

Love Enough!

Dionne Brand and Rosi Braidotti's Affective Transpositions

.....
Libe García Zarranz is Associate Professor in Literature in English in the Department of Teacher Education at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU, Norway). She is also Research Affiliate for the Canadian Literature Centre at the University of Alberta (Canada), Scholar in The Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation, and member of the international research project "Bodies in Transit: Making Difference in Globalized Cultures." She is the author of *TransCanadian Feminist Fictions: New Cross-Border Ethics* (McGill-Queen's UP, 2017). She has also published and edited special issues on Canadian and American literature, transnational studies, feminist and queer theory, affect, and film. García Zarranz has held postdoctoral positions at the University of Innsbruck (Austria) and the Centre for Globalization and Cultural Studies at the University of Manitoba (Canada). Prior to joining NTNU, she taught critical theory and gender studies at the University of Cambridge (Magdalene College, UK).
.....

Abstract

This article puts Dionne Brand's novel, *Love Enough* (2014), in conversation with the vitalist philosophy of Rosi Braidotti, as illustrated in the study *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics* (2006). I look at how both poet and theorist insist on the centrality of affective relations in the transformation of subjectivity, political alliances, and ethical spaces under processes of uneven globalization, rampant neoliberalism, and feminist backlash. Dionne Brand's cross-border material poetics proposes alternative figurations of the subject through exercises of creative repetition, zigzagging between temporal and spatial frameworks, signaling the constant transformation of material, political, and social bodies. Brand's transposable moves follow a similar pattern to Braidotti's nomadic cartographies in that both resist a naïve return to sentimentality or nostalgic love to advocate instead a turn to sustainable

affects and passions; a call for love as a mode of action that can reorient the system by embracing our *potentia* as feminist subjects.
.....

Résumé

Cet article engage le dialogue entre le roman de Dionne Brand, *Love Enough* (2014), et la philosophie vitaliste de Rosi Braidotti, telle qu'illustrée dans l'étude *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics* (2006). J'examine comment la poétesse tout comme la théoricienne insistent sur la centralité des relations affectives dans la transformation de la subjectivité, des alliances politiques et des espaces éthiques dans le cadre de processus de mondialisation déséquilibrée, de néolibéralisme rampant et de réactions féministes. La poésie matérielle transfrontalière de Dionne Brand propose des figurations alternatives du sujet par le biais d'exercices de répétition créative, qui zigzaguent entre les cadres temporels et spatiaux, pour signaler la constante transformation des corps physiques, politiques et sociaux. Les mouvements transposables de Brand suivent un modèle similaire à celui des cartographies nomades de Braidotti en ce sens qu'elles résistent toutes deux à un retour naïf à la sentimentalité ou à l'amour nostalgique pour préconiser plutôt un tournant vers des affects et des passions durables; un appel à l'amour comme moyen d'action qui peut réorienter le système en embrassant notre potentiel en tant que sujets féministes.

Sometimes you have to catch a feeling right away...

Dionne Brand, *Love Enough*
(26)

To talk about love in the context of the humanities, might seem, to some, an exercise of cruel optimism (Berlant 2011). The so-called academic-industrial complex is saturated with fear and anxiety; austerity policies have led to brutal funding cuts, dramatically increasing the levels of competition, and exacerbated feelings of doubt and uncertainty among sessionals, adjuncts, and other exhausted labourers who seek permanent jobs or some form of economic stability. This neoliberal model of the corporate university disseminates and capitalizes on these negative affects with important ethical consequences. The inextricable nature of affective relations, economic processes, and cultural practice is thereby unquestionable. And yet, I firmly believe this is precisely why it is key for the critic, the teacher, and the public intellectual today to find ways to activate their passions in the search for change and transformation. Let me clarify what I am talking about when I talk about love. I am certainly not advocating for a naïve return to sentimentality or nostalgic love, but a turn to sustainable affects and passions; a call for love as a mode of action that can reorient the system by embracing our *potentia* as feminist subjects. Here I follow the tradition of vitalist philosophy that reads passion as an assemblage of forces and flows imbued with paradoxes, tensions, and contradictions (Deleuze 1988; Braidotti 2006a, 2006b). It is crucial then to reactivate our passions to rethink what we love and why we love it; in other words, what moves us.

In my case, my orientation towards feminist writing and critical theory has shaped my teaching and research practices for the last few years. In turn, I have also been curious about what moves poets, writers, and theorists in their creative interventions. The Irish Canadian writer Emma Donoghue is often asked about the reasons why she moved to Canada almost twenty years ago. Her answer is “love,” in particular, “love of a Canadian.”¹ When Makeda Silvera (1995) asked the poet Dionne Brand why she left Trinidad for Toronto in 1970, she replied “To run away, to escape” (165). Brand then explained how she was running scared as a young woman; escaping the history around her; and

also running from femininity. The responses from these transCanadian writers, though remarkably different at first glance, are both saturated by affective configurations that simultaneously locate and dislocate the subject. Following Smaro Kamboureli and Roy Miki (2007), I redeploy the formulation transCanadian to refer 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.² As I argue elsewhere, the designation transCanadian functions as a border concept, which is “construed relationally through an inseparable mixture of coalitions, ruptures, entanglements, tensions, and alliances” (García Zarranz 2017, 9). In this article, the role of affect in this matrix of forces is of particular interest.

Translating the subject geographically, as these writers’ words illustrate, already entails a form of affective transposition, which is inevitably intertwined with economic, political, and cultural processes. Note that I want to think about the concepts of *moving* and *being moved* in a geo-affective sense in an attempt to discern a number of ethical implications for the subject, in particular, the feminist subject. The passion to move, to create, to imagine, to desire new fictions, new subjectivities, new bodies has been a constant in the work of feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti. Since the publication of her first book, *Patterns of Dissonance: An Essay on Women in Contemporary French Philosophy* (1991), Braidotti has forcefully formulated alternative conceptualizations of difference beyond the dialectical opposition between individual liberalism and the risk of postmodern relativism. Through her pioneering work on nomadic ethics, Braidotti has revolutionized our understanding of subjectivity by proposing a theory of affirmative politics and ethics that revolves around the following question: “can gender, ethnic, cultural or European differences be understood outside the straightjacket of hierarchy and binary opposition?”³ Terms such as sustainable ethics, non-unitary subjectivity, vitalism, and transpositions become only a few of the common denominators in Braidotti’s on-going quest for a sustainable feminist ethics that will challenge, as she repeatedly claims, “conservative nostalgia and neo-liberal euphoria” simultaneously (2013, 11).

This article puts Dionne Brand's latest novel, *Love Enough* (2014), in conversation with the Braidotti's feminist philosophy, as illustrated in the study *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics* (2006b). Drawing on queer and anti-racist theories of affect (Ngai 2005; Ahmed 2004), I examine how both poet and theorist insist on the centrality of affective relations in the transformation of subjectivity, political alliances, and ethical spaces under processes of uneven globalization, rampant neoliberalism, and feminist backlash. I focus particularly on how Brand and Braidotti think through the concept of *transpositions*, a term in music that "indicates variations and shifts of scale in a discontinuous but harmonious pattern. It is thus created as an in-between space of zigzagging and of crossing; non-linear, but not chaotic; nomadic, yet accountable and committed; creative but also cognitively valid; discursive and also materially embedded—it is coherent without falling into instrumental rationality" (Braidotti 2006b, 5). Brand's cross-border material poetics proposes alternative figurations of the subject through exercises of creative repetition, zigzagging between temporal and spatial frameworks, signaling constant transformations of material, political, and social bodies. Brand's transposable moves, I argue, follow a similar pattern to Braidotti's nomadic cartographies in that both propose different poetic and critico-ethical approximations to the subject living under the dynamics of contemporary neo-conservative technocapitalism.

For the last three decades, Dionne Brand's fierce fiction and politics have been saturated by a sense of loss and desolation, particularly in her critique of racist, nationalistic, and sexist structural violences within the Canadian context. As literary scholar Cheryl Lousley (2008) contends,

throughout her poetry, fiction, and criticism, Brand has shown, like Spivak, an attention to the violent exclusions enacted through normalizing universals, such as standard English, Canadian national identity and heterosexuality, and an acute interrogation of the danger yet necessity of collective identities for political mobilization. (38)

Brand's recent work, though still posing a critique of these systemic violences, is now more invested in addressing the affective ruptures of the transCanadian subject living in this contemporary age of global crisis.

More in line with Braidotti than with Gayatri Spivak, novels, such as *What We All Long For* (2005), or the more recent, *Love Enough* (2014), mobilize a set of affective relations where the vitality and toxicity of life is always at the centre. I here follow feminist Deleuzian philosophy, which refers to Life as an assemblage of intensities, full of the vitalism of both *bios* and *zoe* as forces shaping the social fabric of contemporary times. In contrast to *bios*, which stands for the organic, political, and discursive portions of life reserved for anthropos, *zoe* refers instead to the affirmative power of human and nonhuman life; "a vector of transformation, a conveyor or a carrier that enacts in-depth transformations" (Braidotti 2006b, 84); "life as absolute vitality" (Braidotti, 2006a, 138).

In the interview with Makeda Silvera, Brand comments on how writing is for her a vital process: "Each piece of work is a piece of my life. It is my life's work. The writing is not a career thing. It is a vocation... With every piece of writing *I can see I moved*" (Silvera 1995, 380, my emphasis). I want to focus on Brand's reference to moving. Etymologically, "to move" means "to set in motion" but also "to exist, to live" and "to excite, to affect" (*OED*). Brand's twenty-first-century work problematizes the poetics and politics of affect, setting in motion multiple transpositions where subjectivity is depicted as malleable, porous, and continuously moving and being moved relationally. This section of my article thus addresses the affective dimensions of the term to *move* by looking at the cartographic transpositions in Brand's novel.

In similar ways to *What We All Long For* (2005), *Love Enough* (2014) depicts the city of Toronto not only as a transnational space of interconnectivity but also as a site of death. The lethal tensions in the city, as one of the characters in the novel puts it, permeate the lives of a series of subjects across racial, sexual, and generational borders. The narrative introduces nineteen-year-old Lia, who struggles to make sense of the fractures in her family's genealogy, while trying to figure out her life and the world around her as she traverses the city. In order to do so, she develops her own theory of transposition, as she calls it:

Lia is biking now along Bloor Street, going east, no hands, her coat is open like a sail...At each block she becomes someone else, some other part of who she might be. One

block she's carrying flowers, one block she has newspapers. At the university she thinks of cadavers and at the museum an emptiness swaddles her. Then the naked mannequins in the posh shops embrace her at Bay. At Yonge the perennial road and construction crews offer her graves that will open annually. (Brand 2014, 21-22)

Echoing Mrs. Dalloway's roamings in postwar London in Virginia Woolf's feminist classic, Lia rushes through Toronto in a constant state of flux and transformation.⁴ The city is here portrayed as a trans-corporeal space where, as Stacy Alaimo contends (2008), "human corporeality, in all its material fleshiness, is inseparable from 'nature' or 'environment'" (238). Lia's pace conveys a sense of urgency in tune with the schizophrenic character of our contemporary times, where constant transformation and change may also lead to crisis and death. In that sense, her fractured subjectivity very much resembles that of Carla, one of the main characters in Brand's previous novel, *What We All Long For*. Both young women show how tracing their family histories, especially their mothers' own affective ruptures, has shaped their subjectivity and self-other relations. Lia's mother, the reader learns, was never loved by her own mother, so this lack has shaped her relationships. "*Perché non hai tenuto di più a Mercedes?... Why didn't you love Mercedes better?*" (Brand 2014, 100), Lia blatantly yells to her nonna, who chose to endure patriarchal pressures over sustaining an alliance with her daughter, thus preventing any form of solidarity to emerge in this matrilineal genealogy. Moreover, Lia's emotional fractures are intensified by economic pressures, which have been forcing her to move constantly from place to place between the ages of sixteen and eighteen, unavoidably preventing her from developing any sustained sense of community: Lia had "spent the last year of high school in a group home, and found a job in a laundromat, then in a No Frills, then in a Wendy's, then as a telemarketer, then in a mall kiosk selling phone covers, then in a dollar store and finally in a TV packaging plant in Etobicoke" (53-54). Lia's affective cartographies, nonetheless, are reoriented away from her family and towards Jasmeet, a young performing artist who lives next door. Her sudden disappearance leads Lia into a spiral of regret and loss but also transformation and love.

When looking at transpositions in music, there

are two important axes to be considered: direction (if the notes move up or down) and distance (how far to move them). I would like to bear this in mind in relation to one of the characters in the novel's own theory of geo-affective transposition. A member of the professional class in Somalia, Dau'ud had to flee the country in the mid-1990s as a result of the civil war. From economist to taxi driver in Toronto, his transCanadian experience has shown him the pleasures and dangers of border-crossing. Dau'ud explains that, to move from Toronto to Somaliland, you need to pass through five airports, "each one a passage to how life is supposed to be lived" (Brand 2014, 82). Moving from Canada to Europe, which involves a move in direction and distance, activates a bodily transposition. After being seen through the lens of the border guard, you change, the narrative voice explains. At the third airport, in Abu Dhabi or Dubai, you begin to forget and you begin to feel free because "you are in the middle of time" (83). Life in those other places keeps going without you and so "you need no longer exist in that life" (84). The fourth airport at Addis Ababa reactivates your sensory system: "your eyes are open, your ears are open; you smell the world. You can change your clothes, free your legs, you can melt into a new life" (84). Finally, the last stop at Hargeisa is where "You begin" (84). What interests me about this passage is that Brand seems to suggest a mode of counter-diasporic subjectivity that escapes the dangerous rhetorical dichotomy of nostalgia or euphoria. In other words, this is not a return to an essentialist origin of unchanged patterns, but a reentry into a new space; a transposable move, which merges the affective and the geographical dimensions of lived experience; a melting pot in reverse in that entering African space is described in terms of opportunity, change, and renewal, thus challenging traditional renderings of the migrants' experience of transition.

This cartographic transposition, nonetheless, seems to be out of reach for those transCanadian subjects whose labour is tied to the global city of Toronto. In a sense, then, this learning process is blocked by this Canadian space, which seems to engulf its inhabitants, erasing their memories and desires, and assimilating them with a number of ethical repercussions. An example of this affective rupture is embodied in Dau'ud's son, Bedri, who moves adrift throughout the narrative, rushing through the streets of Toronto in a car

towards a place that never materializes. Suspended in space and time, Bedri's disorientation clearly reflects the negative sets of passions that lead those eccentric⁵ characters who cannot find sustainable ways to live in contemporary society. Quoting Emma Goldman's anarchist fictions, one of the characters in *Love Enough* explains how "as long as people were *living a life they loathe to live* then crime was inevitable" (Brand 2014, 110). The intertwined relation between affect and ethics is unquestionable in this passage. What are the implications of living a life you loathe? What kind of affective transpositions would be necessary to live a life you love instead?

Brand's (2014) novel provides a clear example of affirmative transpositions through Lia, who manages to reorient her body away from the emotional fractures that shaped her life and into a quest for beauty. At the end of the narrative, we see her in a search to devour life in its multiplicity of colours; a transition into other forms of affect that she could stick to beyond language structures: "When she looks back at her daily jottings, she realises it's not recordable in words. She wants a more porous surface, where beauty can come into her, metamorphose, suffuse her skin" (147). It is here where the affective transposition into positive passions takes place. *Zoe* is blooming here for Lia, who strives to affect and be affected by the sensuality of the world, transposing her body in multiple ways. The vitalism in this scene, which again echoes Woolf's, becomes one of those moments of "floating awareness" that Braidotti (2006b) describes when "'Life' rushes on towards the sensorial/perceptive apparatus with exceptional vigour" (145). Lia understands the *potentia* of Life now as a force that can transform her embodied subjectivity, and so, as the narrative voice explains, she craves for the ordinary beauty of life to "become more chemical, to metabolise, to reconstitute, yes, reconstitute her heart" (Brand 2014, 146). Interestingly, moving to Ward's Island, and thus distancing herself from the city of Toronto, is one of the keys to Lia's affective transposition. Again, then, we see how changes in distance and direction can also enable variations in the trajectories of bodies understood as material and affective assemblages always in the process of becoming.

Further drawing on the field of genetics, Braidotti (2006b) contends that the term transpositions indicates "an intertextual, cross-boundary or transversal

transfer, in the sense of a leap from one code, field or axis into another, not merely in the quantitative mode of plural multiplications, but rather in the qualitative sense of complex multiplicities" (5). These cross-boundary moves, I would add, are always embedded in economic processes with a number of implications for the gendered and the racialized body. In her discussion of affective economies, feminist killjoy Sara Ahmed (2004) claims that "feelings do not reside in subjects or objects, but are produced as effects of circulation" (8). She explains how hate, for instance, "does not reside in a given subject or object. Hate is economic; it circulates between signifiers in relationships of difference and displacement" (119). Following a similar line of enquiry, I propose to consider Brand's affective transpositions as paradoxical assemblages where economic processes circulate, shaping material bodies with important ethical repercussions.

As a result of religious wars and poverty, Da'uud's lived experience has been saturated by violence and dispossession, both in Somalia and Canada. His affective transpositions have provided him with an acute level of perception for ugly feelings—minor affects such as irritation, paranoia, or anxiety that Sianne Ngai (2005) describes as potential sites of "critical productivity" (3). As a taxi driver, he not only witnesses the lives of others, but he perceives people's negative passions⁶ such as sadness and fear: "Da'uud glimpses the man's face. He doesn't like it, it tears a sliver in his chest. He thinks, that man can kill someone... Da'uud leaves, saying to himself maybe he's wrong, the things he knows are not useful" (Brand 2014, 74). It is significant how this kind of affective knowledge is considered as a failed system and thus rapidly discarded by the character. Da'uud's affective transpositions, which are intertwined with racial and economic processes, invite the conceptualization of an alternative ethics where utility could be transformed into affect. I then propose to see this form of excessive feeling in relation to what Ngai (2005) calls *animatedness*. Functioning as a marker of racial or ethnic otherness, Ngai's analysis of animatedness refers to how the representation of African-American subjects in popular culture is often suffused by a set of exaggerated emotions: "as we press harder on the affective meanings of animatedness, we shall see how the seemingly neutral state of 'being moved' becomes twisted into the image of the overemotional

racialized subject” (90). I here argue that Brand’s representation of Da’uud, a Muslim Afro-Canadian working class male, as an embodied affective subject creates instead what we could call a form of counter-animatedness or transposable animatedness. The long and extended impact of 9/11 has brought to the western world an old threat: Islam as a synonym for terror. Animatedness in this context, understood as a form of excessive feeling, could then be associated with religious extremism. In order to challenge these pernicious stereotypes, the novel instead portrays Da’uud as a subject who transposes his religious, economic, and cultural background into a form of affective knowledge. In doing so, he manages to bear witness to the complex circuits of passion that permeate contemporary society, leaving the reader in an uncomfortable position. This is nothing new in Brand.

In similar fashion to Larissa Lai’s provocative poetry collection *Automaton Biographies* (2009), Dionne Brand’s long poems *Inventory* (2006) and *Ossuaries* (2010), as I argue elsewhere (2017), introduce several female figures that problematize the role of bearing witness to the contemporary world. Again, what we find here are the singular multiplicities of the racialized and the feminist subject caught in a matrix of affective, economic, and political processes. Yasmine, one of the main characters in *Ossuaries*, for instance, is depicted as an activist who lives underground, and who has experienced a variety of socio-political revolutions across temporal and spatial frameworks. Historical violences materialize in the body of this racialized woman who is then forced to live a life of confinement, away from community. Targeted as a potential terrorist, this activist remains hidden until the right time to act emerges. Yasmine poses a threat to nationalist discourses not necessarily in terms of her sexuality, but in terms of her race and political associations. In the portrayal of Yasmine as a potential terrorist, Brand indirectly exposes the dangers of U.S. exceptionalism sustained by the narrative of a simultaneous criminalization of the non-Western man, as one who needs to be prosecuted, and the victimization of the non-Western woman, as the one who needs to be rescued. I would add that Brand goes even further by complicating the role of the poet herself in this process. As literary scholar Diana Brydon (2007) aptly suggests, “Brand’s practice of affective citizenship begins from the emotional register in which

injustice lodges itself in the very body of the poet as a special kind of witness” (991). Both the reader and the poet are then transposed into a complicated position where the boundaries between perpetrators and victims are radically blurred. By doing so, Brand further poses the question about what is our complicity in the very sustenance of these structures of power, thus moving the critic into a non-normative or eccentric territory.

In related ways to Yasmine, the character of Sibyl in *Love Enough* is also relegated outside the normative boundaries of the city as an eccentric subject with a different affective relationship to the world. Aware of the multiple toxicities of the environment surrounding her, this post-industrial prophetic priestess wanders the streets of Toronto covered in Clorox: “perhaps Sibyl wanted to slow down the energy, the adrenaline she devoted to cleaning and disinfecting herself and the world from whatever disease she thought they had. Sibyl saw the invisible diseases that were quite possibly there” (Brand 2014, 94). In a way, this character’s relation to matter resembles that of Cam in Dionne Brand’s novel *What We All Long For*. A former doctor in Vietnam, Cam is unable to perform her profession in Canada, so instead, she opens a restaurant with her husband in Chinatown. Cam systematically covers all the surfaces of her house with plastic out of fear of being caught without proof of her identity and citizenship, as I claim elsewhere (2014). This compulsive need to laminate her furniture not only prevents Cam from touching and thus feeling familiar objects, but could also signal “an affective rupture that emerges as a result of being subjected to certain forms of institutionalized racism” (García Zarranz 2014, 94). In contrast to Cam, though, Sibyl’s trans-corporeal relationship to matter allows her transposition into different subject positions, real or imaginary. Claiming to have access to the reality of dreams, Sibyl appears and vanishes in the city: “Who knows who she may have disappeared into. Perhaps she had become a dental assistant, to find mercury. Perhaps she found the door to the key and walked into another life” (Brand 2014, 95). According to normative standards of behaviour, this woman’s capability to metamorphose is associated with madness, disorder, and chaos. In contrast, the narrative voice suggests that Sibyl’s disordered transpositions may point to a specific kind of knowledge in chaos understood as “a different country” (97); the antithesis to a suffocating

morality and the status quo. Brand's critical stance here echoes Braidotti's (2006b) call for a sustainable ethics as a strategy to "disintoxicate ourselves from the fumes of the prosthetic promises of perfectibility that neo-liberal technologies are selling us" (58). Yasmine, Sibyl, and Cam's bodies all bear traces of a number of toxic violences in the name of failed revolutions, madness, and systemic racism. These women's affective transpositions, nonetheless, can also be read as alternative cartographies where the emergence of a feminist ethics can be more clearly delineated.

For the last twenty-five years, Braidotti (2006b) has been articulating a feminist ethics of sustainability, accountability, and relationality concerned with "human affectivity and passions as the motor of subjectivity" (13). In related ways to Brand's material poetics, Braidotti's vitalist philosophy poses a critique of liberal individualism, while generating novel affective frameworks for self-other relations. June, one of the central characters in *Love Enough*, seems to advocate a material feminist ethics with her passion for life as *zoe* and her acute sense of the worlds around her, including more-than-human life. June, who is now in her 40s, works at the Women's History Archive in Toronto. Having engaged in politics and activism for her whole life, she also volunteers for a youth drop-in center in one of the city's at-risk neighbourhoods. Her relationship with her partner Sydney is haunted by an archive of lovers that June has accumulated in her life: "June worked El Salvador and Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe, then Nicaragua, putting up one revolutionary after another and getting rid of them by all sorts of means. She was, in this way, in terms of love, in terms of sex, indiscriminate" (Brand 2014, 61). Sentimental love is here understood as a form of nostalgia that she rejects.

Instead, June practices a more impersonal but democratic love that the narrative voice describes as ethical love: "Her love was simply bigger than the personal...Isador [one of her lovers] represented that she loved. She loved the idea of people rising up against injustice and political terror, and insofar as Isador did this, she loved him entirely" (Brand 2014, 65). Significantly, this ethical love incorporates violence and the looming presence of death; her female and male lovers all share a passion for Life understood as a combination of positive and negative intensities.

Beatriz, for instance, is described as cool, clandestine, and almost lethal (116). As a result of her revolutionary past in Nicaragua, she explains the meaning of death as something irrelevant: "I have held many people's lives in my hand...I have held someone dying. Death is nothing and living is everything" (116). Beatriz's vitalist philosophy is thus very much in line with Braidotti's in that Life, understood as both *bios* (political and discursive) and *zoe* (animal and non-human), becomes the subject instead of the object of social and discursive practices.

Reading through her list of lovers helps June build new insights about herself, always in relation to other subjects. As Braidotti (2006b) reminds us, the term transpositions does not simply imply interconnection: "It is not just a matter of weaving together different strands, variations on a theme (textual or musical), but rather of playing the positivity of difference as a specific theme of its own" (5). I claim that June's archive of revolutionary lovers activates a number of affective transpositions, which finally allow her to maintain a sustainable relationship with her current partner, Sydney, beyond negative passion. Moreover, June's vitalism considers ethics not as a question of morality, but as a transformative assemblage of forces, echoing Braidotti's affirmative ethical position. When June thinks of her younger body, for instance, she envisions a matrix where affect circulates, shaping other materialities, spaces, and discourses:

All June's summers were explosive back then. Vital. She woke up each morning, her brain luminescent. So much to do, so much to think, she put on phosphorous clothing to go out. [...] Those wonderful sleepless nights with stunning arguments and dazzling theories and finally falling into bed breathless with fucking, exhausted and drunk on visions about a coming world. Then she felt at the vertex of mind and body. (Brand 2014, 56)

I have no doubt many of us can identify with June's vitalism if we think about the exhilarating effects of feminist theory and artistic practice in our bodies and in our relationships with friends, lovers, and colleagues, sometimes enabling forms of relationality and, other times, breaking any potential alliances between us. This is the pleasure and the danger of sticking to Braidotti's philosophy and Brand's poetics: they can electrify you

with their passion, but they can also unsettle you, thus becoming paradoxical assemblages of intensities and forces.

In her discussion of Braidotti's nomadic philosophy, queer theorist Judith Butler (2014) eloquently discusses resistance as a form of transposition that inevitably brings with it some form of destructiveness. The paradox then occurs when, in the process of resisting destructive forces such as sexism, heteronormativity, or racism, we then activate antagonistic relations with other modalities of resistance. Butler illustrates her point by engaging with the multiple feminisms in the Left: "the feminist left has certainly never been unified, and even the phrase 'feminist left' would doubtless start some people fighting. Such antagonisms, perhaps agonisms, have to be understood as part of the field of intensity and relationality, for relationality does not necessarily mean love, union, or agreement" (26). Brand's novel *Love Enough* certainly suggests that passion without resistance is not enough to understand affective processes of subject transformation in a time of increasing feminist backlash. It is here, once again, when the role of transpositions becomes central in the need to find connections between the texts examined in this article and larger social and historical contexts. In this quest, I want to reiterate that these cartographies of resistance, these affirmative passions, are paradoxical assemblages where tension and contradiction accumulate as part of their intensities.

We see clear examples of these tensions every day in Canadian literary culture, for example. I would like to conclude by briefly examining the work carried out by CWILA (Canadian Women in the Literary Arts), a feminist organization that fights for gender equity in the literary realm. The selection of Lucas Crawford, who self-identifies as a transgender poet, as CWILA's 2015 Critic in Residence generated some harsh criticism from certain sectors in the feminist and trans community, particularly among so-called transexclusionary radical feminists (TERFS). A detailed examination of the controversy is beyond the scope of this article, but I wanted to mention this case as a current example of how antagonism within resistance is everyday practice.⁷ The key question is, in my view, whether these tensions are conducive to dialogue and change, or whether they signal instead the rupture or loss of coalition between feminist,

queer, and transgender groups in the literary world. I do think it is time to rethink our positionality as feminist critics in the new millennium and creatively devise novel transversal methodologies; affirmative alliances; transposable moves between different feminisms in our fight to end sexism. And it is here again where I find Braidotti's (2006b) transpositions helpful in that they propose "creative links and zigzagging interconnections between discursive communities which are too often kept apart from each other" (7). As Dionne Brand's passionate fictions also illustrate, today's messy world is in serious need of multiple feminist transpositions to help us rethink the ethical, the cultural, and the political realms not only as sites of on-going struggle and resistance but also transformation and love.

In this article, I have proposed to think about literature philosophically, while simultaneously considering the poetics of theory as a way to assemble novel methodologies for feminist intervention. I firmly believe that experimenting with this kind of critico-affective transpositions can help us trace a genealogy of feminist entanglements full of unexpected alliances, productive contradictions, and generative paradoxes across the ethical and the literary fields. Braidotti (2013) contends that her feminist ethics "does not aim at mastery, but at the transformation of negative into positive passions" (134). I often wonder about how many of these positive passions are yet to be formulated in our everyday lives as twenty-first century writers, critics, and activists. Loving what we do might not be enough. And yet, it is worth a try.

Endnotes

¹ See Emma Donoghue's personal website: <http://www.emmadonoghue.com/faq.html>.

² TransCanadian feminist writers such as Emma Donoghue, Dionne Brand, Hiromi Goto, and Larissa Lai are assembling a cross-border archive that expands, and arguably queers, traditional conceptualizations of what is commonly understood by Canadian literature today. See Kamboureli and Miki (2007) and García Zarranz (2014) for further articulations of the formulation *TransCanadian*.

³ See Rosi Braidotti's personal website: <http://www.rosibraidotti.com/index.php/about/bio>.

⁴ Virginia Woolf is for Rosi Braidotti (2006b) one of those writers who explores the vitality of the living world (103). I claim that this vitality, with its intensity and capacity for life and death, is shared by Dionne Brand's material poetics.

⁵ I here follow feminist philosopher Teresa de Lauretis (1990) who deploys the term *eccentric subject* to refer to an “excessive critical position...attained through practices of political and personal displacement across boundaries between sociosexual identities and communities, between bodies and discourses” (145).

⁶ In relation to Benedict de Spinoza’s theory of the affects, Gilles Deleuze (1988) contends that sad passions, such as hate or fear, represent “the moment when we are most separated from our power of acting, when we are most alienated, delivered over to the phantom of superstition, to the mystification of the tyrant” (128).

⁷ For a discussion about the potential alliances between feminist and transgender poetics and politics, see Lucas Crawford’s responses in his interview with CWILA: <http://cwila.com/interview-with-lucas-crawford-cwilas-2015-critic-in-residence/>.

Acknowledgments

Earlier versions of this article were presented at the *Canadian Literature Centre* (University of Alberta), as part of their 2015 *Scholarly Lecture Series*, and the Centre for Globalization and Cultural Studies (University of Manitoba). I am grateful to Marie Carrière and Diana Brydon respectively for their kind invitations and valuable feedback. Research was also funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness, Project *Bodies in Transit: Making Difference in Globalized Cultures* (Reference FFI2013- 47789-C2-2-P).

References

Ahmed, Sara. 2004. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press.

Alaimo, Stacy. 2008. “Trans-Corporeal Feminisms and the Ethical Space of Nature.” In *Material Feminisms*, edited by Stacy Alaimo and Susan J. Hekman, 237-264. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008.

Berlant, Lauren. 2006. “Cruel Optimism.” *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 17 (3): 20-36.

Braidotti, Rosi. 1991. *Patterns of Dissonance: A Study of Women and Contemporary Philosophy*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

_____. 2006a. “The Ethics of Becoming-Imperceptible.” In *Deleuze and Philosophy*, edited by Constantin Boundas,

133-159. Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press.

_____. 2006b. *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

_____. 2013. *The Posthuman*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Brand, Dionne. 2005. *What We All Long For*. Toronto: Vintage Canada.

_____. 2006. *Inventory*. Toronto, ON: McClelland and Stewart.

_____. 2010. *Ossuaries*. Toronto, ON: McClelland and Stewart.

_____. 2014. *Love Enough*. Toronto, ON: Knopf.

Brydon, Diana. 2007. “Dionne Brand’s Global Intimacies: Practising Affective Citizenship.” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 76 (3): 990-1006.

Butler, Judith. 2014. “Reflections on Ethics, Destructiveness, and Life: Rosi Braidotti and the Posthuman.” In *The Subject of Rosi Braidotti: Politics and Concepts*, edited by Bolette Blaagaard and Iris van der Tuin, 21-28. London, UK: Bloomsbury.

De Lauretis, Teresa. 1990. “Eccentric Subjects: Feminist Theory and Historical Consciousness.” *Feminist Studies* 16 (1): 115-150.

Deleuze, Gilles. 1988. *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*. Trans. Robert Hurley. San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books.

García Zarranz, Libe. 2014. “‘The whole city’s our bawdy-house, my lass’: Affective Spaces and Disoriented Bodies in Dionne Brand and Emma Donoghue’s Fictions.” *Peer English: A Journal of New Critical Thinking* 9: 89-107.

_____. 2017. *TransCanadian Feminist Fictions: New Cross-Border Ethics*. Montreal, QC and Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen’s University Press.

Kamboureli, Smaro, and Roy Miki, eds. 2007. *Trans. Can.Lit: Resituating the Study of Canadian Literature*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

Lai, Larissa. 2009. *Automaton Biographies*. Vancouver, BC: Arsenal Pulp Press.

Lousley, Cheryl. 2008. "Witness to the Body Count: Planetary Ethics in Dionne Brand's *Inventory*." *Canadian Poetry: Studies, Documents, Reviews* 63: 37-58.

Ngai, Sianne. 2005. *Ugly Feelings*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Silvera, Makeda, ed. 1995. *The Other Woman: Women of Colour in Contemporary Canadian Literature*. Toronto, ON: Sister Vision.