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## Sharon Pollock : first woman of Canadian theatre

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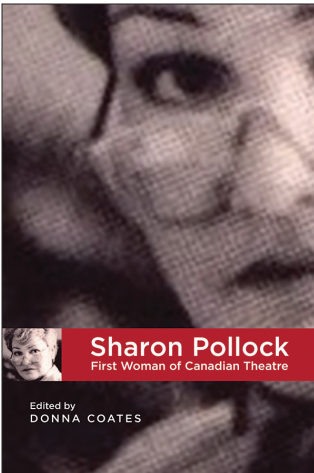
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## SHARON POLLOCK: FIRST WOMAN OF CANADIAN THEATRE Edited by Donna Coates

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## Listening is Telling: Eddie Roberts's Poetics of Repair in Sharon Pollock's *Fair Liberty's Call*

*Carmen Derkson*

*Let me find my talk / so I can teach you about me.*

—“I LOST MY TALK,” RITA JOE,  
MÍGMAQ POET LAUREATE

In a recent *Canadian Literature* review (2011), Terry Goldie claims Sharon Pollock's 1995 play *Fair Liberty's Call* is as “tired as its title” (205). Of the play, he writes,

the conflict between rebels and loyalists in the American Revolution could rise above the material, but it doesn't. In the early seventies such revisionist representations of Canadian history seemed of value in themselves but those days are past. When at the end the cross-dressing soldier known as Eddie and Wullie, the ex-slave, seem ready to go

off together, it is just too cute. All that disruption of gender and race so nicely resolved. (205)

I disagree with Goldie's glib reading of a rather complex play that brings much to mind beyond epithets of "tired," "past," and "cute" (205). Goldie's critique does not seem attuned to the residual effects of the American Revolution within Canadian history, or the conflicts that often find an echo in our current political landscape. Goldie fails to mention or recognize Pollock's counter-play and subtext about indigenous presence and identity in *Fair Liberty's Call*. In a play about exile, civil war, and settler-land disputes, Pollock presents an alternative script and history, one often forgotten by settlers: the indigenous rights to land and identity prior to settler land claims. Rather than performing a "straightforward" reading of the script, I read against the grain to examine the "othered" histories at the core of this play, which has also been consistently overlooked by critics.

This essay examines how Pollock brings indigenous identity to the spectator's attention. By engaging the audience's auditory senses, Pollock subverts the importance of the most significant performers in the play in favour of those who perform behind the scenes, often unheard and unrecognized. Pollock's stage directions, used as a performative strategy, emphasize sound and its relationship to listening practices in order to foreground indigenous presence. An auditory reader will note the connection to "hearing" (10), the "heart" (10), and the displaced eye (10), along with the reappearance of the "red woman" (11) throughout the script. Theorizing a reparative practice, this essay demonstrates how listening functions as an active, intersubjective, rather than passive mode. Further, a reparative practice positions listening in acoustic exchange as the antidote for miscommunication between histories. While the gaze may act as a witness, auditory recognition exposes what the gaze passes over and so allows: listening is not passive activity. An auditory-recognition practice requires a shift in the privileging of the visual and kinetic senses in order to participate

fully and experientially in sound-traces that recognize the sound patterns that define us, whether past or present.

Pollock's counter-play challenges the passivity of the gaze, whether of performer, audience, or reader, to show how sound and listening practices prompt a different kind of recognition in *Fair Liberty's Call*. According to poet Rae Armantrout, recognition manifests as a complex act. In a recent poem, Armantrout discusses the benefits of misrecognition when she writes, "I was trying to tell myself / what I must have known before / in a form / I wouldn't recognize at first" (58). Similarly, Pollock's mistellings (9) allow other voices, spaces, and histories to emerge from misrecognition. Similarly, Siobhan Senier offers compelling material on the differing gradients between mere acknowledgement and recognition. In a recent article, Senier writes, "by recognition I mean the formal, colonial, governmental processes that acknowledge indigenous territories, identities, and self-governance" (15), but acknowledgement differs from recognition because mere acknowledgement, no matter how hard won, retains a hollow ring: it does not mean much of anything. Senier indicates how "recognition affects Native people's self-representation" (2); depending on the federal government's relationship with the tribe, it can provide visibility and delimit identity and resources. By theorizing a tripartite reparative practice based on listening, auditory recognition, and acoustic exchange, I examine how acknowledgement, in primarily visual contexts, through "formal, colonial governmental processes" (15) is not enough to repair relations for disenfranchised groups, especially First Nations. Visibility also promotes negative acknowledgement, which often generates *interference* and mistranslation along with a refusal to actually see, a willful blindness that auditory-recognition and listening practices displace.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick coined the term "reparative critical practices" (128), which scholars and writers began to take up in their work recently.<sup>1</sup> Reparative reading critiques paranoid, fear-based, and suspicious reading and/or reading strategies in order to propose a shift not only in practice, but also in thinking and writing. The term I use,

reparative *practice*, pays homage to Sedgwick's "reparative critical practices" (128), yet extends the definition to include and focus primarily on listening and sound, such as performative reading. Sedgwick draws on a range of writers, theorists, and scholars such as Sigmund Freud, Judith Butler, Melanie Klein, and D.A. Miller to refigure paranoid strategies and define reparative critical practices. She destabilizes oppressive epistemological systems ensconced in the paranoid by unraveling the mimetic, and further suggests that "paranoia refuses to be only either a way of knowing or a thing known, but is characterized by an insistent tropism toward occupying both positions" (131). As paranoia imitates and embodies knowledges and practices, the challenge to destabilize its systems relies on naming it as a "theory" (134) in order to classify and recognize it as a theory. Once paranoia is recognized as a theory, another theory such as reparative practice works to mitigate the mimetic effects of paranoia.

Reparative practice as a listening praxis or theory of sound and auditory-recognition traces the affective dissonances and dis/assemblings of articulate nonverbals, sounds, and memories, instead of relying only on descriptions of verbal patterns or sound images. Reparative practice examines how the body listens or how the body's syntax or neutrality feels sound, beyond a general hearing within a community of spaces or places, to function as an act of repair in language, theory, and literature. "Music entreats the listener to hear that which the ear cannot perceive" (60), writes Alexander Stein when he references the late German pianist Wilhelm Kempff's observations on Beethoven's Piano Sonata, Op. 111. Similarly, this essay entreats the reader to listen to Pollock's counter play as sonic scripting, noted in and between the performers' utterances, spatiality, and presence within *Fair Liberty's Call* – to examine not only caesuras, but the sensory traces, which provide tangibility and voice to the seeming silences of objects or shadows as well as the tensions, whispers, and interiorities within bodies, objects, and spaces.

Pollock's play registers *listening* as a reparative form of speech – not a speech act – but a reparative speaking raised from almost indiscernible

sound-traces. Sound provides another story, a play within the play, or counter to the play most readers read or audiences visualize. In the play, sound is not background or accompaniment; instead, Pollock emphasizes its significance in the play's prelude in a separate, distinct stage direction: "*all sound is impressionistic, even surrealistic, rather than realistic*" (9). With this positioning, sound functions as a cultural intervention in and between verbal exchanges or dialogue, as impressions and dis/assemblings. Sound, as cultural intervention, occurs because it does not cater to one kind of representation or economy; rather, sonification's ephemeral qualities situate boundaries within often overlapping yet specific contexts (Supper 258). Thus, the play is not just about "the conflict between rebels and loyalists in the American Revolution" (Goldie 205); by contrast, the play "rise[s] above the material" (Goldie 205) to explore an often overlooked terrain such as the First Nations' relationship to the Revolutionary War in 1785 New Brunswick and its effects upon them.

Complicating a seemingly straightforward play about American Loyalists exiled in New Brunswick, their land rights, and the definition of home, Pollock threads a counter-sonic narrative throughout the script of Aboriginal presence to provide an *acoustic exchange* between the exiled Loyalist family, the soldiers, the ex-slave, and the indigenous people already residing in New Brunswick: the "red woman stands in the glade of trees, and she watches" (18) as the Americans listen; their new-found lives, their survival, may depend on how well they listen. The play within the play begins, after a collaborative lyric chant, with a re-memory and telling by Joan Roberts of finding a "feather on the doorstep" (11) at this new place. Joan Roberts, the wife of George and mother to four children, grieves because her two sons, one a rebel and the other a loyalist, died as a result of the civil war. The feather, a seemingly small detail, symbolizes the gap in versions of the Roberts family's story about their arrival in New Brunswick from Boston and how Joan's sons died. However, Annie, Joan's oldest daughter, challenges Joan's version:

JOAN: When first we come here after the revolution, when first we come . . . I saw a woman in the woods. A red woman. I saw her watchin'. Watchin' with a babe on her back. I saw her carryin' it like that, like—packed in moss, like—like nothin' I know. One mornin' I found a feather on the doorstep.

ANNIE: We don't have a doorstep, Mama. We haven't had a doorstep since Boston. We may never have a doorstep again. (11)

Both women insist on their own version of events; Annie refuses not only to see the feather, but the possibility of a doorstep too, even though Joan asserts, “the feather was there. And in the sky a bird was circlin'. A bird like no bird I know. The colours were wrong, and the size” (11). For Joan, the feather represents all that is not home for these would-be settlers from Boston. The feather on Joan's imaginary doorstep is not only a fleeting image in the present, but an evocation of a language of listening – an object of repair, an ephemeral offering as it flutters to conjure and situate an undoing of home (a plot of land in New Brunswick) and the silence of never again home (Boston) – in a new but “barren” (11) place.

Although Joan sees the feather, even acknowledges its presence, she refuses, in this opening moment in the play, to engage in auditory-recognition and acoustic exchange. She refuses, like Annie, to recognize another version, to listen to an offering of difference: the “colours were wrong, and the size” (11). Annie, however, does more than simply refuse to listen – she refuses to see or acknowledge any kind of possible opening for exchange in this new place. Rather, Annie prefers to disengage from past memories of their lives in Boston, her lost brothers, and the new home she must now inhabit. Annie refuses recollection and so recognition.

Pollock uses sound to show the systemic gaps embedded in Revolutionary War narratives and the colonization process. In Act



One, Joan glimpses the feather, its potential for repair, but does not pick it up; Annie refuses any kind of self-repair, repair for her family, or the people who already reside in New Brunswick, the Mi'gmaq and Maliseet First Nations. Pollock layers these acts of refusal to show the ruptures, the missed chances for repair, and emphatically demonstrates how a refusal to engage in recognition of another person, place, or object undermines any kind of reparation. To drive home her point, Pollock provides a visual image of an act of refusal – a colonial act. After the verbal exchange between Joan and Annie, George Roberts “gets out a neatly folded English flag” (11), while Eddie, Joan’s cross-dressing soldier-“son” helps George, her father, “guid[e] a white birchbark pole into place so the English flag may be attached and flown . . .”(11). Neatly and smoothly, the potential for engagement in a new place and life, the possibility to repair from the war, is lost as the English flag unfolds.

Thus Pollock’s script is not just a re-visioning of a played-out historical event (if historical events are ever played out); instead, *Fair Liberty’s Call* shows us a different way of performing reading for those who *listen* closely: *Listening is telling* in Pollock’s play. *Fair Liberty’s Call* has a new resonance today due to its emphasis on the potential of reparative practice, if it is taken up, recognized, and engaged with. Pollock shows how listening, auditory-recognition, and acoustic exchange can occur or be missed within systemic gaps or hierarchal relationships, as George demonstrates with his statement of belief: “you can’t have people without you have some kind of relationship between people, some kind of rankin’, some kind of value put on their contribution and placement” (63). Joan, however, acknowledges the feather, the potential for engagement in a new place, but she, too, refuses to listen, to begin an acoustic exchange between the “red woman” and herself, or to discover how the found object, the feather, may speak to her.

If listening is telling, then sound becomes central rather than peripheral in *Fair Liberty’s Call*. Sound is no longer marginalized; it becomes the performing aesthetic or a new way of reading the performed gaps between the authoritative and internal voices in a systemic discourse. According to Salomé Voegelin, “we cannot see to make sense

but hear to understand, contingently, the meaning of [our] place" (133). She adds that the meaning of place, the value of our distinctions between relationships, whether between people, land, or history, depends upon *how* we hear and how we *listen* to who speaks to us and through what sounds. A reparative practice identifies, as Alexander Stein suggests, the parts of us that will not or cannot speak with words (61): "we are all that we have ever heard" (83). Stein's article explores how the "sound environment of earliest life plays a profound formative role in psychological development [to] assert inimitable ongoing influences throughout the life cycle" (59). I refer to this article because Stein's case studies show how sound affects relationships, past and present, while making precise distinctions between the definitions of hearing and listening (63). Following Peter H. Knapp, Stein defines *listening* as a "more developmentally advanced and usually conscious attempt to apprehend acoustically" (63); *hearing*, the more technical mode occurs as the "reception of stimuli over auditory pathways" (63). Listening requires an involvement of all senses with a specific concentration on audition. It is, therefore, a learned practice, which differs from modes of hearing. Pollock's play pivots on the acuity of the listening performed by the audience and performers. Hildegard Westerkamp, a soundscape composer and lecturer on listening, environmental sound, and acoustic ecology, writes that the strongest memory of her experience of crossing the Rajasthan Desert on a camel occurred through listening (19, 133), not watching. Westerkamp's example shows that although we may be displaced to a different time and place, where listening becomes more of a means of survival than a pleasure, we do not truly know how to listen or how we listen to a place or person, unless we move beyond the mode of *hearing* to the practice of listening.

Pollock makes a similar connection about listening beyond hearing in order to *unknow* or displace the visual. In Act One, after the distorting sound of a fading anthem, *God Save the King* (10), and the audience hears the "*sounds of a horrific battle: gunfire and cannon; men yelling encouragement and despair mixed with the cries of the wounded and the thunder and screams of horses*" (10), a silence follows. The three

Roberts women step into the “dappled light” of a “glade in a stand of hardwood trees with sunlight filtering through the leaves” (10); their voices intermingle to repeat in a “taped montage . . . the following words” (10): “you want to know where / where / where to put your eye / eye/ eye so you can hear the / heart / beat” (10). The chanted montage of words displaces the fixity and authority of the visual, the easy positioning of knowing through looking; instead, Pollock poses a question about “wanting to know where” to “put your eye so you can hear” (10), not only in the exterior sound of the body, but the interior beat of the body’s heart (10). The opening of the play and the lyrical chant speak of a different need for recognition. Here, Pollock suggests a shift in practice to emphasize auditory-recognition rather than the intricacies and dilemmas often posed by relying on visual recognition between peoples: listening is telling.

In 1784, New Brunswick was a “country comin’ into bein’” (10) for the British Parliament; however, then, as now, for the indigenous people, the Mi’gmaq and Maliseet First Nations, New Brunswick was already a country, a place called home. How did their *gi’g* (home) sound before it was named New Brunswick? How did the Mi’gmaq and Maliseet listen, and what sounds did they lose after the Dutch, French, British, and Americans arrived? What sounds did they listen for? What sounds disappeared from 1784 to the present? And then, as now, who listened?

According to Mela Sarkar and Mali A’n Metallic, in the spring of 1784, when the American Loyalists began to appear on the St. John’s River keen to leave behind the despairs and losses of the American Revolution, the Mi’gmaq people, “forced to first inhabit land and communities with settlements by the Acadian French and English Colonists, co-existed with Euro-descended Canadians in such intimate quarters that their language, Mi’gmaq was already at risk” (53).<sup>2</sup> I raise the concern of the threatened Mi’gmaq language because Pollock’s play suggests some basic reading and listening of indigenous languages before a performative understanding of *Fair Liberty’s Call*’s structure and scripting can occur. Sarkar and Metallic’s article

demonstrates two important points which relate indirectly to a reading of the play and performing of the script: all Mi'gmaq nouns fall into one of a two-category system, animate or inanimate (60); and the third person is gender-neutral in Mi'gmaq (67).

Although these two points are linguistic facts, when juxtaposed or read alongside *FLC*, the reading of the script becomes ironic. The scripted performers listen to the living to hear the dead while the script circles between the living and the dead and determines who is willing to die for whom, and in what kind of exchange. Secondly, Eddie Roberts performs as a gender-neutral catalyst, a third person, between the living and the dead; a girl-boy soldier who “talk[s] like a Rebel” (39) about exchange, and who raises freedom of rights as the Committee of Fifty-Five Families decides who will be given land and who will not. Throughout the script, the balance between the animate and inanimate circulates as the family members and soldiers, including Eddie, recount their tales of the battlefield in a ritualized re-memory of the missing and the dead. Joan recounts the memory of her son Edward’s suicide upon his return home from fighting in the Cherry Valley (14). She remembers “first the noise, and after the noise, the sound of the gun as it fell to the floor. A small kind of noise, not like the other, and then . . . no noise at all. I stood there . . . holdin’ my breath, not breathin’ and knowin’” (14–15).

However, it is Emily, Joan’s youngest daughter, who picks up her brother’s gun to re-animate him, and in so doing, slips between genders to perform as Eddie. I refer to Emily as Eddie or s/he because when Eddie takes up her dead brother’s soldier-vocation, s/he does not have a fixed identity, but enacts historical disguise by living in between genders: she lives as a man, as Eddie, taking her dead brother Edward’s name and donning his army jacket after he commits suicide, but she remains Emily – Eddie is a performance. Eddie performs as an ex-Captain for one of the most well-known Loyalist units, the Tarleton’s English Legion, which is known for Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton’s brutality at Waxhaws against the Americans. Eddie challenges the empty Loyalist promises of land for the colonial-born

soldier, and this criticism of the Loyalists' renegeing on agreements over land rights results in accusations against her by Majors Williams and Anderson. These accusations depict Eddie as a traitor for betraying the Loyalists with "seditious and scandalous libel" (23). However, Eddie recognizes the doubleness involved in these kinds of language games because of her relationship with Wullie, a former scout with the Tarleton Legion, who resides in Birchtown, a Loyalist community of free blacks. Wullie's freedom is hampered by a shortage of food rations which, as he says, means there is "most often, nothin' left" (48) after the "molasses and meal, and that give out after White rations" (48). Although Wullie cannot read and hence requires Eddie's assistance, he is forced to sign "indentured service" (59) documents. The irony of this situation, wherein the white soldiers' struggles over land claims and title by those in power belies the serious basic rights issues blacks and indigenous populations confront over needs like food, along with the fight for their land claims and title.

Pollock, ever the provocateur, writes about the ironic stance taken by the Loyalist soldiers who fight for land rights on land that does not rightfully belong to them. Pollock's stage directions show how this irony occurs through sound with the reoccurring dry rattles, faint birdcalls, and ghostly moans in between the soldiers' escalating arguments and the Roberts family's memory threads. Although often read as "background noise," the frequent sound-traces evoke a presence, symbolically, perhaps, of those First Nations' voices unheard and unrecognized by Loyalists within a 1785 New Brunswick. Eddie's gendered "disguise" allows her to read and listen between the lines, whether Loyalist or Rebel, and hence to challenge the authoritative version circulated in her family, the army, the Committee of Fifty-Five, and the land in which s/he now resides. Eddie exposes the double rhetoric circulated by the soldiers and her father because s/he listens, as Mikhail Bakhtin might suggest, to the "internal persuasiveness that is denied all privilege" (342). Bakhtin, in his writing on the construction of ideological consciousness – how we become scripted and perform our scripting – shows how, unless auditory-recognition is practised,

the interrelationship between the authoritative and internal version becomes inseparable, and how listening practices become thwarted. He writes,

It happens more frequently that an individual's becoming, an ideological process, is characterized precisely by a sharp gap between these two categories: in one, the authoritative word (religious, political, moral; the word of a father, of adults and of teachers, etc.) that does not know internal persuasiveness, in the other internally persuasive word that is denied all privilege, backed up by no authority at all, and is frequently not even acknowledged in society (not by public opinion, nor by scholarly norms, nor by criticism), not even in the legal code. The struggle and dialogic interrelationship of these categories of ideological discourse are what usually determine the history of an individual ideological consciousness. (342)

Ideological consciousness (the "scriptedness" of our accounts, memories, and speech) develops due to a refusal of the "internal persuasiveness" (342) usually denied all privilege, authority, or recognition by family members, friends, or in a larger context, society. The refusal of the internal voice, our own sounds, manifests as scripted, performative responses until we no longer know our own voice or our own sounds.

Eddie retains a sound of her own, similar to Bakhtin's concept of "internal persuasiveness" (342), as does Wullie, which is why Eddie and Wullie work together against Loyalist interests *even as Loyalists*. Both Eddie and Willie perform reparative practice as listening, auditory-recognition, and acoustic exchange because they are attuned to their own internal sounds. Eddie's and Wullie's unscripting of the Loyalist project creates discomfort among those such as the Committee of Fifty-five who support the Loyalist script because they may benefit from its spoils. The rupture in the script, at least for Eddie, occurs when s/he realizes the double play of the colonial game, and she

states, “I served as a soldier, Loyalist soldier, colonial born, bloodied my hands and my arms, waded in gore, in the name of a King who condoned his enemies’ namin’ me traitor. What does that tell you?” (18). When Eddie performs this speech, “*addressing a crowd*” (18), there is no clear response to her words. However, the “*sound of [a] dry rattle*” (19) occurs at the end of Eddie’s speech, a possible acknowledgement from an as yet unrecognized presence.

Later, Eddie confronts Major Anderson to ask, “is dissent sedition?” (70), while Anderson plays roulette in a calculated attempt at revenge against the Loyalists in the glade; however, Anderson also plays roulette in order to assuage the pain he feels for his lost child-soldier brother (70). Pollock’s ironic gesture surfaces again with the Major’s willingness to sacrifice anyone, even those who are innocent of his brother’s death, and yet persists in the blind refusal to listen and examine why one person may be, wrongly, valued more than another. After all, Major Anderson’s anger toward Eddie stems from his investment in “patronage and preferment” (70) wherein he has opportunity to devalue those who do not fit into his preferred hierarchy of relationships; Anderson admonishes Eddie’s lack of reverence for authority, stating, “you got no respect for position or placement!” (62). Again, Eddie listens, and so recognizes the unsound rhetoric of conflict scripted into the Majors’ words. How perplexing then, the doubleness of Major Anderson’s comment to Annie, Joan’s eldest daughter, about her recognition of a tune sung by Loyalists that may be a “Rebel ditty” (36). Major Anderson responds to Annie by stating, “I’d say it depends on your angle of observation, ma’am” (36). However, as this essay shows, recognition also depends on the characters’ angle of listening.

Listening in *Fair Liberty’s Call* pivots between historical and place memory threads. Angles of listening require attentive acoustic exchanges between the small group of people gathered in a clearing to perform a remembrance ceremony for the dead, those lost in the American Revolution. The gathering consists of the remaining members of the Roberts family, the Majors Williams and Anderson, and ex-Corporal Wilson. However, in the periphery, beyond the woodland

glade wherein Joan and Annie Roberts prepare and cook food, a variety of sound-traces reoccur. These sound-traces are interspersed between pieces of dialogue and frequently occur whenever one member of the group alludes to a broken promise, a missing or lost person, or an act of oppression. Although members of the group frequently notice the sound-traces, they rarely investigate the source of the sound, or note the repetitive, looping qualities, almost as though the sound-traces signalled some kind of warning.

As Joan and Annie prepare food for the ceremony, Joan recalls through various memory threads the circumstances surrounding the deaths of her two sons. While she speaks, she hears a “*faint bird call followed by a dry rattle*” (18) at random intervals. After the bird call, Joan begins discussion of an unknown burial mound: “up in the woods where I saw the red woman, there are bones. [. . .] Disarranged” (18). As Joan recounts her discovery of a First Nations’ burial mound, she states, “they aren’t our Dead” (18). Pollock situates Joan’s monologue between two sound descriptions in the script: “*gunfire and voices and voices resonate and fade as Joan speaks*” (18); and “*a faint bird call followed by a dry rattle*” (18). The sound-traces evoke a signal and a warning or a possible intervention between gunfire and the memory of the dead. Joan speaks about her memory of the burial mound or grave to no one in particular, for who is listening? She recounts that,

when you stand there, you feel your feet restin’ on top of the soil. You could slip. You could fall. Empty eye sockets catch your eye tellin’ you somethin’. Your feet carry you back to the house but they leave no trace of your passing . . . This isn’t home. They aren’t our dead. The red woman stands in the glade of trees, and she watches. (18)

The past and the present collide with Joan’s recollection of the disassembled dead; her possible slip or fall into the grave with the already dead registers the absence of the unrecognized people who perform behind the scene, in the wood, the glade, and who lie buried at her feet.



Joan's resistance and refusal to recognize the dead as her own is a sign of her arrogant cultural blindness; there is "no trace of [her] passing" (18) because there is no auditory-recognition or acoustic exchange. Joan seemingly speaks to no one, yet sees the frequent reappearance of the "red woman" in the woods (18) in various temporalities. Joan first notices the red woman in the past tense "watchin' with a babe on her back. I saw her carryin' it like that, like – packed in moss, like – like nothin' I know" (11). Joan also refers to a presence near the burial mounds "up in the woods where I saw the red woman, there are bones" (18). Later, near the end of the play, Joan refers to the red woman in the present tense: "I see the red woman with the babe on her back step out of the glade of trees" (73). The temporal shifts, or shifts in tense, indicate Joan's developing practice and sense of auditory-recognition through acoustic exchange. At first, Joan's silence shows a refusal to even witness the red woman's presence, and this act of refusal denies the red woman and her baby their identity; it is a refusal to acknowledge presence. Joan buries the dead once again at the burial mound due to her refusal to once again acknowledge or recognize who lies "disarranged" (18). Instead of seeking to repair the disinterred body and disrupted burial ground, Joan slips away, leaving the unknown dead man laid-out, bare, out of the earth, visible, but not recognized, spoken of, or heard.

Cultural theorist Joseph Roach discusses the "diseases of American memory" (273) and notes disease reappearing over time in continual conflict between the visual and the embodied. The disturbed First Nations' burial ground, or the possible depiction thereof, shows not only a disrespect for the dead but also a betrayal and silencing of the living to whom the dead belong. Roach concludes that in such "*lieux de mémoire* [. . .] whiteness and rights reappear as interdependent domains, the self-dramatizing defenders of their contingent frontiers can never allow themselves to forget the obvious: they must always keep alive the specter of the others in opposition to whom they reinvent themselves" (273). Early in the play, Joan situates the red woman as spectral; however, once she engages in attentive, active listening practices, her "angle

of observation" (36) also shifts and the red woman loses her spectral quality and becomes human after all. In *Fair Liberty's Call*, Pollock re-invents the usual "specter of the others" – kept alive by the Americans in their struggle for the past in the present – "your feet carry you back to the house but they leave no trace of your passin" (18); instead, the Americans, the soldiers, and the Roberts family begin to, as Roach might put it, "surrender their version of the past and lose control over the totality of the future" (273–74).

However, Pollock dismantles the "theatre of war" by disrupting the planned ceremony and showing Wullie and Eddie packing up the souvenirs and trophies: "*Wullie and Eddie begin clearing the space during the dialogue; they will take down the war and Rememberin' paraphernalia*" (71). Further, as Wullie and Eddie perform the erasure of the ritualized glorification of war, as the ceremony was intended, Eddie destroys Wullie's "indenture papers" (72). The last gestures in the play offer strategies for reinvention and peace against a persistent re-memorialization caused by a continuous re-enlisting in war. Instead, in the last moments of the final act, Pollock emphasizes the relationship between listening as reparative practice to generate auditory-recognition and acoustic exchange: Joan whispers directly to George, "I can hear you" (72). Meanwhile Eddie/Emily and Wullie laugh together as they stand side by side by "*the birchbark pole with their rum*" (73), celebrating their refusal to return to the army. Each performer listens in recognition and exchange with each other.

The final scenes trace the poetics of repair in and through the performance of the land, in what British performance scholar Mike Pearson might claim to be an agent of reconstitution (28). The land, not just the people, perform intersubjective connection through acts of listening:

JOAN: I feel my feet pressin' flat 'gainst the surface of the soil now. I kneel readin' the contours of the skull and listenin' to the words spoke by the man with the missin' jawbone. The caps of my knees make a small indentation in the

dirt. I see the red woman with the babe on her back step out from under the glade of trees. She holds out a bowl. She offers a bowl full of dirt. (73)

Joan's last piece of dialogue indicates the palpable and sensory shift from visual-recognition to auditory-recognition. Joan's body language shifts from a descriptive, visual mechanics into an acoustic sensorium relying on touch and listening. Joan's feet and knees meld into the surface of the soil to show the interrelationship between sound, body, and land, wherein indentations and impressions become a kind of listening-speaking, or an acoustic exchange between the trace and the body, the earth and the senses. As Joan *listens* to the "words spoke by the man with the missin' jawbone" (73), she "see[s] the red woman with the babe on her back" (73). The interrelationship between listening and seeing, or auditory-recognition, cannot be mistaken. Through auditory-recognition, Joan sees differently. Joan does not render the child as a foreign object dehumanized through her speech: the red woman's baby is no longer an "it" (18); likewise the red woman is now human, someone to listen to rather than to merely speak of or name, a person offering precious sustenance (73). The red woman is no longer a spectral threat. Instead, she offers sustenance they both can share: "Eat, she says. Swallow. And I do" (73). Thus listening as reparative practice fosters coexistence through sustenance and shared experience as a gathering together, a collaborative experience. However, surveillance remains: the hearing practices invested in theories of paranoia and fear within cultural discourses do not easily fade away. Theorizing as reparative practice interferes with and exposes the surveillant narratives we still grapple with today.

## NOTES

- 1 To begin to trace the multiple circuits of reparative reading, see Ellis Hanson, "The Future's Eve: Reparative Reading after Sedgwick," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 110.1 (2011): 101–19.
- 2 Mela Sarkar and Mali A'n Metallic examine how Mi'gmaq, an Algonkian language of North Eastern North America, is one of nearly fifty surviving indigenous languages in Canada usually not considered to be viable into the next century. "Only the Inuktitut, Cree, and Ojibwe currently have enough younger speakers to provide a critical mass for long-term survival" (49). See also Bonita Lawrence's "Gender, Race, and the Regulation of Native Identity in Canada and the U.S: An Overview," *Hypatia* (2003): 3–31.

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