually deviant behavior and traumatic loss experienced by the twins – so that these can attain consensus and reintegrate their fragmented white selves into new wholes. Thus these feminized Asian Canadian spectral bodies perform care-giving functions traditionally associated with home-making.

Asian Canadianness – Spectral Diasporic Reimaginings of Urban Home Space

While Chinese and Japanese Canadian histories may not seem immediately identifiable as postcolonial narratives in the sense that Kirss puts forward, it would be necessary to read these histories in the context of migratory movements during the late 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries at the height of colonial administration in Canada and elsewhere. Chinese and Japanese immigrants to Canada during these periods were subject to colonial racial discourses and diverse forms of exclusion and policing by the Canadian government based on just such discourses.

Indeed, Chinese Canadian and Japanese Canadian histories and current political concerns still grapple with racialisation and racism that reflect the narrative of unbelonging and Othering addressed in the concept of 'diaspora'. Thus, fraught with regard to theoretical and political engagements with race, the idea of diaspora "can be seen to reinscribe and champion essentialised notions of racial and ethnic difference, as well as contest and fracture them" (Alexander, 2010: 113). In her insightful

essay on diasporic citizenship, Lily Cho has commented on the designation of Asian Canadian positions as 'minority', which "marks a relation defined by racialization and experienced as diaspora" (2007: 98). This understanding of diaspora is built on Avtar Brah's cautious linking the diasporic with the status of 'minority', where diaspora is to be understood as "embedded within a multi-axial understanding of power; one that problematizes the notion of majority/minority" (Brah, 1996: 189). Thus in exploring the entangled relations between citizenship, literature and nation, Cho notes that "Asian Canadian literature [...] relates as a minority literature to Canadian literature [...] because it cannot be divorced from the long histories of racialization that mark Asian Canadian communities as being in the minority in relation to the dominant culture" (98). I see this understanding of diasporic identity in this minority/majority binary operating in these two texts, whereby Chinese and Japanese Canadians are used as urban signifiers by virtue of their racialisation, while at the same time marking them as not quite having arrived in Canada. Spectralized Asian Canadianness seems to 'ghost' through these literary Canadian cityscapes, performing certain functions to underscore the narrative of white Canadian citizenship, illustrating Cho's position that "[d]iaspora allows us to be up against citizenship, to embrace it even as we hold it at some distance, to recognize it as both disabling and enabling" (108).

In both texts the white Canadian selves (understood as English-Canadian) attempt physical affiliations with so-called 'visible minority' groups, in order to root themselves in their urban spaces. The Chinese-Canadian (*The Perpetual Ending*) and the Japanese-Canadian (*How the Blessed Live*) characters are not rendered as three-dimensional agents in the narratives; rather they are evoked and reduced to essentialised bodies and types marking urban spaces, while being instrumentalised for the twin protagonists' own processes of self-reinvention. In *The Perpetual Ending*, Jane Ingram refers to a Chinese classmate, Helena Ying, whose only function is to validate Chinese food in the twins' immediate experiential childhood context of Toronto (126), and Mai Ling, the adult Jane's Chinese neighbor on Granville Street, Vancouver (13), who takes in Jane's pet goldfish when she leaves the city. The stories of both women are not incorporated into the Ingram twins' lives – they function as mere props to denote an essentialised non-threatening Chineseness marking the two urban landscapes that are home to the twins. In *How the Blessed Live*, Levi Morgan has a relationship with a Japanese Canadian woman Alex grounded at first in their artistic cooperation, which then develops into a brief sexual affair (98-100). Aside from the fact that she is adopted, speaks French, English and German fluently, and is a member of a street performance artist troupe, there is not much else about the character that allows for more complexity that might denote Japanese Canadian integration into the Montreal cityscape. Indeed Alex serves as a canvas against which Levi can confront the loss of and estrangement from his twin Lucy, while serving as a model for his sculptures of the female body, which he creates with Lucy

in mind, working through his memories of their twin space of home on the unnamed Ontario island.

The Ingram Twins in Toronto – *The Perpetual Ending*

The Perpetual Ending is a first person narrative told from Jane Ingram's perspective, addressed to her twin sister (second-person narrator 'you') in the twelve chapters of the first section eponymously entitled *Eugenie*. The text itself turns out to be an uneasy twin space, due to this narrative structure, since Jane and Eugenie are mirror-image twins, whose thoughts and emotions evoke impressions of very close and secure doubled selves – which however reveal themselves to be the opposite of each other producing conflict and uncertainty ("Sometimes you are just like me and sometimes you are just the opposite, a thing I might never understand" (83)). This section deals with Jane's memories of their childhood in the small town named Deep River in Ontario and their move to Toronto at the age of ten with their mother Lucy – to escape their father's abuse. This sojourn however proves temporary since David travels to the city to reclaim them after a few months. The attempt on the father's part to forcibly reunite the family and return to the suburban home space results in an even more traumatizing fragmentation of the family, ending in the destruction of the twin dyad: Eugenie dies in a traffic accident. As the surviving twin, Jane is estranged from her parents and moves to Vancouver as an adult⁷, where she commemorates her childhood experiences with her twin by writing children's stories, which are interspersed through the entire narrative at key points, when Jane remembers specific incidents about her sister or her parents. She returns to Toronto and to Deep River, Ontario to confront another impending loss – her mother is dying of cancer.

Jane's arrival in this urban space evokes memories of her twin's death and the parents' separation. She associates her childhood experience of Toronto with Eugenie, more specifically their common experience of Chinatown – and her personal comparison of this urban space with the suburban space of Deep River. Both spaces contain Jane's memories of her family before and after her twin's death:

When you and I lived here we would have gone to Chinatown to see the strange fruits and vegetables and their Chinese-character labels. [...]

7 Jane's adult life as a singleton (a twin who has lost her sibling) is marked by her love for Simon which is closely interwoven with her experience of Vancouver and which offers some security in her otherwise fragmented and displaced sense of self. Hence the last six chapters gathered in the second section are entitled *Simon*; who is the second person in her life, with whom she has an intimate relationship comparable to that with her twin. While Jane yearns to tell Simon about her twin – she is unable to do so (19). The narrator tells the story, with Simon as her intended addressee ('you'), who ironically remains ignorant of this hidden story – unlike the reader, who is privy to Jane's thoughts, her loss and private mourning. In this section, Jane disrupts her relationship with Simon, leaving him and Vancouver for an indefinite period – leaving him still ignorant of her dead twin.

Heaps of blushing mangoes. The clean green smell of coriander. A Saturday, Spadina's wide sidewalk swarming with people, the musical Chinese voices loud, then quiet in my ears. [...]

There was always a creepiness about this city, remember? Even back then, when the city was smaller, to us it was huge, and everyone was someone we did not know, just the opposite of home. (42, 44)

The adult Jane maps twin space in Toronto for herself anew by remembering the space of Chinatown, where she and Eugenie used to spend their Saturdays. While Jane perceives the city as 'creepy' connecting to her childhood discomfort with her experience of Chinatown as the very anti-thesis of 'home', this adult sense of 'creepiness', the 'uncanny', is exacerbated in hindsight, by memories of her twin whose death is linked with this urban space and with their father's violence in taking them away from the city. The Chinatown space, redolent of cultural difference, marks it as an 'unhoming' as well as a twin space for Jane, reminding her of life before and after her twin's death ("When you and I lived here ..."). The verb "lived" takes on double meaning with regard to Eugenie's actual state of being alive in Toronto and dying before the twins could return with their parents to Deep River, as well as alluding to the twins as residing in Toronto urban space.

Chinese Canadian identity is sublimated into the twins' experience of Chinese food, and rendered familiar up to a point. Aside from this manageable difference, the immensity of the city space is saturated with forms of cultural difference that are bewildering to Jane, but enjoyable to Eugenie. While Jane manages to consume some forms of difference, she is worried about being "polluted" as can be seen in her preoccupation with germs and filth which comes to symbolize objectionable, undisciplined difference. Eugenie however seems capable of embracing difference in ways that make her similar to their mother Lucy, who is intent on engaging with diverse cultural contexts within the city space in the framework of her training as an artist. Thus the city space of Toronto is the site of the twins' gradual separation into individual entities; their estrangement is also a foreshadowing of the impending, more permanent separation.

Jane's yearning for an intact family seems about to be fulfilled when David comes to visit his family in the city. Lucy and the twins introduce him to more 'authentic' Chinese food, thus making them urban 'experts' in educating him in cultural diversity that constitutes urban life:

Afterwards we take him to Chinatown. He is our tourist. He has never before eaten anything Chinese except egg rolls and sweet 'n' sour chicken balls, and so we show him sticky buns and dumplings and wormy noodles in blackbean sauce, which we know all about because we have been here many times with Lucy and also because at school we have a Chinese friend, Helena Ying, who brings real Chinese food in her lunch

box. 'I think we got ourselves a couple of city girls here, Luce,' he says, smiling. Oh, his happy smile. I want to say, Please can we come home now? Because here people live on the streets, you see. [...] Everyday something happens, Daddy. The floating germs are invisible, they might be all over us, inside us by now. I am careful not to touch, but Eugenie touches everything. [...] (126-127)

Dining out in Chinatown, the twins and their parents perform the idealized intact family; the symbolic value of a family meal in cementing the different levels of homing and belonging is read from the child's perspective, whereby she grasps at the hope that the family may reunite. The Chinatown space itself is an urban site of family and community interaction for Chinese Canadian families, where family lunches and dinners in Chinese restaurants are moments of specific Chinese Canadian sociocultural performance that reinforce this cultural identity. However the Chinese Canadian contexts and people constituting Chinatown are absent; this urban space is hence implemented as a noiseless canvas for the child's imagined family reunion. Helena Ying is a Chinese body that is used to demonstrate how Chinese food has valency as a viable urban cultural marker; Helena is thus implemented to 'do Chineseness' and render it authentic and 'real' for the twins. At the same time, this episode draws attention to the form of multicultural benevolence based on conditional forms of acceptance of non-threatening 'visible minority' contexts, where dominant hegemonic groups can consume difference that can satisfy curiosity and craving without being potentially 'infected' by the same. While David is considered the 'tourist' who is willing to be fed strange and exotic foods by his wife and children, Jane is intent on demonstrating how Chineseness has become familiar to her in ways that cannot 'infect' and change her. This is part of the child's agenda to please her father in the hope of effecting a reconciliation, reunion and return to the paternal home space – which Jane sees herself as exiled from due to her mother's desires.

While Jane is happy to show her father their new home space, her yearning for her father surfaces alongside her own rejection of this same city space, which sets her apart from Eugenie. This fleeting moment of familial harmony reconstructs the family as an intact unit, when David attempts to reconnect with his wife ("I think we got ourselves couple of city girls here, Luce.") His pleasure (it is not clear if this is genuine) moves Jane to think, rather than verbally articulate her secret desire to return home to Deep River, demonstrating the child's own struggle to show loyalty to both parents who are at odds with each other. At the same time, she wrangles with the differences that become apparent between herself and Eugenie; the reader is never clear about this twin's own reading of the urban space of Toronto or the suburb of Deep River, except through Jane's reported impressions of what her twin says or feels. One is tempted to think that Jane's observations and opinions could be shared by Eugenie by virtue of their twinship, but this remains an uncertainty

throughout the narrative and is left unresolved. Jane is unhomed by Eugenie's obvious enthusiasm for the urban space of Toronto and her sense of freedom from their father's abuse. Eugenie's ability to revel in the possibilities that the city offers ("I am careful not to touch, but Eugenie touches everything"), thus contributes to destabilizing the family in ways emulating their mother's rebellion against patriarchal authority. At the same time, Jane is unpleasantly surprised to note that her twin, who had been a stabilizing pivot in her life, is now 'unheimlich' in her enthusiasm – she finds the situation even more alarming since the security she had in their twinship as an identitarian space has been undermined due to her twin's obvious enjoyment of and engagement with cultural difference and urban life, marking her individuality.

The Morgan Twins in Vancouver and Montreal: *How the Blessed Live*

In contrast, domestic violence and parental estrangement do not constitute the push-pull factors for movements into city spaces for self-reinvention in *How the Blessed Live*; instead parental affection as well as forbidden sibling desire form the backdrop against which the fraternal twins in this narrative navigate their chosen urban homes.

The first two chapters in *How the Blessed Live* tell of the journeys of reinvention of Lucy and Levi Morgan, a pair of fraternal opposite-sex twins, who move to Vancouver and Montreal respectively. These sections are the longest in the novel and exclusively devoted to each twin's perspective, narrating their experiences in their respective chosen city spaces, to which they travel when they turn eighteen. Lucy's section entitled *Methods of Leaving the Body* addresses her preoccupation with reinventing herself in Vancouver while dealing with her pregnancy after her incestuous encounter with her twin. Levi's section entitled *The Sweet Smell of Embalment* deals with his sense of loss and betrayal when Lucy leaves him and his father without explanation. His artwork, which becomes his chief occupation in Montreal, is his private homage to his twin. In both sections, the twins' childhood and adolescent experiences of home in the rural space of an unnamed island in Lake Ontario return as haunting flashbacks. There are five chapters in total – the third and fourth chapters are also devoted to each twin separately but are shorter, depicting moments of personal crisis and resolution, while the last and shortest chapter alternates between the twins' perspectives leaving the ending open to a possible reunion between them at the event of their father's death. The entire narrative is interspersed with their widowed father's letters to their dead mother, describing the twins' childhood in their island home. These letters provide the backstory of the Morgans' decision to set up home on the island as well as how Daniel later copes with raising his twins as a widower. The interplay of the memories from different perspectives of the twins and their father furnish a composite picture of the Morgan family, which despite its benevolence and affection, shows how private insular

spaces of longing, loss and sorrow are mapped out both in twin space as well as individually.

Lucy and Levi take separate trajectories to Vancouver and Montreal for different reasons – on the surface, they appear to be pursuing their own artistic ambitions of singing and sculpture. Lucy's plans to train as a professional singer at a music conservatory have been deferred because of her secret; this has driven a wedge between her and her twin, thus disrupting their twin space which had been home. Lucy also confronts her own impending motherhood through interrogating her motherless childhood marked by the lack of a feminine role model. Notably her methods of reinvention examine the possibilities of a lesbian relationship with an actress, remodeling her own body through dyeing her hair black and starving herself, engaging with 'freakish' performance artists in a so-called Holy Circus while working as a personal assistant to the manager of the artist troupe (he has lost his wife, who resembles Lucy in appearance). The very first mode of reinvention that Lucy envisions for herself, however, takes place in a Japanese restaurant in Vancouver:

In Kitto on Granville Street it starts to get busy with early dinner customers. Japanese Pop music blares above the buzz of conversations. Steam fogs the windows, transforming the restaurant into a cosy bubble of happiness. Lucy orders her new favourite things: green tea, vegetable tempura, steamed rice, a salmon roll. The perfect meal to fill her up and keep her light. Just the right amount of food – [...] She is letting herself be absorbed here, becoming Asian from the inside out. [...] She imagines her new Japanese self: beautiful with a musical laugh and a sweet smile. Flawless skin. Straight black hair. No unnecessary body fat. [...] She will travel all over the world taking pictures. Happy all the time. She walks to Chinatown, giving herself over to the exotic, [...]. Salted turnip, [...] Tea in tins [...] Bags of fortune cookies [...] Everything salted and shriveled. With a shelf life extending into eternity. She allows herself to be carried along, unnoticed in the warm press of bodies and the hubbub of voices. It's like she's in another country, among friends, but safely anonymous. Entirely at home in a sea of people. (25-26)

The Japanese restaurant on Granville Street serves as a stage for Lucy to imagine a complete rewriting of her body to perform a non-white cultural identity that is sublimated in terms of food as symbolic culture, to be ingested, to 'become Asian from the inside out' and thus re-home herself. Her desire to refashion herself as a Japanese woman is informed by stereotypes attached to Japanese femininity objectified through superficial characteristics like appearance, tourist consumption of the environment, and seeming happiness stamped on through the smile and laugh. The stereotypical portrayal of Japanese femininity here does not allow for any substan-

tial recognition of lived Japanese Canadian experience with multi-dimensional and multi-axial engagements in the dominant Canadian cultural context nor with other diasporic groups in the urban landscape (see Brah, 189). The Japanese feminine 'spectre' mobilized by Lucy here would allow her to drift anonymously, in an ephemeral insubstantial home, just as she imagines this Asian Canadian identity as drifting and unrooted. Lucy does not remain with this particular context – she switches into a Chinese 'exotic' frame, when she strolls into Chinatown, allowing herself to be taken over by the 'exotic' manifestations of difference contained in Chinese preserved foods, reminiscent of the Ingram twins' forays into Toronto's Chinatown. These fleeting⁸ excursions into Asian Canadianness form backdrops for Lucy to reimagine herself, while "leaving her body" (as the chapter title states), which has become unhomed.

Here the Morgan twin space could be read as the body, which had been whole where Levi and Lucy constituted home to each other. The twin dyad has often been used to symbolize the binary of spirit/body in diverse cultural contexts.⁹ In her estrangement and physical distance from her twin, Lucy thus searches for a space to rest, much like a restless ghost, while Levi symbolizes the body, who in turn feels halved, separated from his twin.

Levi, in the meantime, has relocated to Montreal to do a fine arts degree at McGill University after his twin's disappearance. His magnum opus involves producing hollow female body sculptures (122-124). These sculptures resonate with memories of his twin; thus Levi confronts his loss without necessarily engaging with the incestuous encounter which pushes Lucy to leave – indeed he remains ignorant of the consequences of that intimate moment for his twin. In his initial engagement with the Montreal cityspace, Levi requires a female model for the template of his art project. He meets the young Japanese Canadian woman Alex, to whom he feels attracted:

8 This attempt is short-lived – and Lucy turns to her desire for Cassie, a young actress, who serves as yet another possible 'homing' strategy, that could be read as more acceptable than incestuous love for her twin. One notes that Lucy's imagined intimacy with Cassie depicts a child-like need to find shelter – so could this lesbian love be a site to reimagine a relationship to a mother she had never known? Addressing this aspect of Lucy's self reinvention would exceed the scope of this piece at the present time and will be taken up in more in-depth analysis of the novel in the context of my larger project.

9 While Levi does not remodel his own body as Lucy does, his sculptures resemble Egyptian mummified bodies modeled on the young Japanese woman's body. These bodies are hollow, which Levi then works to fill with smaller sculptures. This is in contrast to Lucy who starves herself to get rid of her unborn child, the product of her and her twin's desire for each other. The entire narrative contains intertextual allusions to the Egyptian Isis and Osiris incestuous twin myth; excerpts from the Egyptian Book of the Dead are interspersed throughout the text. The Isis and Osiris myth addressed the forms of doubling inherent to the binaries of life (birth) and death, the spirit and body, the heterosexual couple, using the device of twin siblinghood.

Levi needs a model, so he calls a number from a bulletin board at school. When she rings the doorbell and he sees her standing there, he recognizes her from drawing class. She looks Japanese. Her hair is long and straight, the blackest, shiniest black. [...] 'I'm Alex.' She reaches out her hand.

'Levi. Hallo.' Her hand is fine and smooth [...]

They go to a hole-in-the-wall restaurant that she knows, [...] As they talk, Levi begins to feel electric, like all the places where his body meets the air are sparking. [...]

They take a rough path up the mountain, [...] At the top, they stand looking at the St. Lawrence River and the green copper rooftops of the city. [...] Levi [...] asks Alex where she's from.

'I was adopted, but I lived here since I was a baby. You?'

'Dad lives on an island in Lake Ontario. I didn't know my mother. She died giving birth to my sister and me.'

'You're twins?'

'Yeah.'

'Do you miss her?'

'Who?'

'Your mom.'

'I don't know. Can you miss something you've never had?'

Alex glances at him sideways, her eyes narrowing.

'Yes, I think you can.' (98, 99, 100-101)

The description of Alex from Levi's perspective echoes Lucy's (brief!) reimagining of herself as a young Japanese woman ("her new Japanese self: beautiful with a musical laugh and a sweet smile. Flawless skin. Straight black hair. No unnecessary body fat. [...] Happy all the time."). While Lucy's ghost self as the Japanese woman fades almost as immediately as she is produced, Alex takes on more solid contours in Levi's urban space, whereby she helps him to explore the city itself and become acquainted with it.

Levi interrogates Alex about her origins – which he cannot seem to align with his perception of Vancouver as a white Canadian space, despite Alex's familiarity with Montreal. Levi's enquiry is typical of entrenched white perspectives that cannot imagine spaces like Canada being home to non-white peoples despite Canada's multicultural policy which ostensibly embraces cultural difference. Ironically, this also allows for the romantic definition of Canada as a nation of immigrants, a notion which however, "collapses diversity with immigration" (Cho, 2007: 99); this problematic stance notably edits out Aboriginal Canadian knowledges, histories and politics. Evidently in Levi's world, diversity – immigrant or aboriginal – had not made itself known – the text itself seems to underscore this perspective of normative Canadian citizenship and belonging. Alex satisfies his curiosity by revealing that she is adopt-

ed, “but that she had lived here as a baby” (100). The literary trope of adoption addresses the (un)belonging of adopted children in family home and cultural spaces, especially in transracial adoptive situations – which seems to be the case with Alex.¹⁰ The question of adoption is not explored further in the narrative, thus preempting any form of depth for Alex’s character – except at one point, where the young woman reveals that she is planning to go on a trip in Asia (where exactly in Asia is not specified) to find her birth parents (112). Alex’s dismissal from the story is thus foreshadowed; since she does not really belong, she is conceptualised as the itinerant traveler, the diasporic drifter, the sojourner, who ‘travels all over the world’ (25).

When Alex asks Levi where he comes from, he replies with information about his parents: the hermit father on a deserted island and the mother who dies at childbirth, thus revealing his own emotional detachment from his birth place and family – while simultaneously marking him as matter-of-factly Canadian. Alex’s question draws Levi out of his isolation to engage with the urban space of Montreal, thus helping him to produce home. Here Alex takes on a caregiving role for Levi, which allows him to access his own emotional resources to deal with the trauma of losing his twin. While Levi appears committed to a relationship with Alex, he inadvertently reveals his feelings for his sister during a sexual encounter between himself and Alex – after which she leaves him (154). The Japanese Canadian woman has thus fulfilled her role in the narrative and is cleanly edited out – without any follow-up to her story, while Levi gathers his emotional resources to return home on the occasion of his father’s sudden death. Alex has brought Levi to a conceptual space that allows him to return home to possibly reunite with Lucy, to mourn yet another loss.

Concluding Remarks

As I have shown here, the protagonists’ initial intimate engagements with the cities Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal implement Asian Canadian frameworks to articulate a sense of ‘unhomeliness’ as well as the ‘unheimlich’ in the twins’ navigations and productions of these urban spaces in their attempts to make homes for themselves. Thus the strategies of ‘homing’ undertaken by the twins involve a means of ‘unhoming’ Asian Canadian contexts as ‘unbelonging’ to the Canadian national and cultural imaginary. The narratives demonstrate laudable attempts to foreground particularly female stories of negotiating domestic violence, death and desire in these narratives, in interrogating ideas of stability and security associated with normative understandings of home. At the same time, I consider the twins’ home-making practices in both novels as ‘unhoming’ vulnerable positions in the

10 See David Eng (2010) *The Feeling of Kinship*, Marianne Novy (2004) *Imagining Adoption* and (2010) *Reading Adoption*, Helen Grice (2005) “Transracial Adoption Narratives”, Mark Jerng (2010) *Claiming Others*.

greater cultural narrative of Canadian citizenship, in accordance with Biddy Martin's and Chandra Talpade Mohanty's reflections:

"Being home" refers to the place where one lives within familiar, safe, protected boundaries; "not being home" is a matter of realizing that home was an illusion of coherence and safety based on the exclusion of specific histories of oppression and resistance, the repression of differences even within one's self. (2003: 90)

Martin's and Mohanty's observation rightly alludes to such precarity in these home spaces is a driving force in both narratives for the twins to reinvent themselves as individuals, creating their own singular stories, apart from their twin narratives. Since their twinships are tainted by their traumatic losses, the twins have to rework their original ideas of home as spaces of safety shaped by their twinship in their endeavours to 'home' themselves in their chosen urban spaces. Den Hartog's and Smith's novels can be read as counternarratives to heteropatriarchal discourses shaping the home space – in rural, suburban and urban contexts, where gender issues pertaining to women and children and their rights to security and community are foregrounded (see Howells, 2003: 2).

However, read against this same assertion, the Chinese Canadian and Japanese Canadian presences evoked in den Hartog's and Smith's novels underscore how essentialised flat perceptions of these diasporic positions contribute to illusions of white coherence and safety in order to reinforce white ideas of citizenship. This is done by rendering Asian Canadian contexts as 'harmless' and ready signifiers of 'care-giving' that are easily consumed, unable to resist exploitation, insubstantial. The binary of ghost / material body is remobilized in my readings of how both novels demonstrate the spectralization of Asian Canadian positions against a more solidified understanding of white Canadian belonging. Thus while white Canadians are depicted as more embodied forms of citizenship in both novels, Asian Canadian perspectives are portrayed as shadowy ghostly twin specters of not-quite citizens.

The reinforcement of the primacy of whiteness as the dominant script of Canadian cultural identity, using Asian Canadian contexts in both novels, is an example of what Smaro Kamboureli refers to as 'sedative politics' in Canadian multicultural policies. Here ethnic difference is managed without making much effort to reflect on white privilege and the power structures aligned with this particular identity, which serves as a default position:

[...] sedative politics, a politics that attempts to recognize ethnic differences, but only in a contained fashion, in order to manage them. It pays tribute to diversity and suggests ways of celebrating it, thus responding to the clarion call of ethnic communities for recognition. Yet it does so

without disturbing the conventional articulation of the Canadian dominant society. (2009: 82)

This sedative politics is more than apparent in the ways both these Canadian narratives ostensibly practice inclusivity in their attempts to 'pay tribute to diversity' by evoking Asian Canadian contexts (while conveniently eradicating all other non-white Canadian positions), to avoid disrupting white Canadianness. However, the rehomed white Canadian twins have exercised their own ghostly 'unheimlich' power in unhomeing the Japanese and Chinese Canadian contexts. At the same time, the Asian Canadian positions function as 'ghostly twins' of white Canadianness, struggling to take up their spaces in Canadian cultural and national imaginaries. Thus postcolonial textual hauntings of exclusionary white Canadian politics against 'not quite white' and non-white presences require equal attention besides tracing the ways in which subjugated and marginalized positions take on the role of revenant to teach whiteness to reflect on its own exclusivity. Hence these novels do not just add maps of social interaction and desire to the literary production of these urban, rural and suburban spaces, but also invite a sustained critique and awareness of how non-white positions are subordinated and instrumentalised in reinforcing white privilege.

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