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The Intertextual Condition: *Vancouver Poems* and the Development of Daphne Marlatt's Archival Poetics

Jason Wiens

In a 1979 interview with George Bowering, Daphne Marlatt describes her process of composing her 1972 book *Vancouver Poems* as

> [n]ot a horizontal movement so much as a vertical movement. It's as if I was drilling, like thru the present, & the immediate present was the people that I knew; down from that into a larger collective present, which was the streets, the city, things I was seeing on the streets, like the English Bay poem; down deeper into, quote, history, the fire & so on; deeper still, prehistory, which was before the written records that we keep, native Indian. ("Given" 72)

Marlatt articulates here an archival poetics of investigation, reading and writing Vancouver as palimpsestic strata. Her figuring of the archive includes both the "written records that we keep" — "we" presumably meaning settler-colonial culture writ large — and the "prehistory" that Marlatt aligns with the "native Indian." *Vancouver Poems* attempts to represent these different strata of an urban archive simultaneously through an emerging paratactic syntax that would increasingly come to mark her signature poetic form. An engagement with the archive has been a recurring concern in her writing since at least the 1970s, with *Vancouver Poems* the earliest and clearest evidence of this orientation. *Vancouver Poems* has been somewhat neglected in Marlatt criticism, often acknowledged briefly as a transitional work, as Barbara Godard does in her seminal 1985 essay "'Body I': Daphne Marlatt's Feminist Poetics," referring to *Vancouver Poems* as "the next phase in the evolution of a feminist poetic voice involv[ing] a move from resistance to exploration to 'telling it as i will'" (487). Other texts by Marlatt that directly engage with the archive and archivization, all of which have received more critical attention, include *Steveston* (1974), several ver-

sions of which developed out of an oral history of a West Coast Japanese Canadian fishing community; *Ana Historic* (1988), which imagines the story of a Mrs. Richards who settled in what would become Vancouver in the late nineteenth century; and *Salvage* (1991), in which Marlatt returns to her earlier writings to make more visible a latent feminist politics or, in her words, to "go back and read my way through those earlier texts for the hidden dynamic that's operating" ("'When'" 182). Although her texts engage and revise the archive as early as 1965, when Marlatt began composing *Frames of a Story*, at least partly in dialogue with the Hans Christian Anderson fairy tale "The Snow Queen," in *Vancouver Poems* we see the emergence of an archival poetics: a poetics that not only draws from the archival strata of empire and ethnography (as these poems certainly do) but also *enacts* the process of archival investigation through a recursive poetics at the level of syntax.

I consider the relationship of *Vancouver Poems* with the archive from multiple vectors. First, I read the poems through the textual residue of their own making as evidenced in the archive, alongside a critical response from one of Marlatt's friends and fellow writers at the draft stage. Second, I juxtapose poems from the 1972 Coach House publication with other published iterations, with particular focus on *Liquidities: Vancouver Poems Then and Now* (2013), reading their differences as consistent with a tactic of salvage and revision that has always been a crucial part of Marlatt's practice. Third, I read the engagement of *Vancouver Poems* with archival materials, focusing on Marlatt's citation of colonial ethnography as a mediation of Indigenous histories and presence. And fourth, I consider the extent to which Marlatt's recursive and paratactic syntax is itself an enactment of a syntactic structure of the archive. My approach here follows Jerome McGann's insistence in *The Textual Condition* that to study texts and textualities is to study "complex (and open-ended) histories of textual change and variance" (9). I also approach Marlatt's writing as exemplary of McGann's observation that "The object of the poetical text is to thicken the medium as much as possible — literally, to put the resources of the medium on full display, to exhibit the processes of self-reflection and self-generation which texts set in motion, which they *are*" (14).

When I arranged to look at drafts of *Vancouver Poems* in Marlatt's papers housed at Library and Archives Canada (LAC), I had hoped and expected to find typescripts with extensive holograph revisions,

something similar to the drafts of *Steveston* reproduced in the special Marlatt issue of *Line*. I was interested in the possible contradictions evinced by a rigorous revision with a proprioceptive poetics enacting, as Charles Olson puts it, "the data of depth sensibility / the 'body' of us as object which spontaneously or of its own order produces experience of . . . 'depth'" ("Proprioception" 182). A number of critics have noted the relationship of Marlatt's writing with Olson's notion of proprioception (Reed; Ribkoff; Wah), while others have aligned her work with phenomenology, especially that of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Barbour; Davey, *From*). As Pauline Butling observes, in her writing Marlatt "diminish[es] the cognitive function of the 'I' through immersion in an expanded field of sensory awareness" (94). Marlatt herself has suggested a connection between phenomenology and the archival impulse to reconstruct or recover "what is lost in the living, layers and layers of memory that are now simply recalled by outline, by the repeated telling of an event that the body's complex sensoria once experienced fully in all the emotional and mental reverberations of a moment's impact" ("Of Mini-Ships" 24). However, the drafts related to *Vancouver Poems* in Marlatt's papers housed at LAC are all close to fair copy and not heavily revised; in her interview with Bowering, Marlatt notes that *Vancouver Poems* actually began as drafts of *Frames of a Story* ("Given" 71). The genetic critical approach that I had hoped for, which would have juxtaposed drafts of the poems at various stages of composition, was largely frustrated by the limited materials that I was able to find, if only because I was looking in the wrong place. However, my subsequent examinations of drafts related to *Frames* in the Marlatt papers did not, to my eyes, reveal any text apparently embryonic of *Vancouver Poems*, nor does *Frames* seem to be as stylistically cognate with *Vancouver Poems* as *Steveston*, for instance.

The archival materials related to *Vancouver Poems* at LAC are still illuminating. Of particular interest are written responses to *Vancouver Poems* at the draft stage, specifically a typescript letter from "Gladys" (i.e., Gladys Hindmarch) and unsigned holograph notes titled "Daphne" that, after some queries by e-mail, I learned were also from Hindmarch. The archival substrate thus records not only the poems in process but also a particular response to them. In e-mail correspondence with me, Hindmarch admitted having no recollection of "writing the notes or letter at all" (and Marlatt having no recollection of receiving either), though Hindmarch speculated that they might have been written in

the early 1970s, after she had left Madison, Wisconsin, in 1970 and where Marlatt remained until 1971. In any case, the written responses interest me as evidence of a particular "interpretive community" reading Marlatt's work, one both of *Tish* and not of *Tish*, one that responded to *Vancouver Poems* with a familiarity not only with the city that they evoke but also with the poetic strategies and stances that Marlatt embraced to do so.

> Dear Daphne,
> I sense I cant get at what I take in and miss in yr Vancouver poems without writing a letter so here it is: I think this work has SIZE both in a geographical and a historical sense and since you've worked at that history there are many references which you know and I dont — Olson, Pound too, no criticism, simple fact; I think this work has emotional depths which occasionally you move away from through fear, you're afraid of balancing on the edge, of remaining stranded, out there, so you come back, hands in pocket. (Hindmarch, Letter 1)

Hindmarch refers to writers whose work she claims Marlatt knows but she does not — she names Olson and Pound — and then a few paragraphs later alludes to Jack Spicer's notion of dictation and quotes Spicer as saying that "The good poem is the one that scares the poet," demonstrating a familiarity with the poets anthologized in the *New American Poetry* and with Spicer's lectures delivered in Vancouver in 1965 (which Hindmarch attended).[1]

Hindmarch begins her discussion of "what I take in and miss in yr Vancouver poems" with reference to a poem that did not make it into the published *Vancouver Poems*, which she refers to as "The insect-drowze-I-know-only-what-I-can-touch-of-you poem." In the Marlatt fonds is a draft of this poem with the opening line/title[2] "Insect drowze surround" crossed out and "Sunset" handwritten instead, and it appears, since all the other drafts in this folder made it into the finished book, that this one was removed at a relatively late stage. Here is the middle section of the typescript draft of the poem:

> I know only
> what I can touch of you. Split off from the creek, driven,
> deeper in tangle, Rocks in sun create moss, bed down
> for us . . . You were large. Larger. Sun (The white, o

> sudden cool your buttock moons I pull down, Amaze
> this riven thing I am
> Sun. shining thru the cornea,
> green water I plunge into. Thrash into it, two
> wilful branches in the crashing rocks the wet
> rains. down. (Marlatt, "Sunset")

Hindmarch comments in her letter on what she both likes and dislikes about the poem:

> The buttocks-moon image is sudden, there, has depths more than touching (and the green, white, cloud, moon, water lock together). But the "riven thing I am" is descriptive, loses strength, steps back from that edge you went out or down to, whereas "stranded" is not simply descriptive, it creates a pull. In the next lines the branches stand out, I see you two as large trees not connecting (but in the same elements).

Despite her suggestion earlier in the letter that Hindmarch does not know Olson's work, her assessments here are made in projectivist terms, invoking Olson's admonition in "Projective Verse" that "The descriptive functions generally have to be watched, every second, in projective verse, because of their easiness, and thus their drain on the energy which composition by field allows into a poem" (151).

I asked Marlatt in an e-mail exchange about this poem, forwarding her a pdf of the typescript, and she responded "No wonder I didn't include that poem in the VP series — it's too personal for the series. Besides there was enough forest imagery in other poems." "Sunset"/"Insect drowze surround" is definitely "too personal" in contrast to the rest of the series of *Vancouver Poems*; it is also more explicitly erotic than the rest of them and lacks their layerings of perception and history. In her letter, Hindmarch similarly contrasts "Insect drowze surround" with the other poems in the series, suggesting that "Maybe I can come closer if I mention a poem where there is no fear of how you (personal) feel (it's all personal but with immigrants and old men you are freer): the fishy public library slimy old man one." The poem that Hindmarch refers to is "Slimey," of which she says, "I sense this is right on. The birds mean what they cry. You ~~cry~~ too. All the cups, soup, fish, steps are present (not a telling about which is what I mean by descriptive)." The inclusion of "Insect drowze surround" in the archives in both draft form and Hindmarch's letter throws the rest of the sequence into

relief through juxtaposition with what is excluded: the poem could be read as demonstrating an excessively "personal" poetics whose exclusion from the sequence suggests an orientation of *Vancouver Poems* toward a public rather than private stance. It is also less demonstrative of what I am terming here an "archival poetics."

I have located five iterations of "Slimey" — one published in *Tish* 39 (1967), a typescript version with holograph annotations found in the Marlatt fonds (and which has "original in *Tish*" written on it), one published in *Vancouver Poems*, and one published in *Liquidities*; there is also an extant audiotext version of Marlatt reading from the typescript at Sir George Williams University in 1970, available on SpokenWeb.[3] The variations within the earlier iterations of this textual plurality are mainly limited to alterations to periods and commas in the second line — "public library steps. the. Gulls. Mean what they" — a substantive variant considering the importance of comma and period in Marlatt's long line. The variants between *Vancouver Poems* and the much later *Liquidities* are both more numerous and more substantive. Here is the opening stanzagraph of "Slimey" in *Vancouver Poems*, followed by the equivalent in *Liquidities*:

Slimey,

mackerel seasky (eyes down). Limed,
public library steps. the. Gulls. Mean what they
cry. Old men. How many step to a dead fish smell.
How would *you* like a tail in the eye, scales , a
little bit rhumey but other wise. Off the point
they go fishing, Under latches of the bridge,
rusty, rattling their rods. Tide. Swirls down
deep there. Noon rains in the street a white lunch. (*Vancouver* 11)

Slimey,

mackerel sea-sky (eyes down). Limed
public library steps, the gulls. Mean what they
cry. Time, time. How many stoop to a dead fish?
How would you like a tail in the eye, scales, a
little bit rheumy but other/wise . . . Off the point
they go fishing. Under the latches of the bridge,

> rusty, rattling their rods. Tide. Swirls down
> deep there. Noon reigns in the street, a White Lunch. (*Liquidities* 14)

The substantive variants between these two versions include the replacement of "Old men" with "Time, time"; the shift from "How many step to a dead fish smell" to "How many stoop to a dead fish?"; the removal of the emphasis on "*you*" in the later version; the change of "rains" to "reigns" in the closing line of the stanzagraph; and the capitalization of "White Lunch" in the later version, making explicit the reference to a small chain of diners in Vancouver. Identifying variants and assigning meaning to them are different tasks, of course. Here I would suggest that the shift from "white lunch" to "White Lunch" could reflect Marlatt's awareness that, whereas an audience in 1972 might recognize the reference to the diner chain, the same could not be assumed about an audience in 2013. Moreover, the capitalization, as well as the proximity to the punning replacement verb "reigns," could allude to the transformed racial dynamics (and antagonisms) in Vancouver in the intervening forty years.

All of this is to demonstrate that, though my hope of finding heavily revised drafts in the fonds was frustrated, this "poetics of the re-," to use Fred Wah's phrase (see Marlatt, *Liquidities*, back cover), was already at work when Marlatt was completing the 1972 Coach House publication of *Vancouver Poems*, as her process of composition involves a return to and a repurposing of the extant public record of her writing. Robert Lecker suggests that "In many ways, *Vancouver Poems* serves as the testing ground for [*Steveston*]" (120), while for Godard a poem such as "Miz Estrus" is "a prelude to *Steveston*" (488). Marlatt's continual return to and revisioning of her work throughout her career suggests that any publication remains provisional, a "testing ground" for work to come; as Susan Holbrook notes, "For Marlatt, written texts remain live, subject to revisions, expansions, and recontextualizations" (1). Brenda Carr goes so far as to suggest that we read Marlatt's entire oeuvre as a long poem constituted by revisionary returns and rewritings: "Marlatt writes with that subversive Penelopean double gesture of unweaving her relationship to the long poem tradition that she is writing out of, and weaving a new relationship to the emerging feminist long poem countertradition. In her revision, she continually reopens the poem and extends the project" (90).

The Gladys Maria Hindmarch fonds, held at Simon Fraser University's Special Collections, contain a letter from Marlatt to Hindmarch dated 14 October 1970 from Brooklyn, Wisconsin, around the same time as Hindmarch composed her critical comments on the *Vancouver Poems* drafts. In her letter, Marlatt relates that she has "typed up 3 more of the V poems for Victor" (Coleman, then senior editor of Coach House, which would publish *Vancouver Poems* two years later); "Am getting all hung up on notes to explain quoted stuff & making comments on, as a way of bringing in newspaper (outside, Other Side) views, views?" She figures her process of citation here as a self-distancing tactic — consistent with the epigraph to *Vancouver Poems*, Arthur Rimbaud's "*car je est un autre*" — which multiplies different perspectives in the poems:

> But I want to get in the Vancouver I can't get in because it's me in the poems, only it's so much bigger than any one method of getting to it, every aspect of the city. Have decided to or thought to intersperse groups of poems with: 1. if I can get it, reproductions of pages of early Sun or Province, say frm 20's or later. 2. quotes frm newspapers, 50's and 60's, interspersed with quotes frm great navigational description of the harbor in B.C. Pilot. 3. collage from streets of oldest part of town (Cordova, Hastings, Granville, Pender etc.) from '51 Directory. The last I like the best & am least sure of the newspaper stuff tho that is so typical of a certain kind of mentality that runs, operates (business, & its vested interests) the city. The contrast with my people in the poems, who are, in various ways, down & out.

Although the inclusion of found materials in her text would be substantially altered from these plans, the citations that Marlatt did incorporate would indeed expand the social heteroglossia of her text, which she gestures toward here.

Her ongoing practice of revision, and the consequent instability of her texts, extend to the contextual field in which Marlatt embeds citations from other sources as well as to those citations themselves. Contrasting her citational deployments within their poetic contexts between 1972 and 2013 reveals how the citations articulate the local in slightly different ways. Throughout *Vancouver Poems*, Marlatt draws citations from texts of settlement, such as Alan Morley's *Vancouver: From Milltown to Metropolis*, or works of colonial ethnography, including

Marius Barbeau's *Totem Poles*, Audrey Hawthorn's *Art of the Kwakiutl Indians*, and Franz Boas's *The Social Organization and the Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl Indians*. Marlatt also draws from a text that could be read as including elements of both of these genres: Pauline Johnson's *Legends of Vancouver*, the only text cited by an Indigenous author and one that transcribes and translates oral Chinook tales for a primarily settler-colonial audience.

"Park, ground" is an interesting poem to consider in relation to Marlatt's practice of citation since it cites from both settler and Indigenous histories of Vancouver, creating productive juxtapositions with both the surrounding context of Marlatt's syntax and with each other. The version of "Park, ground" in *Liquidities* presents some of the more substantive revisions in that collection, expanding a section that addresses CP Rail's extension into the city across "wet ground (Creek waters) since reclaimed" and with the addition of "a blowdown" at the poem's conclusion — what appears to be a reference to the windstorm of 2006 that devastated Stanley Park. Here are the closing sections of "Park, ground," first as they appear in *Vancouver Poems* and then as they appear in *Liquidities*:

lined

hands. Coal brought first, then settled Brickmaker's
Claim, "from Burrard Street (Burrud she said) to Stanley
Park, and from the inlet to English Bay" the English
made . bricks . for stability, mark of mother country
that no time be lost tracks. Wood everywhere in excess
felled like "bowling pins" the CP laid, for tinder.

Not til later heard: alien some one in stone "only
Indian eyes could discern" . her inhospitable presence
fixed by trees . the "Chinook" . trees. (Marlatt, *Vancouver* 22)

drawn

where coal brought them first to settle Brickmaker's
Claim, *from Burrard Street* (Burrud, she said) *to Stanley
Park, and from the inlet to English Bay.* the English
drawn to bricks, pots, stability, mark, of mother
country to be. Established here, no time lost.

> Wood everywhere in excess felled like *bowling pins* . . .
> little coal, no clay.
>
> Not til later heard: alien something in stone, *only*
> *Indian eyes could discern*, its inhospitable presence
> fixed in place by old-growth Chinook trees,
>
> a blowdown. (Marlatt, *Liquidities* 30-31)

In her explanatory notes at the end of the 1972 *Vancouver Poems*, Marlatt describes "Park, ground" as "an immigrant's poem," and the citations here reference two different histories of settlement. The first, a description of the "Brickmaker's Claim" — the land claim made by three migrant brickmakers from England (John Morton, Samuel Brighouse, and William Hailstone) — cites from Morley's *Vancouver*: "Morton filed in the names of all three on what later became District Lot 185 — all of Vancouver's West End, from Burrard Street to Stanley Park, and from the Inlet to English Bay" (27). The second cites from Pauline Johnson's "The Lure in Stanley Park" from *Legends of Vancouver*, which recounts a legend of a rock in Stanley Park that was once an evil "witch-woman" whom the Sagalie Tyee had turned into stone, and of the Cathedral Trees at the head of a trail leading to this rock, trees created through the transformation of "the kindliest, most benevolent men" among the Coast Salish. According to Johnson, "Some few yards beyond the cathedral trees, an overgrown disused trail turns into the dense wilderness to the right. Only Indian eyes could discern that trail" (110). The citations invoke differing and competing histories of the "settlement" of Vancouver and the ghostly residues of both colonial and Indigenous presences. That Johnson's legend comes after the reference to the brickmakers' claim is consistent with Marlatt's trajectory of archival investigation as Marlatt describes it to Bowering, moving from written, colonial history to "prehistory, which was before the written records that we keep, native Indian"("Given" 72). Although both Coast Salish presence and narrative precede British invasion/settlement, that narrative is "Not til later heard," presumably with the publication of *Legends of Vancouver* in 1912. But the context surrounding the citation from Johnson changes from 1972 to 2013: "alien some one in stone" becomes "alien something in stone"; "her inhospitable presence" becomes "its inhospitable presence"; and the scare quotes around "Chinook" are removed as "fixed by trees . the 'Chinook' . trees" becomes "fixed in place by old-growth

Chinook trees." Although the citations here employ the same syntax and, in the citation from Morley, both include the interjection of the oral into the written — "(Burrud, she said)" — in the 2013 version the citations are italicized rather than placed in quotation marks. The effect is to reduce the distinction between cited text and Marlatt's text; the italicized citations seep into Marlatt's syntax rather than remaining contained and surrounded by it.

Heather Milne discusses Marlatt's practice of citation, specifically in *Ana Historic*, which she refers to as "the novel as citation" (88). According to Milne, "Marlatt's use of citation is not empirical, scientific, or scholarly; rather it is associative, subversive, and ironic" (89). Milne contests arguments made by critics such as Frank Davey, who finds in Marlatt's citations a "monologism" (qtd. in Milne 89) that is a "reductive assertion of authorial intent" (Milne 89). Milne argues that Marlatt's intertextual practice of citation is "polysemic" rather than monologic and that "Marlatt's citations break with their originary contexts to generate new and subversive meanings but they never break completely. Through ironic juxtaposition, Marlatt gestures to the political underpinnings of the quotations, which maintain their patriarchal and colonialist assertions against which she writes" (89). I would suggest that we read Marlatt's citations from ethnographic texts in *Vancouver Poems* in a comparable way. That Marlatt chose largely not to remove the citations from the 2013 versions implies that in 1972 she was already deploying the citations in the "ironic" manner that Milne describes. Milne's argument explicitly links Marlatt's use of citation to a queer politics: "The reluctance to recognize the stakes of citationality . . . enables the elision of the lesbian in much of the criticism on *Ana Historic*" (89). We can read the use of citation in *Vancouver Poems* as establishing the ground for its future deployment in advance of a lesbian politics if, as Kate Eichhorn puts it, following Judith Halberstam, we understand queerness not exclusively as an identifier of sexual orientation but as something that refers to "non-normative logics and organizations of community, sexual identity, embodiment, and activity in space and time" (29-30).

That said, I read the politics of citation in *Vancouver Poems* less through the frames of sexuality than through those of class (of the "down and out" whom Marlatt alludes to in her letter to Hindmarch) and the postcolonial. At the end of "Old wood," Marlatt embeds a citation from Barbeau's introduction to *Totem Poles*:

> Young wood carved & painted, will, stand tall mid
> dark the branches weave now, locus abandoned as a
> burnt out house
> to represent, flaunt (taunt[4]) the
> would-be EVENT, whistling in the deep wood
>
> "As it is, they lean precariously, tottering in every
> wind, . . . destined to crash down, one by one," while
>
> sometimes, finally, trees grow up around them (*Vancouver* 28-29)

The wider context of Barbeau's *Totem Poles* from which Marlatt cites reveals that she removed the conjunction *and*, more seamlessly integrating the citation into her own syntax and attenuating the note of closure and finality in the original:

> These carved memorials usually faced the main highways of river or ocean. They stood apart from each other, in front of the owner's house, and dotted the whole length of the village in an irregular line. Changing times forced the removal of most villages to new quarters in the last sixty years, and the poles were forsaken in the abodes of the past. Here and there trees have grown round them, and sometimes it was not easy to find them in the forest. This was particularly true along the Nass and on the Queen Charlotte Islands. As it is, they lean precariously, tottering in every wind, and destined to crash down, one by one. (Barbeau 4)

Whereas Barbeau observes that "Here and there trees have grown round them, and sometimes it was not easy to find them in the forest," Marlatt moves from a perfect passive construction to a present indicative construction: "Sometimes, finally, trees grow up around them." In "Old wood," Marlatt seems to draw an equivalence between the precarity of the totem poles in the West Coast forest and the precarity of settler infrastructure in the face of both fire and capitalist "progress." If the quotation from Barbeau is indeed treated subversively and ironically here, then it might be read as pointing by extension to the precarity of settler culture in unceded territory. But we might also read this as a gesture seeking to Indigenize that settler culture, in which the syntactic integration of Barbeau's text is analogous to the appropriation of Indigenous land.

Marlatt's deployment of citations from colonial ethnographic texts in *Vancouver Poems* could be productively compared with Jordan Abel's similar citational strategy in *The Place of Scraps* (2013). Both Marlatt and Abel cite from Barbeau's *Totem Poles*, and both cite passages that speak to the precarity of the poles in the environment in which they were constructed. But the uses to which a settler poet in 1972 and an Indigenous poet in 2014 put Barbeau's text differ significantly. In *The Place of Scraps*, Abel's technique generally is to apply tactics of erasure to passages from Barbeau in order to reveal the disarticulated voices that haunt the text.[5] Abel seems to draw an equivalence between the practice of carving a sculpture out of wood to reveal, to paraphrase Michelangelo, what is already there and his practice of erasure to reveal latent meanings in colonial texts. We might also read his work as responding to the violent colonial destruction and displacement of Indigenous cultures with a tactic that performs a comparable operation on a colonial master text. If Marlatt's citations from these texts are indeed "associative, subversive, and ironic," where textual authority is undermined through a recontextualization into her poetic text, Abel's method of citation and erasure is even more radical, calling attention to the colonial archives' displacement and mediation of Indigenous presence.

Throughout *Vancouver Poems*, Marlatt employs enjambment, parentheses opened and unclosed, puns, spacing, ellipses, non-sequiturs, slashes, citations, and disregard for/blurring of the distinctions between "title" and "poem" to create the effect not only of a rapid shifting of perspectives but also of a layering, a palimpsest of attentions:

> Free . free the
> dead dreaming, "mercenary", of some
> token. Of their worth, holes . One wet loafer
> equals 2,3 beer, herself bargained for
>
> Gift-giving
> once a pride, a name. livd up to. Unlatched now
> slave
> to hotel parlours & their musty carpet corri-
> doors, their puke tile floor all pale green painted
> whiteman's sickness for (*Vancouver* 20)

Although it is difficult to discern a coherent narrative here, it is just

as difficult *not* to develop some sense of the settler-colonial and gendered context. The juxtaposition of "token," "worth," and "holes," and the reference to "herself bargained for" and "whiteman's sickness for," seem to allude to an exploitation of Indigenous women by settler men through prostitution, compounded by the references to alcohol abuse ("2,3 beer," "hotel parlour," "puke tile floor"). The commodification and exploitation of the Indigenous woman's body in a restricted economy stand in contrast to the general economy and free expenditures of the West Coast potlatch, "Gift-giving / once a pride, a name. livd up to," a cultural practice now "unlatched." Lecker writes of "the difficulty which is inevitably encountered in any attempt to describe the inexhaustible flood of images [that Marlatt] incorporates" (120), a difficulty that Hindmarch repeatedly acknowledges in her notes in response to *Vancouver Poems*. "You move so fast and make connections from image to image that I don't get," Hindmarch writes; "I miss [the] entire poem" ("Daphne"). Butling describes Marlatt's writing as "paratactic rather than syntactic, with words, phrases, or clauses placed one after the other without syntactic connectors" (171-72), and Dennis Cooley observes that "Marlatt's work is about as recursive as any we get" (69). Critical discussions of Marlatt's writing have tended to link these formal elements to gender and sexual politics that would challenge phallocentrism through an *écriture feminine*, as Godard does when she notes Marlatt's "convoluted paratactical sentences that resolutely avoid a dramatic climax" (481) or "a flux of shifting connections articulated through ellipsis and parataxis" (483). In my reading, these are accurate and necessary links made between form and politics, between a phenomenological text and the body writing. I would like to conclude with a suggestion, though, that Marlatt's paratactic and recursive structures also find an analogue in the structure of the archive itself, in archival investigations. As Eichhorn observes, "Despite their alleged purpose, archives are notoriously difficult, disorderly, impenetrable spaces, prone to produce multiple and conflicting narratives" (9). Given the frequency with which critics express a similar difficulty with Marlatt's texts, this description of archives could extend to those texts.

It might seem to be counterintuitive to refer to the archive as structured paratactically. Jacques Derrida, we should recall, argues that "the archontic principle of the archive is also a principle of consignation, that is, of gathering together," and that "*consignation* aims to coordin-

ate a single corpus, in a system or a synchrony in which all the elements articulate the unity of an ideal configuration" (3), a gathering that seems to suggest the subordination of hypotaxis. But an actual archive, as Carolyn Steedman points out in something of a rebuttal to Derrida, "is made from selected and consciously chosen documentation from the past and also from the mad fragmentation that no one intended to preserve and that just ended up there. . . . But as stuff, it just sits there until it is read, and used, and narrativised" (68). Although in theory the structure of an archive might resemble hypotactic subordination, in practice archival work more closely resembles paratactic association. Value is not self-evident but must be constructed by a historically situated subject. Eichhorn references the "scrap heap" — that is, the archive — of preceding feminist movements and communities: "[F]eminism's scrap heap is both a site of abjection — that which must be expelled but which we cannot live without — and simultaneously a playground, a refuge, a scene of innovation, humor, hope, and longing. In every respect, feminism's scrap heap is integral rather than superfluous, vital rather than stagnant" (29). In her essay "Salvaging: The Subversion of Mainstream Culture in Contemporary Feminist Writing," Marlatt similarly writes of the possibilities of salvaging something productive from what might seem to be useless, in this case not feminist archives but mainstream culture: "Salvage: a frontier word with junk associations. What interests me as a feminist writer is the concept embedded in this word of retrieving value from what has been written off. Finding something valuable in trash" (156).

Reading Marlatt's writing as an investigative archival poetics offers a counterargument to numerous critics who have observed what they describe as nostalgia for origins in her writing. For Lola Lemire Tostevin, Marlatt "conveys a nostalgia for a source, an origin" (35), whereas for Cooley "She forever searches for origins, beginnings, sources — always for realities that are prior to language" (72). Davey has explicitly linked this search for origins with a gendered essentialism: "[W]ith their recurrent searches for a lost mother, their metaphorical implication of a lost 'Great Mother,' and intertextual connections with feminist anthropological programs to recover a lost great 'Goddess,' [Marlatt's texts] have strong essentialist implications which . . . do little on their own to assist socially and linguistically based feminisms" (*Canadian* 193). Claims of gender essentialism and binarism are all the

more damaging in a historical moment in which we have increasingly come to recognize the fluidity and multiplicity of gender identities. I have tried to demonstrate here that this recursivity in Marlatt's work is rooted not in an "eternal feminine" but in the archive in multiple senses. Her writing enacts what Derrida famously termed "archive fever":

> It is never to rest, interminably, from searching for the archive right where it slips away. It is to run after the archive, even if there's too much of it, right where something in it anarchives itself. It is to have a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement. (91)

Approaching Marlatt's poetics in relation to the archive rather than the feminine body does not decouple her texts from a feminist or lesbian politics, not if we agree that "the archive, in a myriad of ways, opens up the possibility of being in time and in history differently" (Eichhorn 8). The "essentialism" and "nostalgia for origins" that various critics in the 1980s and 1990s observed in Marlatt's work might point, rather, to its ongoing exploration of an inescapable intertextual condition.

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Notes

[1] Hindmarch recollects in an interview with Terry Ludwar that she first heard Spicer read at UBC in February 1965, what "might have been the best reading I've ever been to in my life" (1). She would later attend the lectures in June 1965, and she shares several further anecdotes about Spicer with Ludwar.

[2] Throughout *Vancouver Poems*, the conventional distinctions between title and first line are confounded/conflated. This speaks to a wider difficulty in citing Marlatt's texts in *Vancouver Poems* and her work as a whole, for spacing between stanzagraphs does not necessarily suggest distinction between them but a more contiguous relationship. Susan Holbrook notes that "From the beginning of [Marlatt's] oeuvre we see an interstanzaic

spacing that is peculiar to this poet, in which the first line of a stanzagraph will begin directly below the endpoint of the last line of the preceding stanzagraph," and that "these interstanzaic breaks forestall linear movement and invite the back-and-forth traffic across space that is born of juxtaposition" (8). My citations from Marlatt's texts in *Vancouver Poems* consequently suffer even more from decontextualization. In this essay, I continue to cite the poems' "titles" as the "first line" of each text.

[3] See https://montreal.spokenweb.ca/sgw-poetry-readings/daphne-marlatt-at-sgwu-1970/. The annotation accompanying the recording mistitles the poem as "Go on." Marlatt reads from what sounds like a fair copy typescript of the version of "Slimey" published in the Coach House edition.

[4] In *Liquidities*, this verb becomes "haunt," and the remaining three lines, including the citation from Barbeau, are removed entirely.

[5] For an excellent discussion of Abel's practice in *The Place of Scraps*, see Karpinski.

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