

## Outsider Within / Inhabitation

*Fran Muir*

### **Cohabitation avec l'Étranger**

*En 1885, Jane Arbuckle arrive d'Écosse à Brandon au Manitoba pour marier un homme qui a acheté une terre indienne d'un gouvernement blanc. C'est alors que commence l'histoire de Jane qui deviendra l'histoire de sa fille, la mère de la narratrice. Traçant une lignée matriarcale à travers des femmes qui sont toujours mentionnées au passage dans le registre familial, la narratrice met l'accent sur l'histoire particulière: la violence conjugale dont Jane est victime, sa pauvreté après sa séparation de son abuseur, et plus tard au cours du siècle, le cancer du sein de sa fille, sa mutilation et le silence prescrit par le monde médical. Cet accent sur les situations difficiles créées par les hommes qu'éprouve une lignée de femmes transforme une histoire familiale en une série de cas exemplaires. L'inscription du corps de la mère comme territoire premier (source d'une ab-originalité romancée) dans le poème se superpose à des fragments de discours sur les conditions historiques de la colonisation des terres des autochtones. Entremêlant les voix d'un premier ministre, d'un leader métis et d'un major blanc, le poème fait le portrait d'une autre histoire à propos de la terre natale et de l'occupation violente. Une phrase comme «Jane arrive au Manitoba à peu près au même moment que la pendaison de Louis Riel» est un rappel des complexités historiques qui produisent une lignée familiale.*

nation

In 1885, Jane Arbuckle  
comes from Scotland via  
Liverpool, on the liner Carthaginian, to  
Montreal and from there to Brandon, Manitoba  
in September of that year, unmarried, her  
three year old son with her, to marry  
his father, who three years before  
has also

common/shared  
(language)  
(history)

come from Scotland and  
purchased Indian  
land from a white  
government, to  
homestead.

inhabiting  
descent  
(inhabiting)  
a particular,

particular = case in point,  
territory /  
province /  
possession

Big Bear, a  
Cree,  
recognized as  
chief of those stubborn Indians who  
refused to sign away their territorial  
rights was plainly informed he must go on to  
his reserve before November 1883, or  
all rations would be withheld.

a case in point being

the f-word

Poundmaker, a  
Cree, who

signed f-f-fear Treaty Six,  
demanded complete control of  
reserve affairs be given to himself and  
Band Councillors. The territory of, white  
government refused and told  
him rations would be withheld  
from anyone on the (language) of,  
reserve who refused to work.  
Representatives of the  
written White Government stated  
the indians in all things  
must conform to the rules  
in/on laid down for their guidance —  
the bands already settled... have  
learned their lesson... ringleaders  
the ...should be arrested at the slightest  
pretext... the Law might have to be  
strained a little...  
in the interests of the Country...  
as well as the indians themselves.<sup>1</sup>  
whole  
body  
A few months after Jane arrives,  
on November 16, 1885, Louis Riel is hanged.  
soulbody in the Gabriel's story comes  
from the tongue in his  
blood line strain mouth, what he sees,  
hears,  
feels, thinks. Not the Official  
family house clan Story, The Record, because it is  
written with the voice, from the  
tribe eye, I-position, in a mother language  
called Michéf; translated into French,  
ascending doubly (*other*). Its passion suspect.

descending spirals of dna\rna

native, I knew every blade of grass,  
 followed their search patrols, the  
 nat-ur-al, gattling only hit one, and it was a  
 horse. The officer was so mad he  
 almost hit the métis who told him. I sent  
 petitions to the government... every minor chief but me,  
 Gabriel Dumont was offered a treaty... we have to  
 pay to cut our own firewood... no people  
 are as strong and as good as the métis.  
 Given a choice between their  
 rights and riches they chose  
 their rights<sup>2</sup>

by birth belonging  
 or-ig-in-  
 al , ab or  
 as-sim-i-la-tion  
 ab or  
 ac-cul-tur-a-tion  
 prim i tive adoption

...finally they ad option  
 wanted Riel back. Someone said  
 he is the only one who can help us  
 now. We need him to draw up petitions,  
 his contacts and abilities, to negotiate, but they tried to  
 scare us when they heard we went and got him to come. They sent  
 word there was a party of police come  
 to take Riel and that got everyone ready to  
 fight to protect their rights. In the  
 man-made, end Riel gave himself up. He said  
 the experience of the English would  
 be satisfied with his  
 head He gave  
 being man-made the mass himself,  
 but he didn't trust the

church, being named said priests only wanted to  
convert the world  
to make money<sup>3</sup>

(other)

natal,

maternal, Canada has an excellent system  
for managing her Indian population,  
of, like, the English Major writes in his journal,  
or, that it has succeeded in protecting far-flung  
enterprising and  
defenseless settlers, that  
from, the Indians themselves were not unaware  
of everything that had been done  
a mother for them  
and of the advantages  
birth/death yet in store... their savage nature  
requires control. Judging them by  
you their own standard doesn't do. They  
are a conquered race narrowed down  
push from their wonted privilege of  
In 1901 of roaming free over the whole  
me country to occupying  
Jane's husband reservations set apart for  
out them, though being liberal  
is brought before in the area are  
the nevertheless a  
Magistrate's Court restraint upon  
charged with door of their freedom.  
assaulting his wife

your other heart the force your other heart the

and sentenced to force If the half-breed  
a fine of uprising were to  
twenty of get out of hand,  
dollars and causing a general uprising  
bound over the of the Indians as well,



your dark child pale mother for leaving her(e). She  
never came back, not even for your  
grandmother's sun funeral, none of them did,  
except the womb of light two sons who stayed, who  
separated them from him, he abused her  
so, you know. The homestead

greening me / her in,  
lost, everything auctioned off, she  
had nothing, stayed into your in that little  
house the sons bought for her,  
completely spaces dependent on  
them. Living in poverty for the rest of  
her days breathing silence,  
silent,  
(i am you)

man-made, the She is not mentioned by  
experience of name in the family story. Her  
being man-made sons are, and he is, breeder of  
being named (*other*) wheat and male children. She is  
mentioned in passing as his wife and  
her daughter named as though never  
heard from, once born.

our heart(s) read(s) Jane's daughter weeps  
tide pool, for her mother never  
butterfly, having had a life. She is  
weeping for herself.

broken wing In 1988 Jane's daughter is eighty-  
image her hospital room to tell her daughter they got  
of a they speak of her mother's irregular heart  
beat under anaesthetic, do not mention

tree                    the rain of small strokes it sends into  
                              her brain, or what that will do to  
 breathing            her memory, her orientation in  
                              time and space. What they say  
 trachea                is no follow up is needed,  
                              leaving the daughter  
 lungs                    believing in their success.

feathered bronchi  
 gathering water around an

overworked heart

In 1994 Jane's daughter is taken  
 into a psychiatric unit  
 to control her aggressive behaviour  
 She is ninety, by the clock.

Dementia releases her into the  
 present past,

linked

fall—opian, opiate, option, utopian did we fall from it? grace?  
 whose?

                             releases her out of silence.  
 what did I            But the system cannot let an *old*  
                              *woman* free herself, take hold of  
 do wrong, you      her own life. They call it  
                              paranoia, hallucinatory, fill her  
 ask                    with anti-anxiety, anti-psychotic  
                              drugs until she is no longer able  
 I must                to walk or sit upright. Her jaw is  
                              rigid, her mouth drooling. Your  
 be                      mother is potentially violent,  
                              they tell her daughter. We need  
 crazy                 her compliant, for her own good,  
                              for the good of the rest.

I want to go home, Jane's daughter says, I don't



belong here.

fighting  
They have discovered aggression is due to the metastasised cancer from  
They remove the drugs, morphine for the pain and her daughter what she would like them to do for her mother. She says think you've done enough.  
In seven weeks Jane's daughter dies for every breath.  
re-creation that her pain of her breast.  
eating ourselves her breast.  
except for feeding on the silence ask  
we dissolve, drowning I

we dissolve, drowning  
in our own fluids, sea creatures  
learning to swim this inner natal sea

your death is  
my death joined  
to you in the  
fear of what is gone I  
feel the weight of what is left  
form without  
spirit familiar man-made, the  
still to sight but not touch experience of being man-made  
absence is presence being named (*other*), our  
the rainbow bleeds heart(s) read(s)  
its colours through the tide pool butterfly  
sky until sky does not know broken wing  
itself are these colours true?  
or not true? spilling and  
drifting into what mind perceives  
*as vermilion cobalt blue indigo*  
*crimson lake permanent yellow*  
*viridian permanent green*  
bleeding stories not yet told  
told each (*other...*)

**Notes**

- 1 J. A. McDonald Papers, Volume 4.
- 2 M. Barkholden, *Gabriel Dumont Speaks*. (Original manuscript of Dumont's dictation now held in Archives of Union Nationale Metis de St. Joseph, Manitoba Provincial Archives. )
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Charles A. Boulton, *I Fought Riel: A Military Memoir*, Heather Robertson, ed. (Toronto: Lorimer, 1985).