9.
Seeing Red in the Streets

Taking Shelter in the Imagi/nation of Kerry Potts and Rebecca Belmore

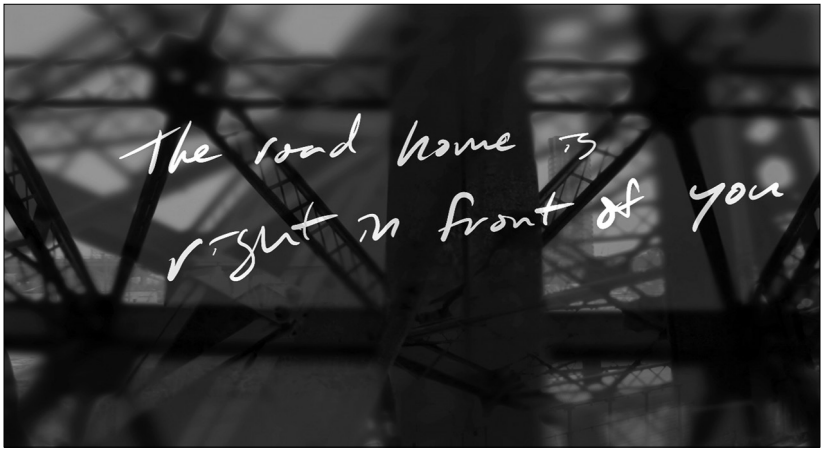


Figure 9.1: Love on the Streets, *2009. Film stills. Director: Kerry Potts, Cinematographer: Andrew McAllister. Photo: Kerry Potts and Andrew McAllister.*

FROM THE 6 (NATIONS)? QUESTIONING IDEAS OF "HOME" IN A WHITE SETTLER COLONY

IDEAS OF HOME ARE COLOURED IN DIFFERENT HUES against the bloodstained white landscape of a colonial country. Chirpy radio hosts pronounce Canada to be multicultural utopia. The multitalented musician Drake uses his lyrical skills to construct sonic homages about Toronto and receives the key to the city from political leaders who do little to protect Black people who are routinely carded and killed by racist police. Drake provides a stirring rhythm to drown out the shots of gunfire, while remarkable



Figure 9.2: Love on the Streets, *Director: Kerry Potts, Cinematographer: Andrew McAllister Source: Andrew McAllister (Cinematographer)*

activist groups such as Black Lives Matter Toronto protest anti-Black racism transnationally. And yet, subaltern identity as celebrity is used by white elites to brand cities as diverse while they often remain indifferent to racism. White settler cities pose questions regarding racialized people's belonging, celebrated through rare forms of economic power that do not stop the violent markings of racialized skin, often marked for death.

Drake has been credited with naming Toronto in iconic ways, such as when the artist refers to the city as "the 6" in certain memorable tracks. Journalist Josh McConnell writes,

> The most seminal Toronto reference comes in the crowd-pleasing track *Know Yourself*, where the chorus has become an outright singalong on Drake's world tour, with everyone repeating: "Runnin' through The 6 with my woes/You know how that should go." ("Woes" itself, supposedly an acronym for "working on excellence," is a Drakeism that has reached meme levels of pop-culture saturation.)

It is suggested by some that "the 6" is an affectionate nickname that refers to the area codes 416 and 647 that are found in the city. Others make reference to the amalgamation of six boroughs in Toronto into one city. (McConnell n.p) And yet, including the Six Nations of

Indigenous peoples whose ongoing colonization defines contemporary Canada as part of "the 6" would perhaps cause all non-Indigenous people in Turtle Island to question ideas of "home."

Metaphors of "home" as the settlement of Indigenous land are repetitive tropes in Canadian media, finding renewed expression in celebratory representations of new waves of diasporic settlers. Television shows like *Little Mosque on the Prairie* are cartoonish examples of the hyperbolic ways that racialized migrants function as diasporic patriots within Western nations. Turbans are matched to hockey jerseys, and the lilt of accents from around the world are accentuated with an "eh." And yet, to be at home in a white settler colony of ongoing attempts to materially and symbolically destory Indigenous people is to cast oneself in history as a victor, one who has conquered the land and is entitled to occupied colonized territories. The relationship between racialized migrants, non-Indigenous feminists, and queers is a fraught and fractured one in which metaphors of place, belonging, and this strangely unsettling idea of "home" trouble easy wills toward solidarity.

Diasporic patriots and happy homonationalist settlers create imagined communities in gentrified enclaves within cities, turning colonial ideas of heteronormative familial bliss into an emblem of "culture" and "survival." To grow up to approximate the idealized middle-class white family is a testament to the arduous hard work of immigrants and the "it gets better" rhetoric of class mobility as an expression of achievement. However, what disturbs the metaphoric equation between imagined peace and settled lives is the ghostly haunting of Indigenous bodies. Many of the histories and bodies of colonized people lie in sacred graves far beneath the concrete and steel of the city. And yet, far from delusional fantasies of the "vanishing Indian," Indigenous people continue to resiliently occupy the everyday of urban spaces. In Canadian cities such as Toronto, one often encounters urban Indigenous people who occupy the lowest economic strata of Canadian society.

As discussed throughout *Uncommitted Crimes*, Julia Emberley argues that technologies of representational violence exist alongside processes of material and political violence that inform Canada's ongoing colonial genocide (Emberley 12). Emberley further argues that the complexity of Indigenous lives were reduced to a set of static and essentialist

images that came to haunt idealized constructions of biopolitical citizenship in Canada (12). The author offers a fascinating discussion regarding the disappearance of Indigenous lives through processes of representation that erased the diversity of Indigenous people, while also causing the figure of the uniform "Aboriginal" to appear as a trope, repeated throughout North American literature, film, and media. Emberley explores how technologies of film, photography, and other artistic and representational mediums were central to staging the lives of Indigenous peoples in racist ways to support the colonial fantasies of white European superiority.

DON'T SHOOT AN INDIAN: FILM AND THE POLITICS OF DECOLONIZATION

Films made by European explorers such as *Nanook of the North* offer an example of uses of film to support constructions of the European, patriarchal bourgeois family as a normative ideal. Emberley states,

> *Nanook of the North* is an early filmic text that demonstrates how "the family" became a visual screen for colonial power to re-signify Inuit kinship relations within the ideological representation of the English and Euro-American bourgeois family. Such filmic sources were part of the vast network of colonial knowledges, practices, and representations circulating at the time that sought to "pre-figure" the Aboriginal as an already existing entity in the history of European civilization. (73)

Emberley makes references to uses of supposed documentaries to stage fictionalized representations of colonized peoples that confirmed European superiority. The author draws connections between colonial film in Canada, Orientalist depictions of Arabs, and racist constructions of Latin America. Emberley argues that,

> The truth claims assembled by the ethnographic film documentary were not only designed to introduce the Western Spectator to the differential value posed by colonial subjects—and there is a great deal about the film to indicate

> who it thinks it is positioning as its spectator—but to deploy that differential value in order to affirm the superiority of bourgeois colonial bodily culture, its codes of conduct, its homemaking and child-rearing practices, its hygiene, not to mention its sex, its labour, and its "race." (80)

In the artistic works of Kerry Potts, techniques of documentary film are utilized to return the colonial gaze that often captured Indigenous people in epistemically violent ways. Similarly, artist Rebecca Belmore employs visual strategies of decolonization to address the gendered and sexual discourses of colonial Canada that mark the bodies of Indigenous women in ways that justify rape, murder, and invisibility. What is of interest in relation to Emberley's discussion lies in how Potts and Belmore employ artistic tools to counter dominant colonial representations of idealized families, sexual moralities, and normative images of whiteness. Obscene uses of filmic technique present staged narratives of racialized familial, gendered, and sexual failing that solidified the ostensible sanctity of the affluent European family, through images that masked the rape script of white settler colonial histories. Delusional narratives of the "good families" of colonizers served as domestic microcosms for racist nationalist discourses.

Potts's artistic praxis subverts the colonial gaze of the camera's lens through empathetic and political uses of documentary film. In her film *Love on the Streets*, the shadows that haunt the homeless people interviewed regarding ideas of love, relationships, and intimacy are not the dark shadows of Indigenous people that inform normative white Canadian identity. Rather, the absent figures that shadow the narratives are those of wealthy, white, provincial, colonial families, romantic love stories of suburban homes, spacious cottage country, and endless land over which "happy" families traipse. This illusion of colonizing Canadian wealth conceals the obscenities of racist and classist outgrowths of colonial rule, which leave many Indigenous people both literally and metaphorically homeless. Similarly, the ghosts that haunt Belmore's installation *Vigil* are not mythic, noble, savage figures or Indigenous people who are constructed as part of Canada's past, having died out with the onset of European settlers. Rather, *Vigil* is inspired by the spirits of murdered and

missing women who are abducted from Canada's streets in acts of colonizing, racist, gendered, and sexual violence. The imagined sexual morality of Canada is not informed by the constructed licentiousness and depravity of Indigenous people, as was the case in early colonial film and continues in mainstream racist depictions of wild women and dysfunctional Indigenous families. In the deft creative praxis of Indigenous artists such as Belmore and Potts, the inherent dysfunction of Canada's imagined polite culture is revealed in the eerie silence that surrounds missing and murdered Indigenous women who disappear from Turtle Island. One is left to question how the historical memory of colonial violence is subsumed under a rhetoric of multiculturalism and the everyday cruelty of a Canada hiding behind the "fair is fair" rhetoric of meritocracy, concealing the injustice found on the streets of "the 6."

"HOME IS STILL A FIGURE OF SPEECH": THE ART OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN

In her remarkable and touching short film *Love on the Streets*, Potts interviews homeless people in Toronto regarding the idea of love. In one poignant sequence, one of the respondents states that "home is a figure of speech." The idea of home, of stasis, of being held in place spatially and temporally, is one that cannot be materially actualized by many in Turtle Island: those whose lives involve continuous movement from shelter to shelter, from street corner to street corner, from love on the streets to the cold and chilling indifference that much of the general population expresses toward the homeless, many of whom are urban Indigenous people. If "home is a figure of speech," one can also question the limits of language in expressing the ghastly obscenities that undercut discourses of politeness, fairness, and niceness that often structure narratives of Canadian national identity.

Rebecca Belmore's installation, "Vigil" offers a performance art installation in which the artist uses embodied action and gesture to comment on the shocking number of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada, many of whom are subject to sexual violence on city streets. In Potts's film, the director interviews six people, all of whom are or have been homeless and some of whom are visibly racialized Indigenous people:



Figure 9.3: Love on the Streets, *2009. Film stills. Director: Kerry Potts, Cinematographer: Andrew McAllister. Photo: Kerry Potts and Andrew McAllister.*

> The short introduces the audience to Mo, Sylvia, Lisa, Michael, Matt, and Kyle—individuals who have lived on Toronto's streets and who share their various perspectives about love. Images from across the city are interwoven with tightly shot interviews in order to convey an intimacy with the subjects and an intimacy that people develop with the city while living on the streets. Viewers are challenged to refocus their gaze in order to see these individuals as partners, friends, parents or lovers. (hotdocslibrary, online)

The film is divided into a series of subsections, some of which take their titles from the words of those interviewed: The road home is right in front of you; Home is still a figure of speech; A great healing place; My child's sweet embrace; The nature of the spirit. The film is an uplifting overture to the power of love against material and systemic violence. And yet, it also offers a raw and truthful representation of life on the streets and the impossibility of easy, trite platitudes of love beyond the political.

Belmore's *Vigil* is an affective performance art installation in which the artist utilizes her own body to comment on the abhorrent forms of gender-based, sexual, and physical violence enacted against Indigenous

women as part of Canada's ongoing colonial project. In the installation, staged in Vancouver, the artist pays tribute to the many missing and murdered women from Vancouver's lower east side, some of whom are sex workers and some of whom are Indigenous women. As the artist's website states,

> Performing on a street corner in the Downtown East Side, Belmore commemorates the lives of missing and murdered Indigenous women who have disappeared from the streets of Vancouver. She scrubs the street on hands and knees, lights votive candles, and nails the long red dress is wearing to a telephone pole. As she struggles to free herself, the dress is torn from her body and hangs in tatters from the nails, reminiscent of the tattered lives of women forced onto the streets for their survival in an alien urban environment. Once freed, Belmore, vulnerable and exposed in her underwear, silently reads the names of the missing women that she has written on her arms and then yells them out one by one. After each name is called, she draws a flower between her teeth, stripping it of blossom and leaf, just as the lives of these forgotten and dispossessed women were shredded in the teeth of indifference. Belmore lets each woman know that she is not forgotten: her spirit is evoked and she is given life by the power of naming. (Belmore, rebeccabelmore.com)

Belmore pulls a thorny flower through her teeth fearlessly and screams out of the names of each woman lost to the violence of the everyday cruelty of Canada. The names echo in city streets much like the voices of homeless people in Turtle Island, begging for mercy. The red dress signifies female sexuality, and in her wearing of this symbol Belmore draws attention to the violent sexualization of Indigenous female bodies. She struggles to free her body from the poles, held prisoner in colonial Canada, and in the racist and sexist imaginaries that cast Indigenous women as vixens and victims. Pieces of a torn red dress remain on the streets, remnants of histories of the blood of Indigenous women spilled in "good" "clean" countries. Indigenous blood is bleached out of nationalist narratives shrouded in denial by colonizing settlers who feel entitled to call Indigenous land "home."



Figure 9.4: Rebecca Belmore, Vigil, *2002. Performance stills. Talking Stick Festival, Full Circle First Nations Performance. Firehall Theatre. Vancouver, British Columbia. Photo: Rebecca Belmore.*

WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT? CHALLENGING ROMANTIC LOVE AS PROPERTY

Ideas of love are increasingly used in the branding of transnational corporations in ways that resonate with secular English language grammars of love that are haunted by colonial history. In a time of technologically powered globalization, metaphors of love are increasingly used to sell products. iPhones are sold through branding campaigns that declare that ninety-nine percent of iPhone users truly love their phones (Matyszczyk). The ninety-nine percent that took to the streets in global Occupy protests and the Chinese workers committing suicide in Apple factories are beyond this market-based "love." In the act of nailing her body to telephone poles and leaving remnants of a red dress behind, to litter the lily white streets of a colonizing country, Belmore troubles the ethics of love as property. The relationship between love and the ownership of women's bodies is imbricated in heteronormative patriarchal colonial ideologies. Entitled white settler's love for Indigenous land constructs bodies of Indigenous women as those who can be metaphorically conquered as part of ongoing colonial violence.

The universal concept of English secular love as pre-discursive and

innate can be critiqued when considering the English language use of the word "love," the relationship between ideas of romantic love and colonial history, and how the concept of love is manipulated within global capitalist branding. Betsy Bolton discusses the relationship between ideas of love and colonialism. Bolton cites the writings of Frederic Jameson who discusses uses of love within nineteenth-century Europe as a means of masking class antagonism: "Frederic Jameson suggests that romance originates with a class conflict not yet articulated in terms of class or conflict" (3). Sara Suleri further suggests that the romantic genre within eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe emerged at a time of nationalist conflict, in which romantic love became a metaphor for the love of the nation. The love of one's mother country corresponds with idealized forms of heteronormative, monogamous, familial love.

The popularization of romantic Anglo-Indian fiction within empire reflects the use of romantic narratives to evade material questions of capitalist and colonial power. Relationships laden with oppressive hierarchies of power came to be celebrated through metaphors of love, romance, and benevolent scripts of salvation. Suleri discusses how the conventions of the romance genre were used to stage scenes of imperial domination as love stories. The affective sentiments of desire and longing scripted the relationship between colonizers and the colonized as a tender affair. The obvious capitalist exploitation, racism, and violence of colonizers was masked in a trite narrative of love. As Suleri states, "In negotiating between the idioms of empire and of nation, the fiction of nineteenth-century Anglo-India seeks to decode the colonized territory through the conventions of romance, reorganizing the materiality of colonialism into a narrative of perpetual longing and perpetual loss" (11). Suleri discusses how within the mirage of romantic longing produced through imperialist genres of romance, colonized countries such as India become the absent Other that is longed for. The colonizing power loves the colony in the way that an abusive patriarch turns power into romance. Suleri continues, "India becomes the absent point toward which nineteenth century Anglo-Indian narratives may lean but which is may never possess, causing both national and cultural identities to disappear in the emptiness of a representational mirage" (11).

Homi Bhabha's writing regarding the psychoanalytic dimensions

of colonization makes reference to the deeply seethed narcissism of empire. As the "jewel in the crown" of the British Empire, the Indian subcontinent is desired for and "loved" much like capitalism turns the ownership of women's bodies within heteronormative patriarchal narratives of conquest into something called "love" (Bhabha 126–31). The projections of the patriarchal male gaze onto the body of women resonate with the libidinal fantasies projected onto the colonized by the colonizer. Victorian moralism and tales of missionary salvation in which the colonies are represented as savage and in need of the maternal love of mother countries distort the brute aggression of colonization as a relationship of care. As Bolton states, "the sentimental mode of late or imperial romance attempts to resolve this tension by translating the materiality of colonialism into an appeal to sensibility and moral right" (4). Bolton further draws on Rudyard Kipling's canonical colonial writings of the "white man's burden" to discuss how the material exploitation of colonialism is rewritten as romance. As the author suggests, making reference to the farcical nature of colonial romance scripts, "Taking power in the name of history coincides with a turn from farce toward sentiment and romance: the white man's burden is yet another variant on the knight's quest to save the forms of civilization for humanity" (5).

As discussed in relation to Ann McClintock's writings regarding soap, cleanliness, and imperialism, domestic advertising was a means through which racist imageries entered the intimate spheres of social lives (McClintock 207-231). Domestic products such as soap advertised using images of celebrated pristine whiteness, which provided a means for turning the romance of the home into one that taught illiterate masses of Europe that racism was a matter of moral virtue. Love became associated with forms of domestic, heteronormative, familial bliss that turned the wretched project of racial and capitalist domination into one of care and salvation. Bolton discusses how the domestic scene within European colonial fiction masked oppressive and gendered power dynamics in the home, and the violence of imperial conquest that put tea into the cups of happy colonial families. As Bolton writes, the "longed-for domestic space cramped and invaded by labour; poverty, tears, illness and physical abuse represent the ideal family intimacy" (6). Nineteenth-century fiction and advertising turned colonialism into a narrative of romance in which the "fair and lovely" colonial

mother country imagined itself as performing a benevolent gesture of salvation by attempting to domesticate the imagined savage in the colonies. The capitalist power dynamics of colonial pillage, slavery, and the use of the colonies to produce the wealth of empire were both naturalized and made sentimental in these romantic narratives. Similarly, contemporary globalized branding also tells a love story that masks its inherent violence.

In contemporary white settler Canada, ideas of love cannot be separated from ongoing colonial genocide. The love of nation, static ideas of "home," and trite familial scripts of provincial family values are deeply imbricated in the ongoing exile of Indigenous people. In *Love on the Streets*, feminist filmmaker Potts interviews homeless people regarding this often profanely overused and intangible idea of love. While the "fair and lovely" mythologies of happy colonizing settlers often revolve around scenes of idealized domesticity, middle-class familial bliss, and sanitized desires, Potts's film speaks to a love beyond property. And yet, it is an outgrowth of the ongoing valuing of human love as connected to wealth, ownership, and the ghostly presence of those made homeless to serve the comfort of others both materially and psychosocially through an ethos of colonial denial that structures normative truth claims within contemporary Turtle Island. The lovely romances of wealthy settler couples and families continue unscathed despite the piercing wails of the homeless crying out for recognition on city streets.

HOUSEWIVES AND HOMELESS WARRIORS: THE POLITICS OF THE FAMILY

Emberley discusses the relationship between visual depictions of "the family" within colonial Canada, biopolitical constructions of race, and the genocide of Indigenous peoples. Emberley writes of the family portrait as a photographic tool that became popular during the height of colonialism in Canada, one that was used not to mimetically document a family, but to discursively and psychosocially create an idealized heteronormative, middle-class alliance to serve the biopolitical aims of a white settler society as one that would reproduce good, white Canadians. Images of happy, white bourgeoisie families were juxtaposed to the simultaneous use

of photography to visually pathologize and denigrate structures of Indigenous kinship. The image of the "wild woman," the ostensible paternal failings of the Indigenous man as "father," and the visual depiction of Indigenous children as those who were uncared for by parents justified the missionary abduction and abuse of Indigenous children who were imprisoned in the residential schooling system. Furthermore, just as the phantasm of the good, white, Christian and Catholic colonial family became a microcosm for the political governance of the nation, the depiction of Indigenous people as those who could not govern their families was metaphoric for the racist invocation of a people not fit for political rule.

Emberley also notes that the spectral violence of visual and verbal categorizations of "Aboriginal" and "Native" peoples did not simply misrepresent the Indigenous, but constructed them as a uniform group of people, obliterating traces of specificity between band, tribe, and nation. Within the lingering colonial discourse of white settler Canada, Cree, Ojibway, Anashinabe, and several other Indigenous tribes and nations are known as "Aboriginal" or "Native." These essentialist terms collapses differences in language, religion, territory, and history between bodies. Similarly, terms such as "Black," "Brown," "Arab," "Muslim," and "African" are used to submerge history in the apparent similitude between racialized bodies that are constructed as uniformly Other. The essentialist trope of racial Otherness functions in relation to the corresponding scripting of dominant whiteness as a visual truth that materializes white bodies who ironically appear as idealized citizens on stolen Indigenous land. Bodies marked by colonial histories are a ghostly apparition haunted by all of the violence that lies beneath the surface of the skin.

In contemporary Canada, one can question how Indigenous people are united not necessarily through shared language, cultural, or tribal origins, but through the shared survival and trauma brought about by white settler violence. It is interesting that both Potts's and Belmore's artistic installations unify the struggles of those on the streets, sex workers, the homeless, and others who occupy the nightmarish truths of North American dreams with those of anti-colonial resistance. The figure of the homeless person and sex worker are not necessarily Indigenous, just as Indigenous persons occupy a range of diverse positions within the class strata of urban Canada. And yet, the

relationship between urban poverty, sex work, sexual violence, and Indigeneity is one that is deeply imbricated in colonial history as that which unfolds in minute theatres of injustice across city streets. Belanger, Awosoga, and Weasel Head discuss the relationship between homelessness in contemporary Canada and Indigenous people. The authors state,

> The issues confronting all homeless populations are dire, but those facing the urban Aboriginal homeless population in particular are of mounting concern: growing numbers of urban émigrés lead to new residents integrating themselves into populations experiencing high birth and fertility rates. This quickly escalating population now represents more than 60 percent of the country's Aboriginal population, and 73.4 percent of the national Aboriginal households. (5)

The authors argue that national statistics are needed regarding homelessness and Indigenous people in contemporary Canada.

"A WANDERING SPIRIT": THE FEARLESS ETHOS OF THE ARTISTIC

Potts's *Love on the Streets* offers a lyrical, poetic, and poignant commentary on that which cannot be counted as property, a love beyond trophy wives and Barbie and Ken dream homes. The narrative voice that frames Potts's film in its introductory segments discusses a "wandering spirit," one that counters the apparent civilizational progress and normalcy of stasis with an intellectual, creative, and sacred restlessness. These metaphors of movement and travel both physically and metaphorically constitute a self that is never held in place but is infinitely in transition, refusing the comfortable apathies that often define North American dreams of betterment as wealth. Beyond the ostensible morality associated with white picket fences, wealthy settler families conceal their profit from the poverty of others. The homeless people in Potts's film evokes a fearless spirit and belief in the intangible that is often absent in secular capitalist culture. Mo, who is interviewed in the documentary, reads a touching poem that he has written. He writes and speaks of a faith in that which cannot

be seen in biopolitical whiteness or counted in images of numerical wealth. As his poem lyrically states,

> A wandering spirit, like smoke passing through the air. Some see it, smell it, but cannot feel it. The road home is right in front of you. Only you'll never see it with your eyes, you'll never touch it with your hands or feet. But one can only feel it. So take heart my dearest, it will be the longest road you'll ever know. That road home … is from your head to your heart. Sounds easy but it is not. Fear stands at the door.

The mention of fear speaks to an overarching sentiment and political position discussed previously regarding *Mass Arrival* and xenophobia. Within a time of gated communities and cultures of supposed left-wing language-policing based on the cultural capital of certain terminologies, the ultimate freedom often lies in the freedom to not be harassed (Žižek, "Against Human Rights") Nowhere is this truer than on the streets of the white settler metropolis in which interactions with the homeless are often met with fear. Potts challenges this rhetoric of harassment by speaking with and documenting the homeless of the city and their relationship to universal ideals of love. The fear of strangers is also a deep irony within a white settler nation in which those estranged from the aesthetics and class-based appearances of supposed normalcy are often urban Indigenous people—those who are Indigenous to the land. Potts and Belmore also offer pedagogies of Indigenous feminist artistic production that counter the trepidation of classist and racist white feminist discourse, which often construct those on the streets as objects of fear, sexism, and threats to women's safety. By centering the lives of those on the streets who are often feared by many, these artists reconfigure the idea of the assumed aggressor and perpetrator of violence to be a person on the street. The resilient spirit of the homeless that counters fear with faith is used to reimagine the implicit violence of dominant constructions of home as private, securitized property. White settler constructions of happy homes on stolen lands are revealed in these artistic acts as spaces designed to further exile urban Indigenous people whose homelessness is part of Canada's ongoing genocidal genealogy.

In Belmore's *Vigil*, the missing and murdered Indigenous women in cities where celebrated racialized migrants are famed for property ownership are those whose very right to life is threatened through a spatialization of fear. The downtown lower east side is marked as a bad neighbourhood in ways that are deeply imbricated with the racist construction of Indigenous women who live, work, and occupy the space of city streets as ostensibly bad, and therefore as deserving of violence. Belmore's installation offers a gripping and poignant challenge to the rhetoric of neo-liberal fear, as she occupies the street defiantly, refusing the easy silence of Canada's unremarked upon colonial genocide. As discussed throughout *Uncommitted Crimes*, "multiculturalism" as segregation and marketing is used to keep distinct ethnic Others in their place. Otherness is contained and quarantined to certain "multicultural" neighborhoods in which diversity is sold in food and other products, while Asian, South Asian, Arab, and other racialized bodies are constructed as part of distinct racialized communities, held at a distance from the white mainstream. The management of fears of "racial contamination" reflecting Canada's underlying ethos of white supremacy is expressed subtly and spatially. Belmore defies the quietude of a Canada that sells saris and samosas as an appendage to anti-racism, while racism continues to structure policing, economics, the reproduction of the white middle class, and the rape and murder of Indigenous peoples.

There is a fearless spirit to Belmore's willingness and ability to cause a scene. An inspiring courageous spirit also exists in the narratives of the homeless people that are interviewed in *Love on the Streets* who learn to boldly traverse the city streets, risking violence every day in their efforts to survive. And yet, the inability to calculate the ongoing economic and political violence that makes "world class" cities of "diverse" indifference to Indigenous homeless people is an epistemic act of colonial denial. One can visibly see the violence of white settler colonialism in the faces of those who sleep in bank shelters and freeze to death on the streets of a cunningly racist place, while the nation state keeps few accurate records of the traumas of nationalism. In both Potts's and Belmore's works, Canada's spatial crimes are recorded artistically in narratives that document the lack of space afforded to homeless people who attempt to recuperate a sense of humanity and humane love in an often inhospitable urban sphere. Those whom Potts



Figure 9.5: Rebecca Belmore, Vigil*, 2002. Performance stills. Talking Stick Festival, Full Circle First Nations Performance. Firehall Theatre. Vancouver, British Columbia. Photo: Rebecca Belmore.*

interviews discuss the difficulty of finding space to love within the shelter system. Mike and Lisa, a couple who are interviewed in the film, discuss their experiences of being a couple in the shelter system. Mike begins by stating, "Shelters aren't the greatest place to start a relationship in the first place, but I guess everybody's got to feel that love somewhere." Lisa continues, reflecting upon the inability for the shelter system to recognize the homeless as those with desire, as those with a capacity to love. Her comments are perhaps reflective of a bureaucratized system of capitalist biopolitics in which those without property are often stripped of humanity. Lisa states,

> There's also just that privacy that's involved with being in the shelter. Well, the lack of privacy especially with the couple being in the shelter because they don't look at us as a couple, they look at us like your this bed number. Right, so it's a little difficult because you're in a room with a whole bunch of girls and he's in a room with a whole bunch of guys. And there's not really that in between space where everyone can kind of connect. So in that way it was difficult.

The dehumanizing bureaucracy of antisocial cultures of social work within a country where the professional occupations of white

settlers become those of managing bodies in shelters is troubled by the emotive stories of the streets. Similarly, the countless murdered and missing Indigenous women lost to colonial violence are named in Belmore's performance installation *Vigil* when the artist screams out the names of murdered Indigenous women into the empty streets of colonial Canada.

STOLEN LAND AND COTTAGE COUNTRIES: SPACE, SEXUAL VIOLENCE, AND PUBLIC ART

Michel Foucault defined the time of capitalist modernity as one of spatial anxiety. Foucault suggests that "the anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space, no doubt a great deal more than with time. Time probably appears to us only as one of the various distributive operations that are possible for the elements that are spread out in space" (23).

Daily street theatres of cruelty often define the movements of female, transgender, and queer bodies in public spaces. The commonplace nature of gender-based violence is definitive of what Kalpana Kannabiran terms "the violence of normal times" (3). Certain bodies appear in public space as punch lines and punching bags, across borders. In 2010, SlutWalk emerged as a protest movement after a Toronto police officer gave a talk to a group of York University law students regarding 'personal safety' and offered a vulgar treatise of heternormative misogyny. The police officer stated: "You know, I think we're beating around the bush here.… I've been told I'm not supposed to say this—however, women should avoid dressing like sluts in order not to be victimized" (Pilkington 2011). SlutWalk involved bodies occupying and refashioning the commons. While the word "slut" caused a great deal of fervor in the mainstream media, the officer's statement that he had been "…told I'm not supposed to say this" demonstrates how policing and state power are steeped in rape culture. Rape culture in contemporary Canada cannot be divorced from white colonial sensibilities that racialize Brown women's bodies in sexually violent ways.

In *Vigil*, Belmore, an Indigenous female artist in white settler Canada, uses her body to pay tribute to murdered and missing Indigenous women, some of whom are sex workers who disappear

from Vancouver's lower east side. Belmore struggles to free her body from the telephone poles in a red-light district where totem poles are lost to colonial history and public feminisms are as scarce as a city street where billboard models are not worshipped as goddesses. The ongoing history of colonialism within white settler Canada is at once a discursive and ideological project and a form of capitalist violence, one that turns once sacred spaces into those of commerce and capitalist consumption. Cities of towering banks and shopping malls are built over sacred burial grounds, and the myths that define place are submerged within colourless parades of commodities, making contemporary Canadian cities indistinguishable from other Western secular marketplaces where the grids of city maps and the routes of those who appear in public spaces are often governed solely by productive labour and consumer excess.

The ironies of Turtle Island are felt in the exile of those who are Indigenous to the nation. Increasingly, urban displacement produces class-stratified urban spaces in which the colonizing ethos of affluent white settlers entitled to plant flags across world maps is expressed in the subtle racism that defines urban gentrification. While Potts and Belmore document the violence of homelessness, murder, and rape that haunts Indigenous bodies and the bodies of impoverished people in urban Canada, once working-class neighborhoods also become ghost towns where all traces of the working poor are often removed. Condominiums, hipster bars, and other branded appendages of "cool" use working-class histories to simultaneously market neighborhoods as edgy and avant garde while driving out residents who cannot afford store-bought deviance.

HIPSTER HEADDRESSES AND "WILD" WOMEN: THE GENTRIFICATION OF THE SACRED

It is interesting to consider the politics of urban gentrification, displacement, and spatial violence in relation to the histories of forcibly removing Indigenous peoples from land. The sublimation of colonial anxieties and aggressions is expressed in the commodity fetish of hipster kitsch bearing traces of colonial racism. The marketing of certain products conceals the violence of ongoing colonization through a celebratory rhetoric of global capitalist branding. One can

consider companies such as Urban Outfitters, a banal example of how contemporary corporate culture attempts to profit from ongoing histories of colonial violence. The company garnered attention and outrage from Indigenous leaders in the Americas through its attempts to appropriate sacred symbols of Indigeneity. Danielle Paradis writes of the "Smudge Kit" through which the spiritual traditions of Indigenous people were turned into hipster branding. As the author states, "Urban Outfitters came under scrutiny for its sale of a 'Local Branch Smudge Kit' ($39.99 on sale from $52.00), a sort of pseudo-ceremonial kit marketed toward hipsters as 'energy balancing' that contains a wild turkey smudging feather, stoneware smudging dish, candle and instructions" (n.p). Paradis discusses the reactions from Indigenous peoples in the Americas who saw the appropriation of these signifiers as disrespectful of Indigenous traditions. The author states,

> Many indigenous people feel this is cultural appropriation. What is the big deal? To start with, there is not just one Native American culture; there are hundreds across the U.S. and Canada. Secondly, repeated missteps by retailers and non-indigenous fashion designers could be avoided if they took the opportunity to engage with Indigenous communities in an authentic way, instead of commodifying and misappropriating sacred symbols. Simply put: If Urban Outfitters loves the aboriginal aesthetic, maybe they should hire some aboriginal fashion designers and artists.

While "hip" neighbourhoods are branded as being artistic, Indigenous female artists such as Potts and Belmore use creative mediums to offer a political commentary regarding how sacred traditions still linger as a means of survival, rather than sales. In the introduction of *Love on the Streets*, Sylvia is interviewed and offers a poetic treatise regarding the use of spirituality in the lives of homeless people who lyrically comment on the sacred and love beyond materialism. As she states,

> I love what you can't see. The protection that's around me. It's not a person. It's something that keeps me through the hard times like homelessness. Some energy. I don't know what it

> is. Some people call it a guardian spirit. Some people call it Totems. And I know there is one for me. Not necessarily love but I hang on to that belief. And as a result, I love the other side of life too.

As with many places, the symbolic capital of gendered and racialized embodiment and the systemic oppression of global capitalism often define love, life, and death in Turtle Island. Sylvia's narrative gestures to ideas of the sacred outside of a belief in the materiality of skin and wealth. Similarly, Mo states, "There are so many people trying to find something to believe in. Only some are looking the wrong way. They tell me to believe in this, believe in that, but most don't even know for sure what they're doing or where they're going. We have a goal. A reason to try. Knowledge is all we need. And we cannot see the nature of the spirit."

While Urban Outfitters sells stolen Indigenous traditions to bored gentrifying yuppies, the homeless people Potts interviews discuss the importance of what some term the spirit, as a means of surviving homelessness, and retaining a belief in love against all odds. The melancholia of the white middle class, often found among affluent white consumers and hipsters drowning themselves in trends and hedonistic middle-class lifestyles, may seem privileged in comparison to the urban poor. And yet, what is striking in Potts's film lies in how it is those who are often systemically, politically, and psychosocially stripped of love who espouse its importance. While Internet dating can lead to cultures of shopping for love the way one shops for furniture, those who live and love on the streets carve out spaces of meeting in unlikely places. Many homeless people occupy spaces in ways that gesture to the survival of human sentiment, affect, and embodied desire. Love on the streets survives against the glare of mall lighting, the clicks of computer keys, and the banal cash register hymns of a day.

One can also consider the kinds of hipster appendages that major multinational companies often sell, which are associated aesthetically with Indigenous people. Urban Outfitters for example, sells "Native print" flasks, panties, and headdresses that are marketed toward supposedly edgy female consumers. The products are marked with feminine excess that connotes store-bought sexuality, a wild life for

the affluent hipster in a white settler colony. While such marketing schemes are seemingly harmless and banal, the signification of the "wild woman" now sold en masse in "Native print" panties and flasks for drunken collegiate crowds exist in an ongoing panorama of colonial violence. The "wild" is intelligible through long-standing racist depictions of Indigenous women that justify rape, sexual violence, and abuse. As discussed in previous chapters of *Uncommitted Crimes*, the image of the Indigenous "wild woman" was emblematic of the "wild" land that needed to be tamed by colonizing patriarchs (Emberley 8). Emberley further states that representing the Indigenous and specifically Indigenous women as "wild" simultaneously constructed idealized images of domestic, white, bourgeois femininity. The irony of such representations lies in how it was through making Indigenous people both literally and metaphorically homeless that images of those who were figured as "at home," and as maternal and paternal authorities, were constructed as the norm. As Emberley states, "The duality of savagery and civilization shaped English ideas about indigenous cultures as essentially ones that existed in a savage infantile state in need of the governing rationality or a more advanced and enlightened bourgeois society" (8).

The association made between Indigenous people and "nature" is a subtle example of how colonialism masks its violence through romantic scripts. Indigenous people are figured as being "at one with nature" and "wild" in ways that somehow celebrate their symbolic and literal homelessness in the nation. Depicted as forever living in tents or as nonexistent, the seizure of land and the placing of Indigenous people on the outskirts of both national geographies and imaginaries are naturalized. As Emberley further writes, "In contradictory fashion, science and aesthetics created representations of colonized Others that served as the basis for a progressive narrative of nature's terror and beauty, her unruliness and innocence" (8).

The "taming" of the wild continues to be used to conflate Indigenous women's bodies with the colonized landscape, as an imagined barren surface on which ostensibly great white men can violently plant their flags. As Emberley writes of the relationship between Canadian colonialism and representations of the "wild" Indigenous woman, "Like an overly aggressive child, she must be physically tamed, taught proper social values of work and family,

theistic values of love, compassion, and forgiveness, and the meaning of applied intellectual and technological European superiority" (8). The reference to "childhood" and the association between immaturity, adolescence, and Indigenous people resonates with the marketing of "wild child" products to urban hipsters in North America. The affluent consumer of "Native inspired" products is invited to tour exotic images of sexually risqué Otherness in their youth. The exoticism of Indigenous lives is countered with the material poverty of homelessness that defines the experience of many urban Indigenous and other homeless people of all ages. The sale of fashionable products and appendages of consumerist excess to young consumers that are marked with references to an essentialist figure of the "Aboriginal" construct Indigenous culture and tradition as a fun, frivolous vacation from adult responsibilities that the consumer can partake in, the way a rich white tourist can vacation in a poor country in the Global South. And yet as Sylvia in *Love on the Streets* writes in a poem regarding the homeless (much like the Indigenous women whom Belmore pays tribute to in *Vigil*), there is no fashionable exoticism found in grinding poverty: "Watch Joes doing blow, a shelter hot holiday," her poem wryly describes.

Once the "wild years" for urban-outfitted fashion tourists have passed, party-going adolescents can grow up, moving beyond the unruly images of childhood that script Indigenous people as being morally, psychologically, and culturally caught in an infantile state. The downtown hipster can trade her "hipster headdress," "Native panties," and "Navajo inspired flask" filled with girly drinks for the colonial sensibilities of the white bourgeois mothers who came before her. In Belmore's and Potts's use of the artistic, such trite forms of commodity fetishism and subtle racism are challenged. Rather than depicting Indigenous peoples as childlike or scripting adulthood through the heteronormative capitalist temporalities that inform one's ability to obtain wealth and property, the artists represent a sense of survival and political integrity that reveals cultures of white, European colonial civility as spiritually and politically immature. The polite racist denial of white Canada is figured as an expression of irresponsibility that defines colonial ideology as one that is—much like a love not found in the streets but in racist commodity fetishism and the worship of whiteness—lacking in wisdom and empathy.

SEEING RED IN THE STREETS
EMPATHY, RACISM, AND INVISIBLE PAIN

To empathize often involves being able to place oneself in the position of another, to imagine the circumstances that beset their lives or have brought them to a certain place. While empathy with others may seem to be an inevitable part of humanity, it is perhaps always informed by politics and an unwillingness to conceive of those whose pain is justified by racist discourse. Authors write of the "racial empathy gap" to discuss how skin colour can effect one's ability to empathize with others. Writing in regards to the shooting of Trayvon Martin, an African American shot by a white police officer, Jason Silverstein argues that race and racism inform different perceptions of the pain of others. As Silverstein writes,

> researchers at the University of Milano-Bicocca showed participants (all of whom were white) video clips of a needle or an eraser touching someone's skin. They measured participants' reactions through skin conductance tests—basically whether their hands got sweaty—which reflect activity in the pain matrix of the brain. If we see someone in pain, it triggers the same network in our brains that's activated when we are hurt. But people do not respond to the pain of others equally. In this experiment, when viewers saw white people receiving a painful stimulus, they responded more dramatically than they did for black people.

Silverstein states that the "racial empathy gap" can be used to explain both institutional and every day racism. As the author states, "The racial empathy gap helps explain disparities in everything from pain management to the criminal justice system. But the problem isn't just that people disregard the pain of black people. It's somehow even worse. The problem is that the pain isn't even felt" (n.p).

Silverstein further comments on the relationship between empathy and privilege. In several studies regarding race, racism, and empathy, researchers found that if someone appeared to be more privileged they garnered more empathy regarding their perceived pain. Conversely, those who appeared to be less privileged were assumed to have the

capacity to withstand pain. Constructions of racialized people as those who are strong and have undergone hardship throughout their lives in fact causes them to be perceived as being able to withstand pain, and therefore not as deserving of empathy or compassion. Silverstein makes reference to several research studies that attempted to gauge the empathy of a cross section of the North American public in regards to racism and empathy: "The more privilege assumed of the target, the more pain the participants perceived. Conversely, the more hardship assumed, the less pain perceived. The researchers concluded that 'the present work finds that people assume that, relative to whites, blacks feel less pain because they have faced more hardship'" (n.p). In white settler Canadian spaces known as financial centers, and beautiful pastoral places, one would assume that the pain of the homeless would cause those who purport to be nice, polite Canadians speaking proudly of multiculturalism to be empathetic. However, the assumed hardship of the homeless and specifically many urban Indigenous people often remains invisible, justifiable, and beyond empathy. For those living on the streets, homelessness can also produce a fear of expressing emotion, as evinced in *Love on the Streets*. In the film Matt states,

> I think homelessness has impacted my experience of love or definition of love very negatively. Like I mentioned before any expression of love or empathy or any of those soft emotions are considered weaknesses. But that's not just it. When I was on the street—First I ended up homeless—I was so hurt, so emotionally battered, so betrayed that my heart was the only thing left and I'd be damned if I was going to let anybody have it. And I didn't want there's either. Because of those events that led up to me being homeless I had this belief that everything came with a string attached. Including, especially love.

Matt further discusses how histories of abuse throughout childhood also impact his understandings of love. He states, "And a lot of people who said they loved me throughout childhood who abused me helped to form that tainted vision of what I considered to be true love." Potts uses the space of film and the techniques of documentary filmmaking



Figure 9.6: Rebecca Belmore, Vigil, *2002. Performance stills. Talking Stick Festival, Full Circle First Nations Performance. Firehall Theatre. Vancouver, British Columbia. Photo: Rebecca Belmore.*

to offer those who are often stripped of the capacity to express affect and emotion a chance to publicly espouse cathartic personal stories.

MISSIONARY POSITIONS: ART THAT DOES NOT BEG FOR REDEMPTION

Academic and historical information, as well as statistics and narratives regarding the brutal violence that Indigenous people experience can be used to construct certain people as being able to withstand all circumstances, and therefore as unworthy of empathy. Furthermore, discourses of missionary moralism in white settler Canada can be used to justify the erasure of the humanity of homeless people. Racist images of alcoholism, drug addiction, and bad families demonstrate how mainstream Canada continues to rely on biopolitical constructions of deviance to justify systemic oppression. Both Potts and Belmore utilize a language beyond bureaucratic rationality to offer striking, emotive

artistic work that asks audiences and publics to empathize beyond the wealth and skin of those who experience unspeakable violence. These artistic gestures are those that defy the static ways that mainstream news media often construct the homeless, Indigenous peoples, sex workers, and the poor as undeserving of compassion.

In *Vigil*, Belmore reads the names of missing and murdered women written on her arm. The use of the names of women who often appear only as numbers in statistics or in racist caricatures within mainstream media personalizes those who are offered a genocidal lack of empathy. David Sanlal discusses how contemporary representations of violence against Indigenous women in Canada justify sexual violence. Sanlal states,

> [S]exual violence against Aboriginal women is legitimized by colonial attitudes that have created systematic racialized hatred and systemic discrimination … the colonial manipulation of public perceptions of Aboriginal women rationalize their subjugation by constructing the idea of Indigenous women as the "Squaw Drudge" who is dirty, degraded, and slave to men.

Drawing on research regarding mainstream representations of Indigenous women in Canadian media, Sanlal concludes that "the discursive construction of Aboriginal women as social waste simultaneously organizes the narratives of Canadian media" (n.p). Sanlal compares the treatment of cases of sexual violence against Indigenous women and non-Indigenous women in the Canadian press. The author states,

> The Aboriginal women received six times less coverage; their articles were shorter and less likely to appear on the front page. Media constructs the image of Aboriginal women as "bad" or "beyond redemption," which render the invisibility of the violence perpetrated against them. The media treatment of Aboriginal women victimizes the women again as they perpetuate the colonial views that Aboriginal women are inferior and insignificant.

Both Belmore and Potts challenge this rhetoric of Indigenous

inferiority. Bearing witness to their remarkable artistic works, one is also left to question the poverty of the supposedly civilized love of wealthy colonizers. The ostensibly bad Indigenous woman and morally deviant homeless person are rescripted as those who are heroic in their belief in love, and whose names haunt the "fair is fair" rhetoric of white settler Canada.

TEXT MESSAGES AND TOTEM POLES: DESIRE AND DISAPPEARANCE IN TURTLE ISLAND

While rich colonial settlers can decide who and how to love through Tinder apps, Facebook quizzes, and other games that turn love into a contest of wealth, beauty, and attempts to approximate normative aesthetics found in racist mainstream media, love on the streets abounds for homeless people who express a courageous and resilient ability to retain faith in humanity, beyond capital. Cynical publics espouse values of love through friendships and romances that are often structured by class status, racism, and implicit attempts to approximate the narrative frames of white colonial bourgeois family romances. The constructed inferior Others of the streets emerge in Potts's film as those who can teach one about the miraculous ability for love to withstand chilling forms of oppression. Mainstream North American publics use money to signify supposed love, often through wedding rings, posh martial homes, honeymoon vacations, and endless photos posted on online media. What can emerge is a narcissistic pageantry in which shopping, beauty, envy, and egoism are conflated with human love. The irony and poignant wisdom of Potts's film lies in depicting those who are stripped of self-centred capitalist appendages as being able to espouse a love beyond vanity. Those whom the filmmaker interviews gesture to the sacred nature of love itself, to a love beyond the superficial use of other people as accessories to class-based identities. Without property or the cultural capital of affluent whiteness, those featured in the film express an intangible faith in the profound nature of love that is perhaps beyond literal translation. As Kyle remarks in the film, love for those who are stripped of property often challenges the relationship between love and ownership. He states that love "is a two way street, you loving them and them loving you but when I love someone, it's freedom."

Belmore also challenges the racist erasure of Indigenous women's lives creatively in *Vigil*. The remnants of the red dress nailed to the telephone poles of Vancouver's lower east side gesture not to the missing and murdered sex worker's body as "beyond redemption," as is so often depicted in sickening forms of racist moralism found in mainstream Canadian media. Rather, it is perhaps a white settler colony that remains beyond redemption in its ongoing rape script, which is not "settled" in speeches given by politicians or tax exemption cards. Colonial violence lingers in the ghostly apparitions of women left for dead, the tattered remnants of their forsaken love haunting the streets. It is through the artistic voice that both artists challenge the cash-based mantras of North America. Within contemporary Turtle Island, the ideology of a North American dream often connected to multicultural capitalism supports delusional ideologies regarding the power of legality and meritocracy to effect systemic change. An imaginary steeped in the denial of colonial history and its coveting of whiteness as an ideal suggests that meritocracy can stop history and erase the violent markings that colonization leaves on the skin.

The "fair and square" mythologies of work, "settling" one's bills, and paying one's taxes to demonstrate morality conceal the obvious sickness of colonial histories of land theft, impoverishment of Indigenous peoples, residential schools, and abhorrent forms of sexual assault and murder of Indigenous women. Northrup Frye once commented that "Americans love to make money, Canadians love to audit it" (Frye, O'Grady, and Staines 468). There is a ridiculous and disturbing hypocrisy to white settler Canada's obsession with bureaucratic order and fairness, given that the entire fabric of the nation state is informed by theft, violence, and ongoing attempts to destroy Indigenous people. In offering artistic insight into the lives and struggles of homeless people in Toronto, some of whom are visibly marked as "Aboriginal," Potts challenges the tired rhetoric of equality and industrious success that are used to support willful historical amnesia. Similarly, Belmore uses an emotive, raw, and gripping artistic performance on the streets of Vancouver to gesture to the obscene underbelly of Canadian nationalism. Finally, what is interesting and instructive regarding postcolonial futures and artistic production lies in the use of art to articulate traumas that cannot

perhaps be expressed, understood, or empathized with through linear language or cold, hard, numbers.

BODY LANGUAGE: CREATIVE GRAMMARS TO EXPRESS THE UNTRANSLATABLE

As discussed, Slavoj Žižek suggests that the trauma of extreme violence cannot often be fully expressed in rational, factual discourse (*Violence*, 63). It is arguably only through nontraditional mediums in which truth is not authorized like bank statements that traumatic events can be expressed in meaningful ways. Belmore's *Vigil* offers a stark, gripping, and moving performance in which "home" as a figure of speech is forever interrupted by the stutter of repeating refrains of colonial history—tongues forever caught on English lies of civility. Polite rhetoric and mythologies of a clean, nice, and innocent Canada are revealed to be disgusting in their denial. The great white settler fairy tale is an obscene delusion, tainted by the bloody corpses of colonized women that all of Canada's pleases and thank yous cannot undo. The silence and invisibility of the missing, murdered, and sexually brutalized Indigenous woman's body within mainstream Canadian discourse and everyday dialogue is symbolic of the perverse quietude that surrounds Canada's ongoing colonial project. The lives of Indigenous peoples are often pushed further to the margins of history through the tactical use of racialized migrants as evidence of an anti-racism that smothers the violence of colonizers in apolitical hip-hop anthems and Bollywood festivals.

If "home is a figure of speech" then who is "at home" in Turtle Island and how are they at home? If "home" is metaphoric of belonging, acceptance, inclusion, and even love, then whose bodies are used to mark the exterior zones of both the family and the nation? Beyond a self-righteous moralistic position or a final statement of certainty regarding the biopolitics of the Canadian nation state, Potts and Belmore offer impassioned artistic works that reflect upon the powers of transitory emotions. These remarkable creative thinkers produce affective sentiments that are not fenced in. Their artistic works evoke feelings that are not domesticated through the love stories of gentrifying "fair is fair" yuppies, sneering at homeless Indigenous women. In the art of these inspirational Indigenous women, the

impossible and intangible idea of "home" is not captured in "precious moments" photo albums or through social media sites documenting rich frenemies and branded desires. Rather, the emotive, political, and embodied histories that haunt a colonizing nation colour the streets, leaving evocative archives of casual genocide.

In Belmore's *Vigil*, the trauma experienced by the people whom the artist names in screams in the streets much like the red dress nailed to telephone poles offer no legalistic or scientific proof of violence. And yet, in the embodied artistic gesture, there is an emotive rage and sadness that captures the lived pain, justified abuse, and disappearance of Indigenous women. Belmore's artistic work poses ethical questions regarding the capacity of grief to ever be fully addressed through legal and bureaucratic grievance alone.

Potts's *Love on the Streets* also captures the intangibility of the idea of human love. Relationships are formed beyond white colonial bourgeois romance and normative secular capitalist scripts where finding love is akin to shopping. The love on the streets that Potts's film depicts is not a love of shiny diamond wedding rings, Yummy Mummies gentrifying poor neighborhoods, or weekend partygoers sporting Urban Outfitters headdresses to turn heads at posh parties. The love that articulates itself through the interviews of those who experience homelessness in contemporary Turtle Island is one that defies market rationalities. The love expressed is not bought like property, or the love of rich men buying women with material things, or parents buying their children's love and affection with products. Those interviewed discuss the feeling of love that one might experience by giving homeless people money on the street. As Lisa states, "I think everyone has been loved at some point and has loved. Whether it's just helping someone out, giving change to someone on the street or just doing that good deed for the day. That caring. So I think love exists in different forms and I don't think we should be questioning who deserves it or not." Those who have experienced homelessness discuss love as empathy and intersubjectivity beyond ownership, capital, and skin. Ideas of unconditional love are expressed by those whose invisibility is pathologized in the mainstream white settler imaginary. As Matt states in the film, despite hardship and homelessness he still believes in the timeless nature of something call love: "Unconditional love. Absolutely. Love with strings attached. I don't think so. I think we were put on earth to love."

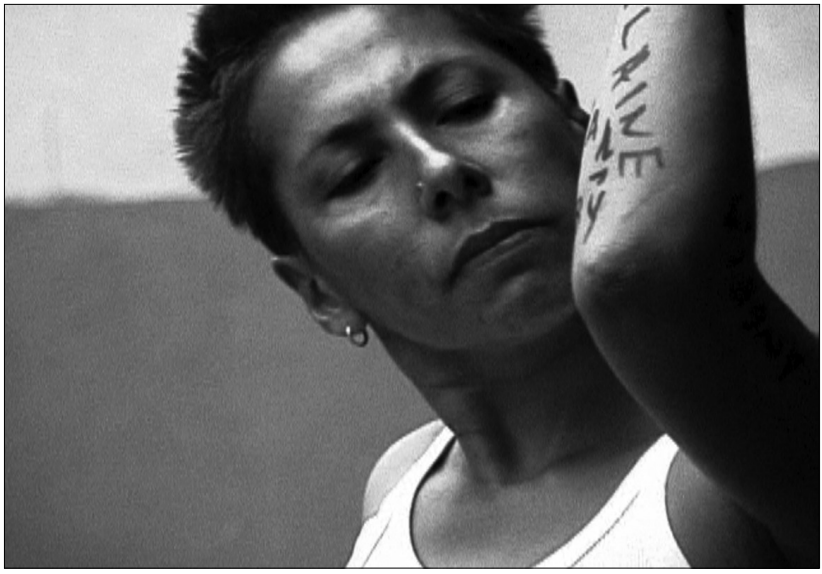


Figure 9.7: Rebecca Belmore, Vigil*, 2002. Performance stills. Talking Stick Festival, Full Circle First Nations Performance. Firehall Theatre. Vancouver, British Columbia. Photo: Rebecca Belmore.*

UNSETTLING SOLIDARITIES: SPARE CHANGE AND LINGERING QUESTIONS

Love on the Streets much like *Vigil* ends with a love that is not divided through colonial categorizations of race, nor through linear grammars dividing the worthy from the unworthy, the "hot" from the "not," nor the successors of colonial patriarchal lineages from those who fail to reproduce racism. As Kyle states at the end of the film, "If everyone was loving then so many problems would be fixed. The world would be a better place if everyone would just let that be." The rhetoric of the undeserving poor of a laughably "fair is fair" meritocratic country is not bitterly lamented, but countered with a universalism that is often espoused and yet rarely practiced. It is ironically those who are often afforded no measure of love who appear as its greatest proponents.

The artistic medium allows for a gesture of solidarity often not found in mainstream discourses and statist agencies that apprehend the homeless as those to be vilified, medicated, feared, or constructed as objects of pity. Hannah Arendt writes that pity is an enemy of

politics, as it often amounts to the glorification of the suffering of others. She explains, "Parasitic on the existence of misfortune, 'pity can be enjoyed for its own sake, and this will almost automatically lead to a glorification of its cause, which is the suffering of others'" (qtd. in Bowring 68). Arendt counters the idea of pity with that of solidarity. She writes that solidarity "can, by means of worldly principles and ideals (such as respect, honor and human dignity), unite the strong and the weak in a dispassionate 'community of interest'" (qtd in Bowring 68).

Both Rebecca Belmore's *Vigil* and Kerry Potts's *Love on the Streets* offer lingering questions regarding the possibilities of universal principles of justice and love within the context of ongoing white settler colonialism and white supremacy. In *Vigil,* pieces of a red dress are left on the streets of Vancouver, traces of the obscene entitlements of settlers to the land of Indigenous people who are often not entitled to the right to life itself. Similarly, *Love on the Streets* finishes with a statement made by Sylvia, one that could be posed as a question that lingers in the streets. Sylvia's unwavering belief in love beyond the crass lies of the "fair is fair" meritocratic rhetoric of a white man's country leave one to consider the possibility of love beyond the language of capital. As Sylvia states at the end of the film, "It's self explanatory. Everyone deserves to be loved."

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