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Transgenerational Affect and Cultural (Self)Acceptance in Two TransCanadian Short Stories

Belén Martín-Lucas
Universidade de Vigo
bmartin@uvigo.es

This article offers a comparative reading of two transCanadian short stories: Nalo Hopkinson's "A Habit of Waste" (2001) and Shauna Singh Baldwin's "We are not in Pakistan" (2007). Both stories focus on young women who are descendants of migrant parents in North America—Cynthia from the Caribbean in the first, and Kathleen from Pakistan in the second—and aspire to fit into dominant models of postfeminist femininity. Both narratives trace the protagonists' similar change of attitude, from their utter rejection of their gendered racialized bodies, to them finally embracing their cultural hybridity. This process is triggered by the affective relationship—which equally changes from disgust to respect—that each girl develops with an elderly figure that, to them, clearly embodies the minority culture they have repudiated. My analysis foregrounds the shared intersectional politics of these two works with regard to race, gender and class, and their common critique of mainstream postfeminism and hegemonic neoliberalism.

Keywords: Canadian literature; transnationalism; feminism; postfeminism; racialized bodies; affect

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Afecto transgeneracional y (auto)aceptación en términos culturales en dos relatos transcanadienses

Este artículo ofrece un estudio comparado de dos relatos transcanadienses de autoría feminista: "A Habit of Waste" (2001) de Nalo Hopkinson, y "We are not in Pakistan" (2007) de Shauna Singh Baldwin. Ambos relatos están protagonizados por mujeres jóvenes descendientes de inmigrantes en Norteamérica—Cynthia, del Caribe, y Kathleen, de Pakistán, respectivamente—que aspiran a encajar en los modelos dominantes de feminidad

postfeminista. Ambas narrativas trazan un cambio de actitud similar en las protagonistas, que va del rechazo absoluto de sus cuerpos racializados y sexualizados a la aceptación de su hibridismo cultural. Este proceso se desencadena a través de las relaciones afectivas de estas chicas con dos personajes de edad avanzada que para ellas representan la cultura minorizada que repudian, y al igual que su propia percepción de sí mismas, sus afectos también cambian del rechazo al respeto. Mi análisis subrayará las políticas interseccionales en relación al género, raza y clase que sus textos comparten, así como su postura crítica común frente al postfeminismo más popular y el neoliberalismo hegemónico.

Palabras clave: literatura canadiense; transnacionalismo; feminismo; postfeminismo; cuerpos racializados; afectos

The classic study *Woman-Nation-State* by Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias (1989) examined female participation in nationalist processes to reveal women's function as central participants in the ideological reproduction of the collective and as transmitters of its culture. Besides their active participation as educators of younger generations, women's instrumentalization as signifiers of national and/or ethnic difference is of particular concern for the purposes of this article, which addresses the damaging effects on young racialized women of social pressures to fit into contrasting cultural models of femininity through the comparative analysis of two transCanadian short stories: Nalo Hopkinson's "A Habit of Waste" (2001) and Shauna Singh Baldwin's "We are not in Pakistan" (2007). Both stories focus on young women who are descendants of migrant parents in North America—Cynthia from the Caribbean, and Kathleen from Pakistan, respectively—and they both trace the protagonists' similar change of attitude, which shifts from their utter rejection of their gendered racialized bodies (which they see as an undesired inheritance from their ancestors) to them finally embracing their transnational cultural hybridity. Drawing on Sara Ahmed's study of emotions not as psychological states but as social and cultural practices (2004, 9), I will first analyze the affect of shame that fuels desire for assimilation into the postfeminist postscript dominant in North America that both Cynthia and Kathleen share, then address the turn in their affective politics towards appreciation of the (diasporic) community and their participation in it. I will foreground how this process is triggered in both cases by the affective relationship—which equally changes from disgust to respect—each girl develops with an elderly figure that, to them, clearly embodies the minority culture they have repudiated. In agreement with Sara Ahmed's view that "such emotional journeys are bound up with politicisation, in a way that reanimates the relation between the subject and the collective" (2004, 171), I will argue that the intergenerational aspect of these relationships further underlies the thesis in both narratives that political and affective connections need to be established across diverse social groups.

The cultural dilemma that these two characters experience is a common trait in diasporic literature about the so-called second generation, and it has often been conceived of as the tension between *assimilation* and *cultural authenticity*, the two extremes along a wide continuum of potential (and varying) identity formations. In contrast with the allegiance to one specific community that diasporic identity often demands, transnationalism has in recent times been invoked from the feminist ranks as a wider, looser and more enabling concept which escapes the standard opposition between *host* and *diasporic* nationalistic cultures, and one that makes more room for women's multiple alliances across national and cultural borders, positively acknowledging their simultaneous involvement in two or more cultural, political or social groups. I am well aware that the notion of transnationalism has been fully embraced and celebrated by neoliberal capitalism in order to benefit from globalized migrations of laborers, and that it is highly lauded in the rhetoric of current economic globalization. My understanding of transnationalism in the Canadian literary context engages with

current theoretical discussions that examine the cultural productions of Canada in relation to globalization processes, to the internal dynamics of multiculturalism and to indigeneity—see Kamboureli and Miki (2007), Kamboureli and Verduyn (2014). Although the discussion over the term *transCanadian* is ongoing, it is generally agreed that this designation conceives of Canadian citizenship as "'multilayered' rather than exclusive" (Brydon 2007, 9). My study of Hopkinson's and Baldwin's stories here aligns with Libe García Zarranz's definition of transCanadian feminist fiction:

> [T]he designation transCanadian here becomes an assemblage where local, transnational, and diasporic subjectivities and locations are historically entangled. […] [M]y use of the term refers to a number of contemporary feminist and queer writers in Canada whose twenty-first-century work proposes new ways to think about location and subjectivity alongside and beyond national and transnational discourses. As a border concept, transCanadian is thus construed relationally through an inseparable mixture of coalitions, ruptures, entanglements, tensions, and alliances. (2017, 15-16)

Taking a similar stance, I will here employ this notion to argue that Baldwin's and Hopkinson's literary texts propose modes of affiliation across cultural and national borders based on affective ties—performing practices of kinship beyond the biogenetical (Kamboureli 2014, 18)—as part of a feminist politics that considers the complex position of diasporic women to contest intersectional forms of oppression. Far from rejecting or surpassing the concept of diaspora and diasporic identities, my recourse to transnationalism aims at reinforcing the intersections and alliances across diverse cultural communities (which, in no case, are ever homogenous), while avoiding the essentialist dogmas of *authenticity* too often compliant with patriarchal interests.

Nalo Hopkinson's "A Habit of Waste" (2001) is introduced by a few verses from the most famous poem of her father, Slade Hopkinson, entitled "The Madwoman of Papine: Two Cartoons with Captions." The lines refer to the mental colonization of Black Caribbean peoples and their assimilation of colonial values:

> second-hand subsistence of the spirit,
> the habit of waste,
> mayhem committed on the personality,
> everywhere the wrecked or scuttled mind. (Hopkinson 2001, 183)

In the story, Cynthia, the protagonist, is the daughter of two Black Caribbean migrants to Toronto who familiarly address her as Cyn-Cyn, denoting their Caribbean background. But Cynthia has interiorized dominant racist values and feels ashamed of her parents' difference: "I really wished they'd drop the Banana Boat accents. They'd come to Canada five years before I was even *born*, for Christ's sake, and I was now twenty-eight" (188; emphasis in the original). Even more dramatically, and this

is the aspect most developed in the story's plot, she feels self-hatred towards her own Black body, which she describes as "full tarty-looking lips [...] fat thighs, rubbing together with every step, [...] outsize ass, [...] narrow torso that seemed grafted onto a lower body a good three sizes bigger" (183). She feels so uncomfortable with it that she has saved for five years in order to afford "a switch," ordering a new body from the MediPerfiction catalogue, whose standards of beauty clearly do not favor Black racial features: "Arrow-slim 'Cindies' had long, long legs ('*supermodel quality*'). 'Indiras' came with creamy brown skin, falls of straight, dark hair, and curvaceous bodies ('*exotic grace*'). I finally chose one of the 'Dianas,' with their lithe muscles and small, firm breasts ('*boyish beauty*'). They downloaded me into her as soon as I could get the time off work" (184; emphasis in the original).

While "Indiras" are included among the desirable options of commodified beauty within an Orientalist market that capitalizes on their "*exotic grace*," Black female bodies with full hips, lips and busts such as Cynthia's are not—see Hobson (2005). Their exclusion from what is considered *desirable* signifies the negative marking of Black women's bodies in the North American context, a visible reminder of the history of slavery and colonialism (Brand 2001) that reinscribes, in Mar Gallego's words, a traumatic "body-historiography" (2016, 74). As numerous feminist critics have argued—among others, Gallego (2016) and Harris-Perry (2011)—Black women's bodies are currently commodified predominantly in the globalized sex market, in the context of a neoliberal economy with "a powerful mass media that defines and sells images of sexualized black women as one icon of seemingly authentic black culture [where] the sexualized bitch constitutes a modern version of the Jezebel" (Hill Collins 2006, 310).[1]

Having internalized such racist cultural images, Cynthia reiterates similar clichés in her description of her own castoff body, now proudly inhabited also by a woman entering the streetcar. This scene is worth quoting at length, as it clearly conveys the "mayhem committed on the personality" (Hopkinson 2001, 183) by dominant models of beauty that make a Black woman feel ashamed of her appearance: "I studied my former body carefully as it made its way down the center of the streetcar. I hated what she had done to the hair—let it go natural, for Christ's sake, sectioned it off, and coiled black thread tightly around each section, with a puff of hair on the end of each stalk. Man, I hated that back-to-Africa nostalgia shit. She looked like a Dr. Seuss character. There's no excuse for that nappy-headed nonsense" (184-185). Black Cynthia's self-hatred seems therefore an illustrative example of the effects of the ongoing individual and collective racial shaming of Black women—the production of a cultural emotion, to use Sara Ahmed's terminology (2004)—as described by Harris-Perry: "This sense of social rejection and undesirability may express itself in

[1] Hopkinson addresses the commercialization of women's bodies in the sex industry in the scene where Cynthia drives through "the creepy side of Shelbourne" (2001, 189), to be discussed in more detail further on.

experiences of chronic shame, with both psychological and physiological effects. Skin color and hair texture, for example, have both been found to evoke a sense of shame that affects black women's feeling of attractiveness, infects familial relationships, shapes expectations for romantic partnership and economic success, and manifests in disordered eating" (2011, 107).

The new posthuman cyborgian *white* Cynthia, on the other hand, literally *embodies* the defining features of postfeminist culture as identified by Rosalind Gill:[2]

> [T]he notion that femininity is a bodily property; the shift from objectification to subjectification; the emphasis upon self-surveillance, monitoring and discipline; a focus upon individualism, choice and empowerment; the dominance of a makeover paradigm; a resurgence in ideas of natural sexual difference; a marked sexualization of culture; and an emphasis upon consumerism and the commodification of difference. These themes coexist with, and are structured by, stark and continuing inequalities and exclusions that relate to 'race' and ethnicity, age, sexuality and disability as well as gender. (2007, 149)

This is also the ideal femininity pursued in Baldwin's "We are not in Pakistan" (2007) by Kathleen, who reiterates a similar attitude of self-denial and assimilation.

Closer to the culturally approved model of the "Indira" beauty mentioned above, Kathleen presents a more complex ethnic and racial background as the daughter of a mixed race couple: her father is Black Irish and her mother, Safia, is the daughter of a white blonde American marine guard (Grandpa Terry) and a Pakistani Christian woman (Grandma Miriam), who is herself also a descendant of a mixed couple, composed of a Catholic Iranian woman and an Anglo-Indian man: "a mixed breed left behind when the British washed their hands of India and Pakistan" (Baldwin 2007, 154). Despite such a rich and varied ethnic background, Kathleen, like Cynthia, wants to be identified simply as "normal" (143), meaning, in her case, *American*. She thus expresses a wish to live the fantasy of the postracial society that official multiculturalism has fostered and "which the mixed race subjectivities, due to their fluid transracial, transcultural, and transnational quality, can best disturb and reveal as a deception" (Fraile 2012, 78).

Kathleen and her mother have moved to Milwaukee to live with her maternal grandparents after Safia's divorce, which has left them in a precarious economic position. After Kathleen's first day in her new school, Grandma Miriam says to her: "Coming towards me just now, you looked like a little girl in Pakistan. Did anyone ask where you got the lovely shape of your eyes, your silky black hair?" (Baldwin 2007, 146), to which Kathleen curtly responds: "Yeah. I told them my

[2] *Postfeminism* is a highly controversial term that has been used to refer to antagonistic views on feminism. In this article I use it, following Gill (2007), McRobbie (2009), Negra (2009) and Tasker and Negra (2007), in reference to the neoliberal cooptation of feminist discourses on choice to the benefit and perdurance of patriarchal capitalist values.

dad is Black Irish" (146). Kathleen thus attempts to enact the postfeminist mantra of *choice*, in this case with regards to her own racial designation, in a neoliberal consumerist context "where racial difference has been conveniently packaged and contained, interracial sex seems to be socially acceptable, and its product, the mixed race person, clearly promoted. Far from a threat to society, racial difference emerges as a profitable commodity to be consumed" (Fraile 2012, 95). Still, this form of *subtle* racism does not replace more explicit ones, and not all racial differences are equally celebrated, as mentioned above in reference to Cynthia's body: Kathleen absolutely refuses to be associated with her Grandma's country of birth, Pakistan, because "[p]eople at school will think she's Muslim" (Baldwin 2007, 144). Being marked as *Muslim* in the Islamophobic post-9/11 context of mid-West America means, undoubtedly, being ostracized, as happens to the Muslim girl "with dark eyes and a nose like her own" (146) that is left alone in the school cafeteria because she wears a hijab, an ostentatious symbol of Muslim women's oppression to postfeminist eyes.[3] This girl and Cynthia's castoff body in Hopkinson's story serve as doubles that embody the visibly distinct diasporic identity that the protagonists have discarded in order to fit into the *normal*.

The *normal* for Cynthia and Kathleen is the model for young women dominant in postfeminist media culture, one based on personal beautification and consumerism where race, like every other identity label, is seen "as a matter of style, as a choice" (Lury 2011, 119); though, as Lury ponders, "[t]he question arises: is this a choice that is equally available to all?" (119). Both Cynthia and Kathleen have fully *bought* this ideology, to use an apt capitalistic expression. But as Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra have pointed out: "Postfeminism is defined by class, age, and racial exclusions; it is youth-obsessed and white and middle-class by default" (2007, back cover). Neither Cynthia nor Kathleen have full access to this postfeminist model of femininity due to their ethnic, racial and class status. Jess Butler correctly points out that "rather than simply an exclusion of racial and sexual others, postfeminism primarily represents an *affirmation* of a white heterosexual subject" (2013, 49; emphasis in the original) and that "racialized women also enact postfeminism" (48), as the characters in these stories are indeed striving to do.

In Hopkinson's story, achieving whiteness is possible, but only for an economic elite; and it is expensive emotionally as well as in monetary terms. Cynthia needs to save for five years to pay for the desired "switch" and is extremely anxious about keeping her new body fit and young to avoid further body replacements: "I wondered if I should start saving for another switch. It's really a rich people's thing. I couldn't afford to keep doing it every few years, like some kind of vid queen. Shit" (Hopkinson

[3] The ongoing debate over the metonymic use of veiling as a symbol of women's oppression in Islamic culture is too complex to be succinctly summarized here. For a feminist critique of such interested reductionism see Abu-Lughod (2013), Ahmed (2011) and Delphy ([2008] 2015). I will return to this issue in my discussion of feminist imperialism below.

2001, 188). While this comment clearly alludes to the costly trend of postfeminist self-fashioning aesthetic surgery—what McRobbie has called the "rigid repertoire of self styling" (2009, 70)—its class and racial aspects need to be highlighted. The intersection of racism, sexism and classism in Cynthia's mental colonization is made most evident in the way she despises the woman now occupying her old body, whom she assumes cannot afford anything better: "here was someone wearing my old castoff. She must have been in a bad accident: too bad for the body to be salvaged. If she couldn't afford cloning, the doctors would have just downloaded her brain into a donated discard. Mine, for instance. Poor thing, I thought" (Hopkinson 2001, 184). Her class anxiety also emerges in relation to the poor "customers" (notice the neoliberal capitalist idiom she employs) of the food bank where she works. Among them, Old Man Morris, a Black Caribbean migrant, reminds her too much of her own background, which she is attempting to keep invisible through her new white body. Her conversation with this man is the final test of her success at assimilation: "'You is from Trinidad?' He asked delightedly. 'Is true Trini people come in all colours, but with that accent, I really take you for a Canadian, born and bred'" (191), which of course makes Cynthia very proud. At this point Old Man Morris's light comment when Cynthia discloses that she has switched her Black body for a white one hints at the postfeminist ideology of consumerism that makes of Cynthia a fashion victim in very real terms: "Lord, the things you young people does do for fashion, eh?" (192).

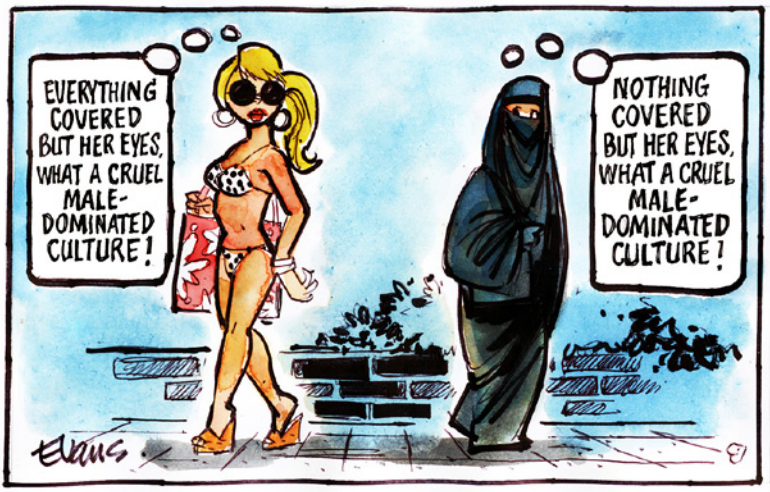
In the case of Kathleen, her precarious economic situation is made explicit in the first paragraphs of the story: "If it wasn't for Grandma Miriam and Grandpa Terry, she and Mom would have been living under some bridge" (Baldwin 2007, 141). This constitutes a major obstacle for Kathleen's full incorporation into teenaged *normalcy*, which defines identity and belonging via one's commodities, or the lack thereof, much to Kathleen's regret: "No laptop. No cellphone. Every kid gets a laptop and a cell phone except Kathleen" (142). Her economic precariousness, as in the previous case, is linked with her ethnicity, since her mother cannot access the better paid jobs in the air company she works for because after the 9/11 attacks "Pakistani-born employees need not apply to be crew members" (154). Safia needs to do overtime hours to barely subsist. Blind to the racism she reproduces, Kathleen blames her Pakistani grandmother for this situation, starting with her parents' divorce, even though it is clearly her father's new relationship with a white woman that caused the rupture. Further, it is *his* failure to send monthly payments which keeps Kathleen in this impoverished economic situation: "Dad hasn't sent a check this month and there's no just-in-case plan. Grandma's fault—she never liked him. If she had been nicer to him, maybe Dad and his lily-pale orangutan-haired girlfriend wouldn't be off on a cruise through the Panama Canal" (152).

Kathleen's choice of clothes denotes explicitly the struggle between cultures to signify her body as either *properly* American or *properly* Pakistani: "Grandma's fault. Tankinis, tanks-tops and spaghetti straps were not allowed. Nor were bare

midriffs. Hipster jeans were forbidden. And no Nikes, absolutely no Nikes" (144),[4] a prohibition that she transgresses by "wearing a Britney Spears tank top and shorts" (150);[5] her rebellion seems to consist in showing "more leg than Grandma can handle" (161).

As hinted at above in relation to Kathleen's ostracized Muslim school peer, the contest over the quantity of flesh a woman may show in public is of course a prominent metonym for the cultural wars of our post-9/11 era, reflected in Malcolm Evans's famous 2011 cartoon on the bikini versus burka theme (Figure 1):[6]

FIGURE 1: Bikini vs. Burka © Malcolm Evans 2011



This is an important aspect that emerges in both short stories. In Baldwin's, the discourse of "imperialist feminism"—the mission of rescuing brown women from barbarous brown men, as theorized by Gayatri Spivak (1988, 297) and recurrently employed by transnational feminist critics like, among others, Lila Abu-Lughod (2013, 33) or Leila Ahmed (2011, 222)—is renewed at full force in the justification for the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq. It becomes a major point of confrontation between Kathleen's parents, probably fuelling their divorce, and widens the ideological distance between Kathleen and her grandmother.

[4] The reason offered by Grandma for forbidding Nikes is that this company abuses children in sweatshops, to which Kathleen responds that children also make carpets in Pakistan. While she criticizes child labor in Asia, Kathleen considers it absolutely normal for minors to work in underpaid "Burger flipper" jobs in the US and is herself desperate to get hired (149).

[5] The reference to such an iconic figure of postfeminism—discussed by Tasker and Negra (2007) and Butler (2013)—is symbolic of Kathleen's cultural models.

[6] Image reproduced here courtesy of the artist.

In her refusal to be identified as a Pakistani girl, in conversation with her grandmother Kathleen invokes the image of women in burqas that were ever present in the Western media in those days (and which return to our screens at convenient times):

> "I don't look like a girl in Pakistan," says Kathleen. "All of them wear those black things."
>
> "Burkhas? On TV you mean? CNN loves showing women in burkhas. But I didn't see many burkhas in Lahore when I was growing up [...] We were so cosmopolitan then, darling. It's so different now because of the fundies in the rural areas [...] So parochial they are—you know, just like Americans who haven't travelled." (Baldwin 2007, 146)

On the one hand, Kathleen reproduces here the postfeminist premise that the exhibition of the sexually objectified female body is not only liberatory but also empowering, a premise that appears to contrast with Pakistani women's alleged lack of agency that her description of them presupposes. This is a recurrent strategy of self-deception that Western women have been resorting to since colonial times, as Chandra T. Mohanty exposed in her influential essay "Under Western Eyes" (1984). As Wendy Brown has pointed out, "the contrast between the nearly compulsory baring of skin by American teenage girls and compulsory veiling in a few Islamic societies is drawn routinely as absolute lack of choice, indeed tyranny 'over there' and absolute freedom of choice (representatively redoubled by near nakedness) 'over here'" (2006, 189). This discourse is critically echoed in Baldwin's reference to a speech made by Donald Rumsfeld in relation to the Iraq war at Arlington cemetery "about the triumph of Freedom over Tyranny" (Baldwin 2007, 151). Sara Ahmed's incisive comment that "[h]appiness as a form of duty is written in the language of freedom" (2010, 217) may be applied here to reveal the postfeminist indictment on women to be content in "choosing" the forms of their own oppression.

On the other hand, the parallelism established by Kathleen's grandmother between Afghan fundamentalists and "Americans who haven't travelled" further emphasizes the continuities in "male dominated cultures" exposed in Evans's cartoon. It also serves well as a warning of the real risks for women in the current postfeminist context and its conservative backlash (Faludi 2006; Negra 2009) as regards how easily the rights of women are revoked, not only under the tyrannical regimes of religious fundamentalisms (including Christian ones) but also under the contingent economic crises of neoliberal capitalism that have dismantled the social services that help women lead dignified lives.

While for Kathleen the exposure of her thin and only slightly tanned body—"probably Hispanic," a teacher guesses (Baldwin 2007, 144)—brings her closer to social acceptance in America by linking her to the commodified exotic beauty valued in globalized markets mentioned earlier (Butler 2013, 50), Cynthia's shame at her "fat" Black body incites her to hide it as much as possible (until she gets a new white and thin one), as she reveals while criticizing the woman now using it: "She has a lot of nerve too, wrapping that

behind in a flower-print sarong miniskirt. Sort of like making your ass into a billboard. When it was my body, I always covered its butt in long skirts or loose pants. Her skirt was so short that I could see the edges of the bike shorts peeking out below it. Well, it's one way to deal with the chafing" (Hopkinson 2001, 184-185).

Cynthia polices her body, both the original and the expensive new white one, closely inspecting its reflection in the mirror in ways that clearly show her internalization of the heterosexual male gaze theorized by Laura Mulvey in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975): "Home at last, I stripped off and headed straight for the mirror. The boyish body was still slim, thighs still thin, tiny-perfect apple breasts still perky. I presented my behind to the mirror. A little flabby perhaps? I wasn't sure" (Hopkinson 2001, 185). The woman now using her old discarded body, on the contrary, inhabits it in a confident and proud way that makes Cynthia jealous: "Far from looking graceless, her high, round bottom twitched confidently with each step, giving her a proud sexiness that I had never had [...] Had my old skin always had that glow to it? Such firm, strong arms..." (184-185; ellipsis in the original).[7] Cynthia's anxiety at the public appraisal of her body confirms the tyranny of the spectacle of the female body as a measure of a woman's "liberation" and "empowerment," as commented by Gill in her description of postfeminism, quoted above, and its "emphasis upon self-surveillance, monitoring and discipline" (2007, 149). As a Black woman, she felt inadequate and lacked the confidence to experience such "empowerment"; with her white body, far from feeling freer, Cynthia is even more stressed by the need to maintain her new body's "figure" (Hopkinson 2001, 201) and rejects her mother's homemade cocoa, which evidently stands for her mother's Caribbean culture: "I didn't let my mom serve it to me anymore when I visited. I'd spent too much money on my tight little bum" (195).

Cynthia's and Kathleen's severance from their "mother" culture (literally that of their respective mothers) does not bring them to a happier state, but, on the contrary, to constant bitterness and anger. Thus, Cynthia apologizes for her cranky mood to her work colleague admitting that "I know I've been bitchy. I've been really down, you know? No real reason. *I just don't feel like myself*" (188; my emphasis), while Kathleen constantly feels a glacier in her body, "a massive ice block at the base of her tummy" (Baldwin 2007, 142) which "clenches and expands" (145) every time she confronts her grandmother and "she can't remember how it feels not to be angry" (154). Assimilation into mainstream postfeminist culture does not fulfill for either of these two young women in multicultural societies the "promise of happiness" in retribution for their transcendence of ethnicity (Ahmed 2010, 122), and therefore they clearly present what Ahmed has described as the "anxious narrative of self-doubt" and the "narrative of rage" (2010, 42) engendered by such disappointment.

I agree with Jess Butler that it is necessary to consider "how nonwhite and/or nonheterosexual women adopt, internalize, negotiate, and challenge hegemonic

[7] On racial pride and racial shame as two interrelated political emotions see Harris-Perry (2011, 103).

postfeminist conceptions of race, gender, and sexuality" (Butler 2013, 49) from an intersectional approach. Postfeminist ideology works against intergenerational and cross-cultural alliances among diverse groups (McRobbie 2009, 24) by effectively reinstating models of individualist femininity and, "just as it does for white women, postfeminism requires its nonwhite participants to reject political activism in favor of capitalist consumption and cultural visibility" (Butler 2013, 50).

In both stories, the elderly characters—Old Man Morris and Grandma Miriam, respectively—function as mentors and teachers of values that contrast with the consumerist fever of the young women. "A Habit of Waste," as its title suggests, sharply critiques neoliberal capitalism and its policies of redundancy and the discarding of commodities and people. In his influential essay "Necropolitics," Achille Mbembe defines sovereignty as "the capacity to define who matters and who does not, who is disposable and who is not" (2003, 17). Hopkinson reveals the necropolitics of transnational capitalism operating on the "disposable bodies" of the unemployed migrant (Old Man Morris), of the fat Black woman (Cynthia) and of the poor (the food bank customers and homeless people in the park) who are "wasted" and discarded in the neoliberal economy. In opposition to this logic, Morris defends the idea that "[y]ou have to learn to make use of what you have" (2001, 199). Cynthia's meeting with this elderly man the evening before Thanksgiving is epiphanic. Very reluctant to deliver his rations from the food bank to his home because of class prejudices, her car journey to "the creepy side of Sherbourne" (189) is a cruise through the "wastelands" of Toronto: strip clubs, corners of prostitution, derelict tenement row houses, garbage and decay, all of which disgust Cynthia and contrast with the allegedly "happy" suburban life she now enjoys.

Once at Morris's home, Cynthia is surprised not only by its cleanliness—which demonstrates her class, age, race and gender stereotyping of the old man as unable to keep home on his own—but most significantly by the nice smells coming from his kitchen: "Whatever Mr. Morris was cooking, he couldn't have done it on food bank rations" (193). Leaving on one side the canned food she is delivering, Cynthia is astounded by the banquet Morris is willing to share with her: "He loaded the table with plate after plate of food: roasted chicken with a giblet stuffing, rich, creamy gravy, tossed salad with exotic greens; huge mounds of mashed potatoes, some kind of fruit preserve [...] I was so busy trying to figure out if he could have turned food bank rations into this feast, that *I forgot all about calories and daily allowable grams of fat; I just ate*" (193-194; my emphasis).

In her prejudiced neoliberal mind, Cynthia distrusts Morris, suspecting he is "working for cash so that he could still claim welfare" (194) and is shocked to discover that the food she is eating is actually grown in the neighborhood, and that Morris has hunted the meat and collected the vegetables himself: the salad is flowering kale, ornamental cabbage thrown away from the pots at the door of the symbolic location of the Dominion Bank office, seasoned with herbs he grows on the windowsill and accompanying not chicken, but wild rabbit hunted with a slingshot in the ravine (194). Overcoming her fears of contamination and pollution from eating unprocessed,

uninspected food, Cynthia has to admit that Morris in fact looks younger and healthier than any man his age she knows (he is seventy-four). Morris has resorted to the principle of making use of what you have from two main inspirations: his memories of childhood in the Caribbean, where despite the economic poverty around him there was always something to eat because they grew their own vegetables, and thoughts of the indigenous inhabitants of the land and how "they must be did eat something else besides corn before the white people come and take over the place!" (198). That is, diasporic and indigenous knowledges provide him with strategies for survival in a necropolitical system of social expulsions that he details as follows:

> Me and my Rita, we work hard when we come to this country, and we manage to buy this little apartment, but when the last depression hit we, I get lay off at the car plant. After that, I couldn't find no work again; I was already past fifty years old, nobody would hire me [...] My one little pension wasn't goin' to support me. I put on me coat, and went outside, headin' for the train tracks to throw myself down, oui? (197)

This is a common narrative of despair and exclusion of the destitute that high finance capitalism—the force that ultimately determines the allotment of labor—produces. His reference to "the last depression" hints at the cyclical nature of economic crisis and its effects: unemployment, debt, eviction, poverty, suicide.[8] It is at his lowest moment that Morris sees an elderly poor woman feeding the pigeons in the park and smiling to them, and this vision makes him realize that the promise of happiness may perhaps reside in looking at life from a different ideological perspective. He then educates himself in the public library (thus defending common knowledge over privatized) to find out which edible plants he might find "right here in this city, growing wild by the roadside" (198) and how to cook them. Through this example, Hopkinson defends a self-sustaining economy that takes from the immediate environment what is absolutely necessary for survival, instead of depleting and commercializing natural resources in a global market; Morris's way of life truly enacts the "act local, think global" slogan that has been proposed as an effective strategy against the abusive consumerism of contemporary capitalism. Morris thus feeds Cynthia in a physical, emotional and political way (that is, in an affective way), providing food that has, like her, been grown in Canada, though cooked in a Caribbean style that she also identifies with her childhood home. In a telling reversal of positions, Cynthia has changed from being the provider of canned food to carrying home containers of the meal provided by Morris, as she comes to acknowledge: "I come to rescue you with my food bank freeze-dried turkey dinner, and you end up rescuing me instead!" (200-201).

[8] As Saskia Sassen (2014), among many others, has explained, crisis is consubstantial to capitalism; therefore, it is cyclically and intently provoked. Suicide induced by neoliberal measures is a form of austericide that continues to rise in many parts of the globe.

The scene closing the story presents Cynthia's reunion with her parents for Thanksgiving, a symbolic date for Cynthia to restore the damaged ties with them; when her mother complains "[y]ou know she won't eat no gravy; she mindin' she figure!" Cynthia conciliatorily responds "It's okay, Mom; it's Thanksgiving, and I'm going to eat everything you put on my plate. If I get too fat, I'm just going to have start walking to work. You've got to work with what you've got, after all" (201). She thus not only reproduces Morris's lesson but agrees to "ingest" her parents' Caribbean culture.

Kathleen's grandmother shows a similar political awareness of her responsibility as a consumer. First, she boycotts Nike shoes because, as commented above, "Nike has sweatshops" (Baldwin 2007, 144). Besides, she also defends state regulation of commerce to guarantee good conditions for laborers—"'Socialism,' said Kathleen, just to make her [grandmother] mad. 'Regulation for the better,' said Grandma" (145)—which is anathema for advocates of neoliberal free markets and globalized corporate culture. Even worse, in the context of the so-called "war on terror" Grandma Miriam dares to foreground the social work that fundamentalist groups had carried out in Pakistan as the main reason for their achieving popular support in the face of the abandonment of the poor by pro-capitalist politicians: "What if you didn't have the mosques? Would Musharraff or any other president give the homeless welfare? And who would take care of war refugees, orphans? At least the fundies give them food" (147).

As happens in Hopkinson's story, food also takes on a symbolic cultural value here, one denoting class status and allegiance to a given culture. Like Cynthia, Kathleen initially rejects the food her grandmother cooks, "things with funny names like alloo cholas and eggplant bhartha, all served over an endless supply of cumin-scented rice" (149) which she associates with "the Third World." In her efforts to be considered American, she must eat what all her teenage peers eat, that is, American fast food: "Kathleen is desperate for hamburger, pizza or a single mouthful of Uncle Ben's. She skips class a couple of times to walk over to the nearest McDonalds" (149). So what triggers the announced change in Kathleen's case? It is the mysterious disappearance of her grandmother, which makes Kathleen realize how much she really misses her and how ignorant and superficial she has been in not paying attention to the warnings of her mother and grandmother about the political situation.[9] For the arguments between her parents over "the CIA's funding the Taliban ('didn't' said Dad, 'did' said Mom), whether General Musharraff was President Bush's puppet ('is,' said Mom, 'is not,' said Dad), whether the US ought to act unilaterally or wait for the UN ('shouldn't,' said Mom, 'should' said Dad) [a]nd the final brawl about whether there ever were any weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and did that suspicion justify killing thousands of Iraqi civilians" (143), Kathleen had simply blamed her grandmother's Pakistani origin, with no second thoughts.

[9] It is symbolic of mainstream American willful ignorance of such matters that Kathleen's grandfather, the white American retired marine guard, is losing his sight and his memory, and is in apparent oblivion of the turmoil surrounding him; it is suggested he is suffering Alzheimer's.

Throughout the narrative, conversations in the home expose the atmosphere of prosecution and racial profiling that the Patriot Act encouraged. Early in the story Kathleen admits that "Mom says you never know who might be listening these days. If she were here, she'd shush Grandma from going on and on about Pakistan" (147), which shows Safia's awareness of massive espionage on South Asian migrants in the US after the 9/11 attacks. In fact, she mentions during her conversations at home the diverse agencies controlling them, such as Galileo, CAPPS, IBIS and National Crime Info databases; it is clear to readers that she is more than worried about the prosecution of Eastern migrants in the US, even if Kathleen seems not to pay attention and fears only rejection at school. It is through Miriam's phone calls to family and friends in the diaspora that we come to know of the effects of such prosecution: recurrent stories of deportation; imprisonment in isolation for months over an expired visa; charges of anthrax possession (for keeping bottles of garam masala); over eight hundred asylum applications to Canada unanswered for months. The list of names in Miriam's phonebook shortens as more and more contacts are erased. When Miriam disappears, Safia consequently believes she has been taken by Homeland Security, and explains the situation to Kathleen, and thus to readers:

> Have you any idea how difficult it is to stay legal? It's damn near impossible. Lose a job that brought you here or get laid off before you have enough money saved for the trip home and two months later you're illegal. Take nine credits instead of twelve on a student visa and you can be deported. And *now they just take away your passport and you're stateless*. Can't prove you're from anywhere. (163; my emphasis)

Since Miriam's Pakistani passport has also disappeared, it is hinted that this may have been the case for arresting her. Her situation, Safia informs us, is not unique, but far too frequent in the "war on terror": "She could be wearing an orange jumpsuit along with the 9/11 detainees and the Afghan POWs at Guantánamo, and we wouldn't know [...] My Amiji could be in solitary, without bail, without trial, or in shackles. They could move her from jail to jail across the country and your Dad would say, Oh, the government must have information, something we don't know about her" (164). Safia points her finger here at the complicity of the population in sustaining these abuses through inaction, and Kathleen feels she herself has also acted this way with her refusal to be seen near the Muslim girl at school or walking with her own grandmother. This marks a turning point for her, when she recognizes, in Arendtian fashion, her uncritical acceptance of biased mainstream discourses and how by rejecting her family's ethnic diversity she has also contributed to sustaining this regime.

Although she initially feels glad that "[n]ow there won't be anyone really Pakistani-looking in her family any more" (156), with the passing of the days she becomes self-critical—"Kathleen sounds whiny and middle-school-girlish even to herself" (161)—starts drinking the Taj Mahal tea she had always hated, and "keeps forgetting about

acting bored and nonchalant" (162), keenly listening to her grandpa and mother's stories about Miriam. Similar to Cynthia's final reunion with her parents in the last scene of "A Habit of Waste," Baldwin's story closes with Kathleen approaching the ostracized Muslim girl in the school cafeteria. Kathleen establishes explicit associations between her grandmother and this girl, who seems to somehow replace Miriam's absence: "Kathleen sniffs back tears, inhales a whiff of spices. The Muslim girl has brought her own food. Aloo cholas? Maybe eggplant bhartha? [...] Magnet eyes ringed with kohl. Like Grandma's, but without the crinkles" (166). Kathleen finally accepts her social responsibility and tries to amend the errors she has committed against her grandmother by acknowledging the public visibility of this girl. The narrator tells us: "The girl is looking at Kathleen as if expecting her to leave. But if Kathleen leaves now, everyone will go back to pretending they can't see the girl, though she is right in front of them" (167).

Kathleen's final words, closing the narrative, emphasize the politics of solidarity and alliance across cultural gaps, as she proposes that "[e]veryone's connected to everyone [...] We just need to figure out how" (167). I find it significant in this respect that Miriam's fate is not disclosed in the story, that there is no happy ending of a reunion with the lost grandmother because it was all a mistake and these things would not happen in America, as Kathleen would prefer to believe. On the one hand, this is because a more plausible truth is, as her friend Jodie informs her, that "Kathleen might never find out where her grandma is—that is what happened to her relatives in Chile a few years ago. Things like that happen everywhere, to innocent people all over the world. All the time" (164). On the other, Kathleen's conversation with the Muslim girl in front of her peers in the public space constitutes a political act of simultaneous recognition and respect of difference through affiliation, not filiation, that is, "by social and political conviction, economic and historical circumstances, voluntary effort and willed deliberation" (Said 1983, 25), outside filial or national duties to the family or your diasporic community.

In my analysis of Hopkinson's "A Habit of Waste" and Baldwin's "We are not in Pakistan," I have focused on the characters of racialized young women in North America in order to offer a critique of racist implications within a postfeminist neoliberal ideology that determines the new *normalcy* for women in globalized, multicultural societies, one that proves to be inherently capitalist, white-centered and conservative in its views of women's empowerment via their sexuality. Both short stories trace the political awakening of a young woman from endorsing such postfeminist models of identity (rooted in consumerism and beauty) to their establishment of transgenerational and transcultural solidarity alliances and engagement, to a certain extent, in anti-capitalist practices. Cynthia's and Kathleen's affects change from self-hatred and disgust to pride in their racial and cultural difference, their embracing of their transnational, diasporic, situated identities. Despite the celebratory rhetoric of difference in neoliberal globalization, the context in North America continues

to be hostile to many racialized women and, in the post-9/11 era, it is especially so toward those targeted as Muslim, a situation Baldwin's story addresses. The bodies of women have become the territory where the Clash of Cultures Theory seems to be best illustrated: antagonistic cultural codes (such as undressing and covering female bodies, for instance, in Kathleen's and Cynthia's cases) pull these women in opposite directions, until an epiphanic event helps them break this dichotomy and acknowledge their until now uncritical participation in a neoliberal global order whose lethal politics include austericide (addressed by Hopkinson) and the war on terror (by Baldwin). Despite the stories' very different literary styles—Hopkinson uses futuristic speculative fiction while Baldwin employs realistic narrative—they share common intersectional feminist politics, with special attention paid to race, gender and class in their critique of hegemonic neoliberal postfeminism. The intergenerational affective relationships that trigger this political awareness foster a politics of affinity that starts with the recognition of one's multiple affiliations.

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Belén Martín-Lucas is Associate Professor at the University of Vigo in the fields of Gender, Postcolonial and Globalization Studies. Her research focuses on modes of dissent and resistance in Canadian women's fiction. She has published extensively on transnationalism, and she is co-founder of *Canada and Beyond: A Journal of Canadian Literary and Cultural Studies*.

Address: Departamento de Filoloxía Inglesa, Francesa e Alemá. Facultade de Filoloxía e Tradución. Universidade de Vigo. Campus Lagoas-Marcosende. 36310, Vigo, Spain. Tel. +34 986812333.