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Visual Texts, Textual Visions: Hypertext, Resistance, and Contemporary Asian-Canadian Writing

Visual and textual media have often been analyzed as forms with different elements or constraints. *Laocoön*, a work by eighteenth century German writer, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, for example, compares the limits of poetry and "painting," arguing that different effects are generated by poetry than by "painting"¹ (the latter term is also used by Lessing to describe a visual art such as sculpture). He claims that the textual medium can diffuse the effects that are often sustained in "painting." However, the visual and the textual are not always conceived of in a mutually exclusive way. Ekphrasis or the textual description of the graphic is an example of the interaction of the textual and the visual.² (The description of the shield of Achilles in *The Iliad* and the portrayal of the shield of Aeneas in *The Aeneid*, both of which Lessing analyzes in *Laocoön*, are classic examples.) Contemporary culture is increasingly challenging the separation of textual and visual forms through various technologies and concepts, one of which is hypertext. The concept of hypertext (not the term) was articulated by Vannevar Bush in 1945 in his description of a "memex," an imaginary machine that would organize information in a spatial manner "with a mesh of associative trails" linked to one another (Bush #8). As a computer based phenomenon, hypertext can be described as "an information technology consisting of individual

1 "In poetry, as I have already noted, ugliness of form loses its repulsive effect almost entirely by the change from coexistence to the consecutive. From this point of view it ceases to be ugliness, as it were, and can therefore combine even more intimately with other qualities to produce a new and special effect. In painting, on the other hand, ugliness exerts all its force at one time and hence has an effect almost as strong as in nature itself" (Lessing 128).

2 Peter Wagner indicates that ekphrasis originally meant "a full or vivid description" (12). While the term is most often used in reference to a description of an actual painting or work of art in literature (e.g., W.H. Auden's poem "Musée des Beaux Arts" which describes Brueghel's *Fall of Icarus*), I am using ekphrasis, "the verbal representation of a visual representation" to discuss fictional, textually articulated photographs as well.

blocks of text, or lexias, and the electronic links that join them" (Landon 1). As Janet H. Murray points out hypertext documents may consist of "images, text, charts, tables, videoclips" (55). Computer software such as Storyspace, a hypertext writing environment, enables authors to write hypertext fictions or hyperfictions as well as organize research data. Michael Joyce's *Afternoon, a story* (1990), recognized as the first hypertext fiction or hyperfiction (Koskimaa #3), makes use of the Storyspace program. One of the most widely used hypertext environments is the World Wide Web and its array of visual/textual and auditory media which allow the user to navigate from one document/image or site to another. However, a definition of hypertext is not limited to electronic links or computer software systems alone. Victor Vitanza proposes other ways of viewing hypertext such as "the death of the actual book and the birth of the virtual book" or "that form of writing... which has no sense of a beginning or ending as we commonly experience such conventions in narratives" (Vitanza 184). Hypertext can therefore be understood as a technology and as a technique of resistance to the linearity of the print medium and the traditional Western narrative of the book.

However, instead of polarizing the discussion of hypertext in the context of print media versus electronic technology or textual versus visual culture,³ I view hypertextual elements or techniques as a useful way of analyzing the visual/textual interplay in contemporary narrative fictions of resistance such as those written by Asian-Canadian authors Joy Kogawa, Hiromi Goto, Denise Chong and Paul Yee. As Janet H. Murray indicates in *Hamelet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace* (1997), the fragmentation of story structure and the creation of multiform stories reveal that "print and motion picture stories are pushing past linear formats not out of mere playfulness but in an effort to give expression to the characteristically twentieth-century perception of life as composed of parallel possibilities" (37). While most print based narratives do not conform to the common definition of hypertext fictions either made available on the World Wide Web or as self-contained CD roms, they do illustrate how contemporary writers promote the kind of textual/visual interplay, and non-linear, subversive structures, that are also evident in electronic hypertexts. Authors such as Joy Kogawa, Hiromi Goto, Denise Chong and Paul Yee combine the textual and the visual by incorporating actual photographs or paintings, descriptions of photographs, or various scripts and fonts into their "texts." This layering of visual/textual images

3 *Harper's Magazine* presented a debate between Neil Postman and Camille Paglia on print and visual media. Postman argues that visual culture can be dangerous: "... we have not yet figured out how to build defenses against the seductions of imagery" (192), and favours the printed word. Paglia, on the other hand, praises "ads as an art form" (193) since they shaped the imagination of her generation, but still recognizes the value of the book.

allows these authors to contain or document certain images temporarily while also conveying the resistance of a particular culture. Their narratives consist of the construction of multiple, ambiguous subjects and cultures of resistance that depend on the alliance of the visual and the textual. The texts that I have selected for this analysis are Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* (1981), Hiromi Goto's *Chorus of Mushrooms* (1994), Denise Chong's *The Concubine's Children* (1994), and Paul Yee's *Tales from Gold Mountain* (1989). All four authors challenge uniform constructions of Asian identities as well as established systems of power and knowledge. The resistance to other kinds of hierarchical, inflexible structures or systems of knowledge is an important quality of hypertext.⁴ This technology also operates on the concept of highlighted or visually charged links, and this is how one can conceive of the interaction of visual and textual components in these works; the textual often functions as the visual, or as hypertext critic and hypertext fiction writer Stuart Moulthrop has argued, "the word is an image after all" ("Pillows of Folly" 17). Similarly, the visual can be used to read or reinforce a text. In some of these narratives, ekphrasis, the textual description of a visual image such as a photograph or a painting assists in the creation of a hypertextual effect; in other instances, the inclusion of actual photographs or illustrations facilitate hypertextuality.

Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* relies on multiple textual forms and verbal photographs to question the master narrative of colonial powers, and as a means of representing dispossessed subjects. Resistance is not always immediately apparent in Kogawa's text, since much of the narrative presents the Japanese-Canadians as people who have been silenced, overwritten or "captured" by Canadian authorities. However, Kogawa does present some ironic images of Japanese-Canadians which allow her to critique the practices of the Canadian government and the historical injustice of internment. Kogawa uses a visual form in Chapter one of her text when Naomi describes her Uncle as the subject of a picture postcard:

Uncle could be Chief Sitting Bull squatting here. He has the same prairie-baked skin, the deep brown furrows like dry river beds creasing his cheeks. All he needs is a feather headdress, and he would be perfect for a picture postcard — "Indian Chief from Canadian Prairie" — souvenir of Alberta, made in Japan." (2)

4 While hypertext does offer an alternative to the traditional linear arrangement of the printed text by allowing the reader/user to follow different paths, it is still governed by a process of selection. The author or authors of a hypertextual structure determine the number and kinds of links which can be followed. The reader is still directed in a subtle way.

This portion of the novel interlaces the visual with the textual and establishes alliances between cultures; the colours of the uncle's "prairie baked skin" are combined with the script "Indian Chief from Canadian Prairie" and the accompanying statement or label placed on souvenir products "made in Japan." The superimposition of this script on the uncle, as well as the labelling of her uncle as Sitting Bull may initially be viewed as little more than an act of cultural appropriation; however, the ironic correspondences between native and Japanese actually foreground both cultures as dispossessed people who have been commodified. The well worn phrase "made in Japan" highlights the scripted face of her uncle, who is viewed by the Canadian authorities as a product of Japan, and not a citizen of Canada. Yet the image of resistance, the embodiment of an alternate link or hyperimage/text is present in Naomi's choice of Sitting Bull, a well known historical figure who is invoked to signify a spirit of rebellion that is difficult for Naomi's own silent relatives to articulate.

Another visual form used by Kogawa is the family photograph taken when Naomi's brother, Stephen, was born. It shows Grandpa Nakane posed with his hand like Napoleon's in his vest. The expressionless Japanese faces and their bodies are "pasted over with *Rule Britannia*. There's not a ripple out of place" (18). Naomi says that the picture conveys "its message for the day that all is well" (20); however, this message is quickly undercut by Naomi who argues that "it isn't, of course. Even my eleven-year-olds know that you can't 'capture life's precious moments', as they say in the camera ads" (20). Even though she is perceived as a passive character in many ways, here she resists this reading of the photograph as a sign that all is well and instead draws attention to the oppression of her family. The photograph itself suggests some element of resistance in the form of Aunt Emily, whose eyes show "an expression of concentration and determination" (19). She is the most vocal voice of resistance in the text, since she becomes a political activist. Naomi's mother, a fragile presence, similarly reinforces the lack of stability embedded within the picture: "Her eyes, Obasan told me, were sketched in by the photographer because she was always blinking when pictures were being taken" (19). The photograph, which has often been viewed as a historical document or an "analogical reproduction" (Barthes, "The Photographic Message" 17), is viewed here given the illusion of completeness or stability. It is, in effect, a construction. The essence of Naomi's mother resists containment.⁵ Not surprisingly, there are some parallels that can be drawn between this view of the photograph and hypertextual sites such as those on the World Wide Web;

5 Roland Barthes identifies the paradox of the photograph, a paradox which also applies to Naomi's mother: "Now, in the Photograph, what I posit is not only the absence of the object; it is also, by one and the same movement, on equal terms, the fact that this object has indeed existed and that it has been there where I see it" (Camera Lucida 115).

these sites offer the illusion of stability; however, they can change location if they are moved to a different server, or they can disappear altogether if they are removed by their author.

In addition to the textual descriptions of photographs, which can be seen as a kind of ekphrasis or textual description of the graphic, Kogawa's novel includes other textual forms which are embedded within the larger text. These include letters, documents, short poems, italicized extracts. All of these features can be viewed as hypertextual phenomena which disrupt the linear continuity of the larger text or a single interpretation of history.⁶ While these embedded fragments/forms often reflect the voice of authority, it is interesting to see that they are generally the source of ironic reflections on the part of Naomi and therefore facilitate the disruption of the voice of officialdom.⁷ This is similar to a hypertext system which encourages the user or reader to re-construct a narrative by not merely choosing the default option (e.g., Joyce's *Afernoon, a story*); instead, users are offered alternative storylines. One example of Kogawa's creation of alternative stories involves a "brief official-looking letter from someone signed B. Good to Aunt Emily" (37). The letter is described as a toneless form letter; however, Naomi's reflections constitute a form of cultural resistance to the authority of this text:

The Custodian's reply to Aunt Emily must have been the same to anyone else who dared to write. "Be good, my undesirable, my illegitimate children, be obedient, be servile, above all don't send me any letters of enquiry about your homes, while I stand on guard (over your property) in the true north strong, though you are not free. B. Good." (37)

Naomi sees the irony of the name B. Good. She then proceeds to re-formulate the line from "O Canada," the national anthem.⁸ The original line reads the "true north strong and free," but Naomi has changed it to emphasize the division between the voice of

6 Marilyn Russell Rose indicates that the structure of *Obasan* "is non-linear and achronological, shaped by the consciousness of the narrator as she acts in the present, remembers much from the past, reads (in the present) Emily's documents from the past, and records dreams from both past and present, zig-zagging back and forth through time" (292).

7 The letter reads as follows:

Dear Madam

This will acknowledge your letter of the 31st ultimo.

This will also advise you that as Mrs. T. Kato is a Japanese National living in Japan at the outbreak of war, all property belonging to her in Canada vests in the Custodian.

Yours truly,

B. Good. (37)

8 Linda Hutcheon argues that "the echo here of the national anthem of Canada underlines the bitter irony of Japanese Canadians' experience at the hands of their own government" (*Splitting Images* 62).

authority and the Japanese Canadians who have been repressed and "are not free." This re-reading of a sentence can be compared to hypertext fictions that offer different links or paths, thus enabling the user to reject the concept of a single storyline or truth. As Murray notes in her analysis of Joyce's novel *Afternoon*, the author is "intentionally 'problematizing' our expectations of storytelling, challenging us to construct our own text from the fragments he has provided" (58). Naomi's retelling of the narrative of authority is similar to this kind of hypertextual re-construction.

Another illustration of textual disruption which is reinforced visually is encountered by Naomi as she reads her Aunt Emily's manuscript. As mentioned earlier, Aunt Emily is the spirit of resistance in *Obasan*. Naomi reads her sixty page manuscript called "The Story of the Nisei in Canada: A Struggle for Liberty." She skims the pages of the text until she arrives at "a statement undermined and circled in red: *I am a Canadian*" (39). This highlighted section is comparable to the "hot link" in hypertext which would signal to the user of the technology the presence of a movement in another direction (access to another text, or to an image which may or may not involve a logical connection to the previous link). In a similar fashion, both Naomi and the reader of *Obasan* are encouraged to examine this manuscript of Aunt Emily's which includes multiple reformulations of a line in a poem "This is my own, my native land!" (39).⁹ Each time the line is repeated, a different word is italicized; these lines are interspersed with brief statements that reveal Emily's personal and cultural history. The continuity of Naomi's reading experience is disrupted further by Aunt Emily, another indication of the hypertextual feature of this novel: "Before I could finish more than a few pages of her manuscript she handed me an old scrapbook full of brown and brittle clippings" (41). The scrapbook includes text, which according to Naomi, is underlined, marked and circled. Kogawa's presentation of individual headlines and passages is similar to the use of links in a hypertext environment where the reader is alerted to images or text. These examples of literary "hyper" text invite the reader/narrator Naomi, as well as the actual reader of *Obasan* to construct narratives or truths from an assortment of passages.

A final hypertextual feature of *Obasan* is evident in the two endings in the novel: Chapter 39 and the final segment. The latter consists of a formal declaration by the Co-Operative Committee on Japanese Canadians; this is the public statement of a culture, a statement of resistance. Yet the narrative immediately preceding this section,

appears to be the end of Naomi's narrative. It resonates with a definition of "hypertext" as "beyond text"; Chapter 39 is the declaration of a personal loss that transcends the domain of standard language; yet the textual and the visual still colour this final image of grief: "Father, Mother, my relatives, my ancestors, we have come to the forest tonight, to the place where the colours all meet — red and yellow and blue.... Tonight we read the forest braille. See how our stained fingers have read the seasons, and how our serving hands serve you still" (246). The forest or the book of nature is to be read but not without stained fingers; thus, the textual and the visual are intertwined. This ending is the personal history of blood, which presents an alternative to the typical written history.

Another writer who addresses Japanese experiences in a visually charged fashion is Hiromi Goto. Her novel *Chorus of Mushrooms* was a regional winner of the 1995 Commonwealth Writers Prize for the best first book (Beauregard). Goto was born in Japan in 1966 and immigrated to Canada at the age of three. She represents the voice of a younger generation of Japanese Canadians.¹⁰ *Chorus of Mushrooms* explores the lives of three generations of Japanese Canadian women: Naoe, Keiko and Murasaki or Muriel. Hypertextual elements in Goto's work consist of long italicized portions of text, Japanese terminology, embedded dialogue, a grocery list, a postcard, and newspaper articles. This novel embodies the definition of hypertext as "that form of writing... which has no sense of a beginning or ending as we commonly experience such conventions in narratives" (Vitanza 184). Goto's text includes the reflection, "When does one thing end and another begin? / Can you separate the two?" (213) This is considered to be one of the defining features of hypertext, which allows the reader to move in different directions. In hypertext fiction, much like Jorge Luis Borges' concept of the Garden of Forking Paths, different routes are possible.¹¹ Goto's text acknowledges the fluidity of narrative through the visual use of the italicized line "You know you can change the story" (220). According to George Landow, a leading critic of hypertext theory, hypertext allows for the active participation of the user/viewer within a hypertext environment: "Like much recent work by poststructuralists, such as Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida, hypertext reconceives conventional, long-held assumptions about authors and readers and the texts they write and read" (1). The consumer actually becomes the producer and shapes the text, thereby dissolving its

10 Kogawa was born in Vancouver in 1935.

11 In Borges' story, the concept of "the garden of forking paths" is understood as follows:

"The garden of forking paths" was the chaotic novel; the phrase 'the various futures (not to all)' suggested to me the forking in time, not in space. A broad rereading of the work confirmed the theory. In all fictional works, each time a man is confronted with several alternatives, he chooses one and eliminates the others; in the fiction of Ts'ui Pên, he chooses — simultaneously — all of them. He creates, in this way, diverse futures, diverse times which themselves also proliferate and fork" (434).

9 Kogawa intersperses Emily's reflections with this line:

This is my own, my native land.

Then as I grew older and joined the Nisei group taking a leading part in the struggle for liberty, I waved those lines around like a banner in the wind:

This is my own, my native land. (40)

fixity and authority. Of course, like many hypertexts, Goto's texts includes an element of the finite in the sense that the lexias or strings of text are limited; however, the narrative encourages the role of the reader in creating a fictional world.

The italicized portions of Goto's text present a narrator (who may be an extension of Murasaki, but not necessarily) and a lover. These segments present an alternative world to other segments of the text, because of the comments on the "writing" of a story. Like hypertexts, which often communicate the expression and construction of what we say instead of the substance (Joyce, "New Stories" n.p.), Goto's novel self-consciously examines the process of story writing. The gender of the narrator is unclear; s/he frequently begins each narrative with "*Here's a true story*." However, the reader often questions the veracity of these accounts, because Goto's organization of the novel deliberately questions the notion of a single authority as do certain hypertextual structures. Other segments of text take the reader to a different plane; for example, the conversations between Murasaki and Naoe (granddaughter and grandmother) constitute a dramatic interlude or deviation from another narrative. Japanese words (either in their transliterated form or in the visual script of Japanese characters) are scattered across the narrative to a far greater degree than in Kogawa's text, thus disrupting the reading experience, especially for the reader not familiar with Japanese.

A newspaper article in Goto's book serves as an excellent visual/textual means of undermining limited images of Japanese Canadian culture as well as the idea of a single truth that is arrived at through a linear reading strategy. Goto presents a segment of text which discusses the disappearance of Murasaki's grandmother, Naoe. The inclusion of a newspaper article is reminiscent of Kogawa's use of documents in her text and her subversion of these forms. Like Kogawa, Goto invokes a document traditionally associated with the "truth" while questioning its ability to do so. The article outlining Naoe's disappearance is followed by multiple explanations for this disappearance, which undermine the authority of this journalistic form and echo the different narrative possibilities available in a hypertext fiction:

"What happened to your grandma?"

"She went back to Japan. She got sick of all this snow and dust and up and left. I don't blame her."

"What happened to your grandma?"

"She went ape-shit and was raving, frothing at the mouth and she ran naked from the house screaming like the pagan she is." (88)

Guy Beauregard argues that Goto writes plural identities and multiple names for her characters as a way of resisting "prepackaged oriental images." Like Kogawa, she

contests a single cultural vision; however, Goto's grandmother figure, who becomes a mystery bullrider at the Calgary Stampede, is a far cry from the rather passive grandmothers in *Obasan*.

One particularly creative use of the visual/textual interface occurs during Murasaki's italicized musings which project the thoughts of her grandmother who has disappeared:

The journey begins inside my head. With thoughts and words like my Obasan before me. And when I'm gone, after I'm gone, I'll send postcards now and then, so people won't have to worry. (192)

These thoughts are followed by a postcard. Of course, we are dealing with a work of fiction here; however, an actual postcard or souvenir of Calgary is used along with a 43 cent Canadian stamp and a 1994 postmark. Some of the words describing the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede have been erased. The postcard is addressed to Keiko or K. Tonkatsu, and it is signed by Naoe. This visual form has the effect of ejecting the reader from the comfortable world of fiction into a world where fiction and reality meet. The stamp on a postcard authenticates the narrative/the textual while also questioning the fictional nature of the novel. We only see the back of the postcard, so the picture is actually hidden or withheld from the reader; this is not too different from a hypertextual link which signals the availability of additional information, but does not reveal it unless the link is accessed. In Goto's text, we do not have the option of accessing the image, but presumably like the narratee in the italicized narrative, the reader can imagine his or her own picture, just as readers change stories or make stories through the reading process: "*You know you can change the story*" (220).

Like Kogawa and Goto, Denise Chong incorporates what could be described as hypertextual elements in her work. Chong includes descriptions of photographs (a kind of ekphrasis) as well as actual photographs of her family in her memoir *The Concubine's Children: Portrait of a Family Divided* (1994). While it is tempting to view the narrative as a search for closure, a search for missing family "links" in China and Canada, it is also a story of ambiguities. Here as in Goto's text, the "truth" is often elusive; instead multiple truths in a postmodern sense are acknowledged, for Chong's narrative is comprised not only of her voice, the voice of a single author, but of the recollections of family members:

There are as many different versions of events as there are members of a family. The truth becomes a landscape of many layers in an ever-changing light; the details depend on whose memories illuminate it. I felt strongly that the book should be a "family project." (xi)

This collaborative framework which is the subtext for her memoir can also be an important feature of hypertexts. On the World Wide Web, for example, it is possible to have numerous individuals contribute to a hypertext; for example, a team of scholars can design bibliographies, with each person designing his or her own and then joining their respective sites to form a web of information. The collaborative possibilities of hypertext have also been analyzed in the context of feminist writing. Barbara Page's article "Women Writers and the Restive Text: Feminism, Experimental Writing and Hypertext" includes an interesting comparison between hypertext fiction by women and experimental print works by women writers. She explores how women writing in both media alter the formal structure of the text itself: "...hypertext would seem to provide a means by which to explore new possibilities for writing, notwithstanding an aversion among many women to computer technologies and programs thought to be products of masculinist habits of mind" (par. 1).¹²

Page maintains that the writing of Canadian authors Daphne Marlatt and Betsy Warland, is "in many respects hypertextual in principle and bears relation to discourses of many women writers now working in hypertext" (par. 1). Her analysis of Marlatt and Warland's piece "Reading and Writing Between the Lines" reveals that their refusal to distinguish between two voices is an example of collaboration; it is a move away from the "rigid lineation and lineage of the print text" (par. 13). Page's connection between print fiction and hypertext electronic fiction is a good illustration of how the technological medium can be used to reinforce feminist attitudes and forms of resistance already present in non-electronic media. Denise Chong's memoir reflects some of the tendencies of feminist hypertext since it subverts the traditional notion of memoir as a series of events and memories created by one individual: "I myself was not enough of a living link" (Chong x). Furthermore, it celebrates in a hypertextual fashion, the multiple realities portrayed through textual and photographic images.

Since the reproductions of the photographs in *The Concubine's Children* are all placed together in the centre of the book, they do not simulate the most aesthetically pleasing network of image and text; however, during a public reading at the University of Northern British Columbia, Chong indicated that she would have preferred to see her photographs interspersed throughout the book instead of relegated to one section of the book. This would have allowed her to place the actual photographs near the textual description of the photograph in a more hypertextual fashion. The limitation placed on the author by a publisher is one example of how the printed text is often subject to constraints not placed on hypertextual structures generated by computer technology. The electronic medium generally permits much more flexibility in the

colour, number and size of images than the print medium (unless the individual or publishing company controlling the publication of a hypertext work demands this kind of organization). Yet despite their location, it is still possible to appreciate how Chong's photographs interface with textual descriptions.

While the photographs in *The Concubine's Children* can indeed be perceived as cultural artefacts which present a literal reality or a kind of "analogical reproduction" (Barthes, "The Photographic Message" 17), further consideration of the context of these photographs as well as textual descriptions of photographs indicate that they are ideologically constructed and linked to the politics of deception and misrepresentation. Like the family photograph in *Obasan*, these pictures offer a hypertextual disruption of the authority of a single, official truth. For example, Denise Chong's grandmother, seventeen year old May-ying is brought into Canada by Chan Sam to be his concubine, under the guise of a twenty-four year old woman Chung Gim-ching returning to her native Canada. False papers and a photograph are used to "record May-ying's new identity. The photograph had to conform with the age on the false birth certificate" (9). May-ying therefore alters her appearance to generate an appropriate image for a photograph.¹³ Here the photograph in one sense serves a masculine economy (Chan Sam's desire), but it must also be considered against the Canadian racist and sexist economy which imposed head taxes on Chinese immigrants and forced the Chinese community to live as "a predominantly bachelor society."¹⁴ Thus the photograph and certificate serve as a kind of underground resistance to policies which discriminated against Chinese emigrants.

A textual reference to a photograph not included in the visual reproductions reveals May-ying's own interest in gender shifts and resistance. Even though an actual photograph of this event is not present, this description of a picture demonstrates how one medium informs another in an ekphrastic moment. According to Chong, May-ying added a masculine touch to her wardrobe to add to her "value":

...it was as though she was making the statement that she was taking her rightful place in a man's world; that a woman who made her own living, who didn't depend on a man for support, should be respected. Perhaps more than anything, her masculine dress was a statement that a woman could do as she pleased with her life. As if to prove some

13 In the book, the photograph appears alone without the accompanying document.

14 In his introduction to *Marry-Mouthed Birds: Contemporary Writing by Chinese Canadians*, Bennett Lee points out that due to restrictive legislation in Canada in the form of the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923 which prevented Chinese men from bringing future wives to Canada, "the Chinese community was for many decades a predominantly bachelor society, living in a kind of limbo between two worlds" (1-2).

12 For additional material on how women respond to computer technology, see Ebben and Kramarac, "Women and Information Technologies."

solidarity, she convinced two other women friends to do the same, to wear men's suits and matching caps. They called themselves "The Three Sisters." A photograph of the trio taken at Yucho Chow's stood on May-ying's dresser, alongside those of her three daughters, the three real sisters. (123-24)

Here May-ying's masculinization serves as a feminist resistance to male dominance; paradoxically, she challenges distinct gender boundaries but uses a photograph to solidify her masculine presence.¹⁵ The three women re-create themselves and change their identities to "The Three Sisters" even though they are not related; they convey the paradoxical concept of masculine sisters. The malleable nature of identity is comparable to one of the themes in the hypertext novel *Patchwork Girl* (1995), which uses the visual structure of a quilt to suggest "that identities are patched together" (Koskimaa 1), thus resisting the ideas of seamlessness and stability. Chong's presentation of shifting identities through the ekphrastic device of a photograph, and her use of text combined with reproductions of photographs achieve a similar effect as that of the patchwork quilt structure in Shelley Jackson's hypertext fiction.

Paul Yee's *Tales from Gold Mountain* (1989) along with the accompanying paintings by Simon Ng offer yet another intermedial experience that may be read with the assistance of hypertextual concepts. Critics such as George Landow, Stuart Moulthrop, and David S. Miall have argued that hypertext is as much about the process of reading and interpretation as it is about technological design.¹⁶ However, the largely non-linear or associative reading facilitated by hypertext can also be practiced in relation to an illustrated children's book like Yee's *Tales from Gold Mountain*. This text consists of self-contained stories each of which is accompanied by one of Ng's paintings. In some ways, a narrative and a picture offer the reader the kinds of options available in a

hypertext medium. For example, a web page may provide the user with either a textual display or an icon that permits the user to access certain kinds of information (of course in a non-fictional hypertext, unlike a literary text, it is normally the "same" information; it is only packaged differently). In other instances, there is greater interdependency between the visual and textual: a highlighted word might yield a picture, or a picture may be used to complement text within the same level/space. In Yee and Ng's book an image is found on the left hand side of the page, while the story is on the right. The picture informs the story just as narrative affects the "reading" of the picture.

Each story is presented in the following format: the title of the story appears in a large frame; the following page includes a painting, which is in turn followed by the title and the story. The opening title can be viewed as a hypertextual link which leads the reader to the picture, which in turn leads to the story. The reader can at any point move back and forth between the story and the picture. In fact, specific images within the single picture or words within the story can lead the reader back to the other medium.

One of Yee's stories, "The Revenge of the Iron Chink" presents images of resistance that encourage a hypertextual reading. The title itself suggests the relationship between culture and technology. The painting portrays a Chinese man in the centre, fish in the foreground and a machine in the background. This is an interesting layering effect that also suggests a hypertextual structure. The narrative deals with Chinese workers in the canneries along the "west coast of the New World." Lee Jim is the designated boss of the cannery, but must still follow the orders of a fat little man called "Chimney Head." The tale addresses the displacement of workers by technology; yet it also identifies the spirit of human resistance, even though this is accomplished under the guise of a machine. In Yee's story, a brand new machine called the "Iron Chink" is introduced to the cannery, which "did the work of thirty workers." As Chimney Head has just arranged for the canning of a case of fish for the Queen of England, Lee Jim appears with his bloody bandages and says that he has donated his baby fingers to the Queen: "I think she will find them as sweet as any salmon meat we have canned!" (62). However, once Lee Jim has left on the ship with the other workers, he shows them that his hands are still "as pink and healthy as any man's!" (62). The painting depicts Lee Jim with his bandaged hands and the hidden pinkies; the hidden fingers reappear in the text, and the reader may well want to return to the opening painting to review the image of the hands. Thus the interdependency between the visual and the textual is reinforced. Similarly, the image also provides that which is not directly conveyed through the text; the visual similarity between the "Iron Chink" and the human worker; a hypertextual movement between picture and text solidifies the anthropomorphism of the machine: "The revenge of the Iron Chink."

15 Identifying May-ying's feminist practices is challenging since many of her actions may not be interpreted as feminist. However, reading her actions in light of Shirley Geok-lin Lim's notion of a "multiply colonized subject" (244) may help. Lim refers to her self as such a subject: "I do not see these oppressions as coming from a hegemonic center. Instead, I see a colonial subject as the cultural site for the contradictions inherent in the intersections of multiple conserving circles of authority. These authoritarian domains overlap each other but not sufficiently so as to preserve the illusion of totalization. Ironically, therefore, I experienced those liberatory movements precisely where Confucianism, Catholicism, feudalism and colonialism intersected" (244). May-ying's "liberation" is often evident in her resistance to Chinese male domination and simultaneous opportunism within a Western society.

16 In his article, "The Resistance of Reading: Romantic Hypertexts and Pedagogy," David S. Miall discusses Landow's and Moulthrop's "claims for the hypertext medium" (n.p.). While cautioning against reading literary texts exclusively according to the principles of hypertext structures as articulated by Landow and Moulthrop, he recognizes "the promise of hypertext both as a literary medium and as a vehicle for learning" (n.p.).

The loose bandages promise an unravelling: this is accomplished by the narrative. Of course, as with hypertext in a computer mediated environment, there is no guarantee that the user will access a particular link or return to the previous "page" or image; therefore the experience of the hypertextual is very much in the "hands" of the reader or viewer.

Establishing comparisons between hypertext and literature is one way of recognizing alliances between computer technology and the arts. Too often technological developments are viewed as completely divorced from cultural expression. An examination of visual/textual relations in works by Kogawa, Goto, Chong, and Yee reveals how contemporary Asian-Canadian narratives of resistance lend themselves to interpretations informed by hypertext theory. These narratives interweave the visual and the textual, thus challenging the notion of a single, official, purely linear truth. Joy Kogawa's verbal photographs in *Obasan* and her use of multiple textual forms question a master narrative by foregrounding dispossessed subjects and different images of Japanese-Canadian history. In *Chorus of Mushrooms*, Hiromi Goto disrupts the linear reading of her text by using different typefaces and embedding visually charged elements such as a newspaper article and a postcard. These devices reinforce Goto's interest in empowering her readers and characters with the ability to construct stories. She writes against cultural stereotypes while articulating Japanese-Canadian experiences. Denise Chong's family memoir *The Concubine's Children* includes actual photographs and verbal descriptions of pictures; Chong reveals the difficulty of identifying the photograph with authenticity or a single truth, but still documents Chinese-Canadian family history through her book, which is a collaborative effort. Paul Yee's *Tales from Gold Mountain: Stories of the Chinese in the New World* and the exquisite paintings by Simon Ng which complement the text depict the exploitation experienced by the Chinese in North America, while also expressing resistance to the ruling forces. Yee's stories and Ng's paintings encourage the reader to move between visual and textual in a hypertextual fashion, thus evoking the collaborative possibilities that many critics have identified with hypertextual writing or design. Jay David Bolter argues that "the computer has the capacity to integrate word and image more subtly, to make text itself graphic by representing its structure graphically to the writer and the reader" (226). He supports the view that computer technology can achieve that which is not possible through other media. However, Kogawa, Goto, Chong, and Yee show that the interplay of word and image is also highly effective in non-electronic texts; these authors construct hyper-images which resist totalizing narratives and allow for the expression of Asian-Canadian cultures.

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NOTES, DOCUMENTS and REVIEW ARTICLES

La synesthésie vue de "Voyelles"¹

IRIS YARON

I.

Si "Voyelles" de Rimbaud demeure une énigme, c'est que la figure qui la constitue, la synesthésie, invite le lecteur à associer deux domaines sensoriels, l'auditif au visuel, le son E à la couleur blanche, par exemple. Entièrement fondé sur des synesthésies, "Voyelles" est le poème synesthétique par excellence. La recherche sur la synesthésie est donc indissociable de celle qui se centre sur cet unique poème. Cet article propose une analyse de "Voyelles" mais précédemment fait état de la recherche littéraire sur la synesthésie. Bien que la synesthésie constitue un phénomène exceptionnel, elle a attiré l'attention d'un nombre limité des critiques (contrairement à la métaphore). La synesthésie se décrit par la juxtaposition des deux objets ou plus relevant de systèmes sensoriels distincts, "une odeur en forme de triangle" ou "une odeur jaune," par exemple. De tels énoncés soulèvent la question de savoir s'il serait possible de décrire une expérience relevant du sens olfactif par exemple, dans des termes empruntés au sens visuel. Le fait que nos cinq systèmes sensoriels s'excluent les uns les autres met en doute la question de savoir si la réalisation d'une synesthésie (telle que celles citées ci-dessus) est possible. En effet, la particularité de la figure synesthésique est issue du fait qu'elle défie nos capacités sensorielles.

Avant de discuter de la synesthésie littéraire, nous noterons que ce terme est également employé dans le domaine de la psychologie. Il se réfère à une situation où des hommes combinent des expériences des deux sens ou plus. "Clinical synaesthesia stands for any *involuntary* awareness of a sensation, perception or image of one sense which accompanies (perhaps invariably) the stimulation of a different sense" (O'Malley 1957, 392).

Notre intérêt dans cet article se porte sur la synesthésie littéraire. La synesthésie littéraire a une longue histoire qui remonte à Homère et Démocrite en Grèce. À Rome

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