# John MacKenzie's *Letters I Didn't Write*

## Rewriting Home, Homeland, and Citizenship

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Often in discourse of poetry, a divide abides between the aesthetic and the political. This division is a false one because, whether overtly referencing politics or not, poetry is political. There are many critics including David Orr and Stu Watson who discuss the political nature of poetry and how political poetry can be categorized.[1] In *Prelude Mag*'s article "Political Poetry," Watson breaks down two types of political poetry. One is the overtly political: "the poetry of protest that seeks to address, through its content or the radical form it takes, society's perceived ills. It can emanate from an alienated voice crying in the wilderness, or from a laureate standing beside a newly anointed king." Critical to this type of poetry is its direction and its intended audience: the people (the *polis*). This type of political poetic discourse emanates from a locus of morality; either arguing for or against the status quo, a political poem necessarily asserts a stance. The second kind of political poetry, Watson contends, is "one that seeks not so much to marshal forces but to dramatize society's forces as they are marshaled; to reveal, not through subject matter but through a manner of approach, the affective ramifications of living-in-the-world—ramifications almost always truncated, foreclosed upon, by the didactic turn of the first type of overtly political poetry." This second type of political poetry is a less idealistic one because it demonstrates the effect of the structures upon the people who inhabit that society and is "a tallying of our human indemnities" (Watson).

Falling under Watson's first category of political poetry, some poems deal directly with the complex relationship between home, homeland, and national borders. Whether it be a poetic discourse of war, protest, or witness in relation to citizenship and belonging, some contemporary poets who deal with these themes directly include Caroline Bergvall, Carolyn Forché, Allen Ginsberg, Denise Levertov,

1 In "The Politics of Poetry", Orr highlights a significant connection between poetry and politics: engagement in verbal persuasion. Considering rhetoric as a commonality, Orr insists that political poetry "like all speech, it exists at the mercy of time, history, and other people. But that doesn't mean poetry itself is passive" (418). Instead, Orr insists that a poet is actively engaged in battle (stakes unknowable) each time they write.

and Brian Turner. Some poets even critique the construct of nationality and a "national literature." In Canada, there are many established poets such as Margaret Atwood, Octave Crémazie, E. Pauline Johnson (Mohawk), Lee Maracle (Sto:lo), Erín Moure, John McCrae, and Émile Nelligan who grapple with nationalism and national identity. Poetry and written literature has often been used in the national/nation-building project. National or Provincial Poet Laureates have an obligation to use their artform for the promotion of their country or province. Yet, the complications of classifying and categorizing a Canadian "national" literature are still debated contemporarily. In her essay "Toward a National Literature", Maracle references the *Oxford Canadian Dictionary*'s definition of literature ("a body of writing") and emphasizes that the study of "literature" today eschews the true (and more significant) *body of written materials* that counter imperialism (band council resolutions and grant applications, etc.) for an "elevated" literature that prioritizes colonizing voices. Moreover, in a recent collection, *Refuse: CanLit in Ruins* edited by Hannah McGregor, Julie Rak, and Erin Wunker, the editors elucidate the recent public controversies in Canadian Literature and demonstrate how this cultural formation and industry has institutionalized injustices. Categorizing art by national identity is problematic because it often draws false borders and boundaries while privileging power structures that have institutionalized colonialism, racism, and genderism.

How does one decide what is "Canadian" in terms of literature? Such a designation made by physical and political boundaries complicates the positions of Indigenous Peoples who have lived in these places long before settler borders were established. Indigenous people have nation-specific, reciprocal relations with the physical land that colonizers are so often praised for describing in "early Canadian literature." Indigenous poets such as Kenzie Allen (Oneida), Jordan Abel (Nisga'a), Billy Ray Belcourt (Driftpile Cree), Joy Harjo (Muscogee), Johnson, Maracle, and Thomas King (Cherokee) grapple with the intersections of settler and Indigenous identities in their poetic discourse and examine the mischaracterizations of their cultures. Moreover, the Canadian experience is one of immigration. So, would not writers of the diaspora such as Dionne Brand, Roy Miki, Michael Ondaatje, M. NourbeSe Philp, and Fred Wah be one of the closest representations of the Canadian experience?

How does one decide who is Canadian? Citizenship is intricately tied to considerations of national identity because nationality through birth or parentage is often a determining factor of citizenship. Regarding the "The Rights of Non-Citizens," the Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights defines citizens as:

> persons who have been recognized by a State as having an effective link with it. International law generally leaves to each State the authority to determine who qualifies as a citizen. Citizenship can ordinarily be acquired by being born in the country (known as *jus soli* or the law of the place), being born to a parent who is a

> citizen of the country (known as *jus sanguinis* or the law of blood), naturalization or a combination of these approaches. (5)

Therefore, even if poets are not discussing citizenship explicitly, their contemplations and criticisms of home, homeland, and national identity connect with considerations of citizenship. Moreover, there are poets whose creative works enter into the interstitial space where they do not discuss these politics directly but instead implicitly describe personal and societal identity in connection with home and homeland. In their *Handbook of Citizenship*, Engin Isin and Bryan Turner outline the problem of national citizenship "in relation to human rights, the question of the obligations and virtues of the citizen, and finally the problem of globalization and territoriality" (5). This essay does not focus specifically on human rights or its citizens' particular obligations; instead, this essay illuminates the nuances of the third issue: the problem of globalization and territoriality. "The third issue," Isin and Turner delineate, "concerns the place of citizenship in the dynamic relationships between region, state, and global society in the modern world" (8). As an exemplar of Watson's second form of political poetry and a rumination on themes of belonging, this paper focuses on the contemporary Canadian poet John MacKenzie as he addresses the themes of home and homeland to challenge the constructs of national borders, especially for Canada—a nation constructed from and through other nations. As a whole, the collection *Letters I Didn't Write* (2008) critiques authorship and ownership, which illuminates the problem of being claimed by a settler state and by extension the issue with citizenship as a form of belonging to a particular state, of being owned/possessed/authored by that state. MacKenzie's poetry further illuminates the divide between homeland and home in a country like Canada, where so many of its residents call Canada their home but another place their homeland. Moreover, through his act of "transposition" in the composition of the poem "Georgetown Memories," MacKenzie problematizes the roles of authorship and ownership; this act of *absolute deterritorialization* through the creative act of "transposition" expresses a person's individual agency in redefining their sense of belonging and their effort in constructing a place they call "home."

In an age of global diaspora, MacKenzie calls for a reconsideration of home and homeland via the experience of belonging. Isin and Turner similarly note that these shifting definitions problematize our understanding of citizenship: "As the globalization process produces multiple diasporas, we can expect very complex relationships between homeland and host societies that will make the traditional idea of national citizenship increasingly problematic" (9). MacKenzie's chosen method of a "transposition" in "Georgetown Memories" is an act of *absolute deterritorialization* which incites and informs this essay's discussion of citizenship. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari generate the term "deterritorialization." In short, "deterritorialization" is the separation of particular social or political practices from

the populations and places that adhere to those practices. In a subsequent translation of *Anti-Oedipus* by Brian Massumi entitled *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987; 2004), Deleuze and Guattari discuss the process of translation as a "deterritorialization": "the temporal linearity of language expression relates not only to a succession but to a formal synthesis of succession in which time constitutes a process of linear overcoding and engenders a phenomenon unknown on the other strata: *translation*" (69; emphasis original). Deleuze and Guattari further expand the idea of "deterritorialization," differentiating between "relative deterritorialization" and "absolute deterritorialization." In his book *Deleuze and Guattari's A Thousand Plateaus*, Eugene W. Holland provides an accessible example for "deterritorialization," describing it in musical terms: "jazz musicians de-territorialize a tune by improvising on or around it" (9). Holland, through the example of jazz musicians, effectively differentiates "relative" and "absolute deterritorialization": "What Deleuze and Guattari call **relative** deterritorialization entails improvising on a familiar tune's chord sequence (or 'chord chart') in a specific key" (9; emphasis original). Holland goes on to explain "absolute deterritorialization": "But it can also happen that jazz musicians will unexpectedly change keys, or indeed suddenly switch from one tune to a completely different one … in the middle of an improvisation: these are instances of **absolute** deterritorialization" (9; emphasis original). In "Georgetown Memories," MacKenzie works as a jazz musician moving the piece from one key (a specific time and place) to another (different time and place). This act, even in the world of music, is called by the same term that MacKenzie uses: transposition.

The composition of MacKenzie's *Letters I Didn't Write* as a whole is a dialogue of voices. Throughout this collection of poems, MacKenzie overtly references and responds to the creative work of Hank Williams, Fernando Pessoa, Eugenio Montale, and Federico García Lorca. Interspersed between these named voices, some unnamed speakers give first-person accounts of their struggle to understand their place in the world. While some critics could argue that MacKenzie's rhetorical and compositional style is appropriative, I argue that these poems work intentionally against that very interpretation to complicate our understanding of contemporary *belonging* in Canada. I present four ways in which MacKenzie actively engages with these other poets and destabilizes conventional expectations of authorship and ownership of creative works that map onto the relationship with the nation state. MacKenzie disrupts assumptions of authorial ownership over texts at the same time that he destabilizes notions of belonging as singular in terms of place; by re-imagining the relationship between national belonging and textual ownership through transposition, MacKenzie critiques traditional arbiters of citizenship. Consequently, one could argue that a citizen can define their own sense of citizenship by navigating and reimagining home, homeland, and belonging.

This critical examination of the book as a whole is necessary to understand the context of the particular poem, "Georgetown Memories," which bears the epigraph:

"Transposed from Li Bai's Changgan Memories into the voice of a 19th-century Prince Edward Island woman." This poem's content elucidates the meaning of belonging as it relates to home and homeland. In response, I address the established critical considerations of home and homeland while also demonstrating how MacKenzie destabilizes those constructs. Furthermore, this poem is one of MacKenzie's self-proclaimed acts of transposition, in which he responds to and transforms a separate author's poetic work into a different work of poetry. I suggest that MacKenzie's act of transposition is one of absolute deterritorialization, and I emphasize the musical undertones evident in the term and act of transposition that also resonate with the other poems in the collection. Such an act of absolute deterritorialization calls for a re-examination of borders of all kinds—including boundaries and conditions of citizenship. MacKenzie's *Letters I Didn't Write* and the individual poem, "Georgetown Memories," both demonstrate the power of the written word to respond to conventions of authorship and ownership while simultaneously subverting those conventions through absolute deterritorialization, which suggests the power of critical writing and engagement to re-imagine and re-envision a new sense of citizenship. MacKenzie's *Letters I Didn't Write* demonstrates through its many voices, speakers, and transpositions that writers can rewrite contemporary understandings of home and citizenship.

## John MacKenzie's *Letters I Didn't Write*: Voices Destabilizing Conventions

MacKenzie was born on Prince Edward Island (PEI) in Canada in 1968. Without finishing high school, he set off working jobs that took him across Canada—all the while writing poetry. He found his way back to PEI, and he currently lives in Charlottetown. His first book of poetry, *Sledgehammer and Other Poems*, was shortlisted for the Atlantic Poetry Prize and the Gerald Lampert Award. His second book of poetry, *Shaken by Physics*, blends mythmaking and science. *Letters I Didn't Write* is MacKenzie's third published book of poetry. As described in the book's cover material, *Letters I Didn't Write* is "imbued with a sense of longing for opportunities lost and lives unfulfilled." As the title suggests, the narrative voice shifts from poem to poem—almost as if the narrator inhabits different experiences—with an undertone of loss. The book is divided into three sections: "The Moon Just Went Behind a Cloud (lost Hank Poems)," "Letters I Didn't Write," and "The Book of Hours." The first section, "The Moon Just Went Behind a Cloud (lost Hank Poems)," presents a vivid portraiture of the country music star Hank Williams. Each poem in this section is titled with key and time signature—highlighting the musical resonance in both form and content. Written in third-person narration (describing the life and impact of Williams) as well as first-person narration (where the narrative voice is that of Williams, himself), these poems grapple with the grief, alcoholism, and untimely death of Williams at

the age of 29. The second section, "Letters I Didn't Write," has poems in first-person narration that muse upon the passage of time and loss of innocence while threading musicality throughout. This section has songs ("Sparrow Song," "Crows Calling in the Evening," "Midnight Song of the Seasons"), laments ("To Sorrow"), and notes ("Notes in a Diminished Minor"). The poem "Georgetown Memories" appears in this middle section of the book and contains the themes that resonate throughout the collection: music, voices, loss, and belonging. The final section, "The Book of Hours," dialogues with the poets Pessoa, Montale, and (especially) Lorca. Each of these twentieth-century poets has radically different lived experiences and cultural backgrounds (Pessoa is Portuguese, Montale is Italian, and Lorca is Spanish). Referencing and engaging with these poets, MacKenzie makes connections between diverse backgrounds while also demonstrating shared experiences. The poets' poetic discourses relate to the themes of loss and belonging throughout *Letters I Didn't Write*, as they each demonstrate these themes in their poetry while they struggle with this reality in their daily lives. Interspersed between these poetic conversations in the final section of *Letters I Didn't Write*, other first-person poems reveal a speaker grappling with loneliness, loss, and solipsism.

MacKenzie's engagement with these specific creative writers is significant, especially that of Pessoa. One critical aspect of the poet Pessoa concerning authorship should be highlighted: Pessoa wrote under various personae, which he called "heteronyms." Instead of a pseudonym (a different name), a heteronym is a persona created by an author, and it is a separate person with their own history. A writer taking on a heteronym is an act of deterritorialization, itself. In *The Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, J. A. Cuddon attributes the creation of the term "heteronym" to Pessoa and defines it as: "a kind of creative *alter ego*: a separate character and personality who produced poetry and prose" (331).[2] Writers at the Poetry Foundation explain even though Pessoa would write under his own name, he considered that identity separate from himself: "Pessoa published under his own name as well, but considered that work the product of an 'orthonym,' another literary persona." In his creation of heteronyms, Pessoa separates himself from his creative output by engendering various personae and imbuing their lives with complex experiences. Pessoa ardently argued that he did not write those works written by his various heteronyms. In creating these personae and attributing the creative agency to them, Pessoa breaks down preconceived notions and traditional expectations that yoke

2 Cuddon also adds that Pessoa "invented three main personalities, namely Alberto Caeiro, Ricardo Reis and Álvaro de Campos, on whom he bestowed lives and histories of their own. In effect, one may conclude that they represented different facets of his own many-sided personality. For him, they had a real existence; they were not pseudonyms (q.v.). In a letter to Adolfo Casais Monteiro (13 Jan. 1935), he describes in detail how they came to exist and how they tended to take over in the creative process (331–332).

authorship to ownership. Ahead of his time in his progressive thoughts on authorship and ownership, "Pessoa's insistence on identity as a flexible, dynamic construction, and his consequent rejection of traditional notions of authorship and individuality, anticipated the concerns of the post-Modernist movement" (Poetry Foundation). MacKenzie similarly shares this flexibility of identity and authorship in *Letters I Didn't Write*, and this dynamic understanding of authorship should shape the way the reader interprets the poetry therein. This same reevaluation of authorial ownership maps onto those arbiters—gatekeepers—of citizenship; MacKenzie's subversion of authorship can be read as a critique of those arbiters of citizenship who seek to exert power and "ownership" over people by determining the parameters of their identity as citizens.

One could read MacKenzie's *Letters I Didn't Write* and claim that the book is one of cultural appropriation and elision of other writers; however, this interpretation lacks the contextualization necessary to appreciate the complexity of this book of poetry. There are four significant aspects of *Letters I Didn't Write* that highlight MacKenzie's intention and care for fellow poets: 1) acknowledgement, 2) dialogue, 3) transpositions / versions, and 4) destabilizing conventions. Firstly, MacKenzie acknowledges the other authors in the titles or epigraphs of the poems he writes; MacKenzie intentionally names and highlights the authors that inspire the works within *Letters I Didn't Write*. Secondly, this whole collection is comprised of letters (as the title suggests), which implies a dialogue. In his epistolary collection of poems, MacKenzie responds to the creative works of these poets by writing responses. Thirdly, MacKenzie writes transpositions and versions of other poets' artistic work.[3] With these designations, he is suggesting that these "letters" exist as iterations of previous poems—not as poems that supersede the works that inspire him. Fourthly, MacKenzie challenges conventions of both "high" and "low" art by responding to Chinese poetry as well as songs (and the life) of Hank Williams. Through the many compelling creative writers he cites, MacKenzie demonstrates they should be given consideration—regardless of artistic categorization that may be attributed to those artists and their medium. Another way in which MacKenzie destabilizes convention is his consideration of authorship. As previously mentioned, MacKenzie challenges the conventions of authorship in a similar way to Pessoa; MacKenzie acknowledges the fluidity and flexibility of authorship. MacKenzie builds this fluid understanding of authorship into the text itself—in its form, content, and even its title. The title *Letters I Didn't Write* suggests that the poet abdicates ownership or authorship of these works. Throughout this paper, I continue to attribute the poems in this collection to MacKenzie because no other crediting seems veracious. But one may ask: if MacKenzie did not write these letters—as the title suggests—then who did? With

3 I will address the complexity and significance of this term transposition (and the differences between transposition and translation) when I closely examine "Georgetown Memories."

each transposition and each poem's speaker, the "letters" take on different authors. While MacKenzie may not be the speaker of these letters—he is the author of this work as a whole. Throughout the collection, it is difficult to ascertain the distance between the poem's speaker and that of the writer himself. But that distance (or lack thereof) seems to be precisely an area of inquiry for MacKenzie, the poet. *Letters I Didn't Write* is not a book that attempts to elide other poetic voices or speak for underrepresented experiences; instead, it reads like a series of carefully worded letters in conversation with other complex and compelling works of poetry—attempting to navigate the world and the speaker(s) place within it. Further, the polyphony of voices and abdication of ownership suggest that readers find areas of shared experience—belonging—and understand how each individual's navigation of this experience may be different but that each person shares the opportunity to define their own sense of belonging. By extension, people have an agency in defining their place in the world and this should extend to notions of citizenship.

## "Georgetown Memories": A Transposition

> I've heard that even atheists will pray and pray
> in fair weather near the Cape of Good Hope,
> and you sailed in the changeable springtime
> with its litany of names of lost ships. (45.31–4 )

In this brief excerpt from MacKenzie's "Georgetown Memories," the poem's speaker describes her experience as a sea merchant's wife, a reality experienced by many women in nineteenth-century Prince Edward Island. Appearing in the second section, "Letters I Didn't Write," the poem "Georgetown Memories" is compelling and quixotic. As the epigraph notes, this poem was originally written in eighth-century China by Li Bai (also known as Li Po), and MacKenzie rewrites the content to make it a representation of the life of a nineteenth-century PEI woman through a self-described act of transposition. Through this transposition, MacKenzie challenges the concepts of "home" and "homeland" in "Georgetown Memories." MacKenzie questions home through the actions of the characters in the poem. MacKenzie presents an idealized version of home and subsequently problematizes it; consequently, this work prompts a reinterpretation of home. Instead of home as a place defined by four walls and physical boundaries, home is a metaphysical construction experienced through emotional and spiritual connections with others. In addition to questioning home, MacKenzie challenges the notion of homeland in his self-described act of transposition. In "Georgetown Memories," MacKenzie aligns two distinct female characters: an eighth-century female narrator in China with a nineteenth-century female narrator in Prince Edward Island. By breaking down temporal and spa-

tial boundaries between these women, MacKenzie performs an absolute deterritorialization. The dissolution of these boundaries through MacKenzie's creative act of transposition presents a new understanding of homeland. Homeland is not just defined by one location with physical boundaries; instead, homeland is constructed through community—through relationships. This reimagining of homeland is similar to Isin and Tuner's discussion of the changing concept of citizenship which is in the locus of "the dynamic relationships between region, state, and global society in the modern world" (8). Home, homeland, and citizenship are constructed by both social and political forces; however, the intersection of relationships and belonging is the nexus for these negotiations.

## Finding Home (Heim)

MacKenzie first challenges notions of home in "Georgetown Memories." The actions of the narrator in this poem suggest that home is a construction dependent not on the state or parameters of citizenship but defined through emotional and spiritual connections. Eric Hobsbawm, employing the German term "heim," describes home as an "essentially private" space (67). Contrastingly, in *Home Territories: Media, Mobility, and Identity*, David Morley challenges such ideals of privacy: "I am concerned to explicate a number of senses of what it might mean to be 'at home' in a world where the sitting room is a place where, in a variety of mediated forms, the global meets the local" (2). Morley explores a conception of home infiltrated by the public, and as such, he questions whether home is indeed an essentially private space. Similar to Morley, MacKenzie in "Georgetown Memories," challenges the private sphere of home within the plot of the poem by presenting an idealized home and problematizing it.

MacKenzie begins with the poem's narrator describing her budding romance with her childhood friend:

> When I first began to care
> about how my hair would look, I sat
> one day near the apple trees by our gate
> picking and arranging flowers.
> A boy came by on a high-necked horse
> he made from a branch of white birch—
> You rode round and round me as if I were a sun,
> and apples the small green moons of your thoughts. (44.1–8)

MacKenzie fashions an idealized marriage and home: one of companionship, love, and faith shared by two lovers. These two lovers had even known each other as children, as the poem reads: "We were not really strangers to each other; / both of us born and raised in the same village" (44.9–10). The beginning of the marriage, especially

for the woman narrator, is characterized by shyness. The speaker describes this, saying: "as a wife I was too shy / to dare open my face in a smile" (44.15–6). However, the trust that they shared in their marriage and the warmth of their home was transformative: "I learned again / that laughing with you was a thing I loved. / I knew that day life with you was good" (44–5.21–3). The emotional and spiritual connection they share defines home for them. The narrator speaks of this powerful bond: "I wanted us to be together even as ashes and dust" (45.24). This illustrates the speaker's recognition that home is defined by her connection with her husband.

MacKenzie complicates this connection with a plot development: the husband's business takes him away from his wife to travel on the dangerous seas that have claimed many lives; his departure gives rise to conflict. MacKenzie highlights that the husband's absence tears their home asunder. She says:

> It is August already. Already August,
> and the butterflies are yellow.
> In pairs, like slow, hesitant suns, the butterflies
> dance the west meadow's grass towards yellow.
> Your absence is the hard, long axis
> my heart turns around, wearing and wearing.
> Every day adds a line to my lament. My colour fades.
> tears score my cheeks the way rivers etch the earth. (46.45–52)

For the narrator, the absence of her husband is equated with the loss of home itself. The speaker claims that she will leave that physical space once called home. She is willing to overcome all barriers to seek her love and be at home with him—wherever he may be.

The speaker of the poem seeks home in emotional and spiritual connection and thereby evidences home characterized by fluidity. Similarly, Morley addresses these fluctuations: "… various forms of mediation, displacement, and deterritorialization are generally held to have transformed our sense of place, their theorisation has often proceeded at a highly abstract level, towards a generalised account of nomadology" (3). While the poem's narrator is compelled to leave her private sphere to search for home, she does not intend to seek a life of nomadology; instead, she has a clear idea of where home can be found:

> If company business ever brings you
> as near as Halifax, Boston, or New York,
> please write as soon as you know
> to tell me when you will be there.
> Discomfort of travel, distance from the Island
> mean nothing. I will board the first train

or ship bound for that city
and come directly to meet you. (46.52–59)

Although MacKenzie's poem is set in the nineteenth century, the question of home still resonates with a twenty-first-century readership. (And it must not be forgotten that the poem's readership originally was an eighth-century audience, which further evidences the enduring significance of the meaning of home.) In *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, James Clifford portrays the twentieth century as an age of rapid mobility: "… crucial community 'insides' and regulated traveling 'outsides.' What does it take to define and defend a homeland? What are the political stakes in claiming (or sometimes being regulated to) a 'home'?" (36). The actions of the narrator in this poem suggest that home is defined through emotional and spiritual connections instead of "the state" or definitions of citizenship. As evidenced by MacKenzie's poetic discourse, home, experienced in these connections, produces a plurality of manifestations, resisting a singular definition. Poetic discourses, like MacKenzie's, demonstrate that the broadening of narrow definitions allows for greater diversity, and ideally, greater compassion. Individuals have the agency to define their own sense of home and belonging; by extension, they become arbiters of their own citizenship by identifying themselves with a place and defining it as their home.

## Finding Homeland (Heimat)

In addition to questioning the construction of home, MacKenzie also challenges the concept of homeland. In *Banal Nationalism*, Michael Billig also addresses the term "heimat" or homeland: "Heimat … is the place of 'our' personal homes—my home, your home—and, as such, it is the home of all of 'us,' the home of homes, the place where all of 'us' are at home. In this sense, the homeland is imagined as a unity…. Each homeland is to be imagined both in its totality and its particularity" (75). In "Georgetown Memories," MacKenzie makes a self-proclaimed transposition by shifting from eighth-century China to nineteenth-century Prince Edward Island. By exposing similarities between these entities, his transposition challenges the constructs of history and nationhood. By aligning two disparate time periods and countries—revealing their similarities—MacKenzie effectively troubles those boundaries, performing an absolute deterritorialization.

The first question to consider is: why is MacKenzie's "Georgetown Memories" not considered a translation? In *Performing Without a Stage*, Robert Wechsler describes the art of translation as "an active way of reading something closely, critiquing it, and writing it, all at the same time" (13). MacKenzie's re-envisioning of "Changgan Memories" fits these parameters. But MacKenzie does not seek to translate; he does not wish to put the poem from one language to another. He *changes* the poem's de-

tails: the age of the narrator, the names of important places, the degree of the marriage's description, and later the intensity of the pain the absence causes. While he makes these small changes, he makes this text align with a different time period, a different geographical location, and a different audience. Making these changes to the text is what situates MacKenzie's act as a transposition instead of a translation.

The second question to consider is: if MacKenzie does not translate but instead transposes, what type of activity is he performing? As previously explained, this act of transposition is one of absolute deterritorialization because MacKenzie moves the piece from one key (a specific time and place) to another (different time and place). The subsequent question to consider then is: what is the significance of the act of transposition? MacKenzie, through his act of absolute deterritorialization, removes the boundaries between seemingly disparate nations, time periods, and individuals. He evidences that concepts of nationhood and historicity are constructs, a theoretical development with which we are familiar in the twenty-first century. But more significantly, MacKenzie demonstrates that constructs can be challenged and destabilized through creative acts, in this case through transposition. In *Out Of This World: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation*, Peter Hallward discusses Deleuze's emphasis on the creative act: "Purely creative thought will proceed on the model of what Deleuze calls an 'abstract line,' a line that traces a trajectory whose development or becoming is indifferent to any already constituted forms or shapes, whose creative flight is free from any territorial constraint" (2). MacKenzie puts into action what Deleuze describes in theory. MacKenzie, through his creative act of transposition, allows the reader to recognize territorial boundaries but not be constrained by them. Instead of merely removing boundaries, MacKenzie also elucidates connections. MacKenzie, in his creative act, illustrates that connections can be found between individuals, nations, and time periods. This is not to say that individuals, nations, and time periods are all the same; the differences between these groups are often significant foundations of a culture. MacKenzie's transposition illustrates that cultural groups, despite their differences, should not be considered as another's "opposite" or "other," because each share connections and are not completely alien from one another. Canada, in particular, is a country that so clearly is constructed by and comprised of many cultures and nations. In this act of transposition, MacKenzie demonstrates that humans share experiences that elucidate connections that extend beyond political, cultural, spatial, and temporal boundaries. MacKenzie highlights the shared human experiences of finding home, coping with loss, and seeking belonging that bind people together by restoring agency and power to individuals in being authors of their own identity and citizenship.

## Writing Citizenship

MacKenzie's *Letters I Didn't Write* destabilizes preconceived notions of authorship regarding creative or artistic works. This subversion of ownership critiques the assumed power of the state to author an individual's identity, personhood, and citizenship. Also, at the level of the individual poem, MacKenzie's "Georgetown Memories" challenges established ideals of both home and homeland. Initially questioning the role of home by employing the plot of the poem, MacKenzie creates an ideal home, problematizes it, and provides a new interpretation of it. MacKenzie reveals that home is not a physical, bounded entity; instead, home is experienced in emotional and spiritual connections. This presents a fluid concept of home; as a result, this problematizes a strict definition of home as being only a private sphere defined by physical boundaries and separated from the public sphere. MacKenzie also tests the construction of homeland. MacKenzie demonstrates that homeland is experienced in connections—through relationships and community. Such spiritual, personal, and yet communal re-imaginings of home and homeland remind us of the shared experience of belonging. The act of belonging to a place is an integral part of being a citizen of that place. MacKenzie's transposition is an act of absolute deterritorialization which speaks to the power of the creative act and the agency of the individual to delineate their sense of belonging and where they fit in the world.

This discussion of the creative act and the role of contemporary authorship is paramount to us as scholars and critics. As Hallward says: "Almost every aspect of Deleuze's philosophy is caught up with the consequences of this initial correlation of being, creativity, and thought" (2). We seek and study the result of creative acts, each time attempting to gain a greater understanding of how we function in the world of which we are a part. We are in a constant state of pursuit: the pursuit of knowledge, the pursuit of our place in the world, and even the pursuit of home and belonging. MacKenzie's "Georgetown Memories" subverts traditional definitions of home and gestures toward new interpretation, inundated with a plethora of manifestations. And regarding the search for home, it remains to be said: if you can experience home and homeland in connections and community, then perhaps you are closer to home than you originally thought. These desires link to our understanding and our definition of citizenship. Isin and Turner suggest that citizenship and its definition are fundamental to global governance: "Citizenship must be a central component to whatever answers and policies emerge towards global governance" (9). Considering the significance of citizenship and its definition, as critics, we ought to consider our role in writing critically about citizenship, even as we engage with and examine the work of authors or other creative thinkers. Isin and Turner declare the vital role of citizenship studies: "Citizenship studies is about producing analytical and theoretical tools with which to address these injustices with the depth, sensibility, scope and commitment that they demand and deserve" (3). Isin and Turner

demonstrate the valiant undertaking of an ethical approach in citizenship studies, and they illustrate how sensible and nuanced thinkers/writers are central to producing analytical and theoretical tools to generate positive change. Poets like MacKenzie demonstrate the power of the written word and creative forms (of transposition) to remind us of the agency we have in personal expression to define our personhood, determine our home and homeland, and to designate our citizenship.

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