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TRANSNATIONAL BODIES IN TRANSIT
New Routes for Affective Transpositions in Shani Mootoo's *Polar Vortex*

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ABSTRACT

This article puts Shani Mootoo's novel, Polar Vortex *(2020), in conversation with the vitalist philosophy of Rosi Braidotti, as illustrated in the study Posthuman Feminism (2022) and Libe García Zarranz "Sustainable Affects" (2017a, 2020b). I look at the centrality of affective relations in the transformation of queer subjectivity under processes of the growing (un)happiness in the diasporic homeSpace. Shani Mootoo's (non)diasporic cross-border narrative proposes contrastive figurations of the subject through temporal and spatial frameworks. Mootoo's "transposable moves" resist a naïve return to sentimentality or nostalgic love to advocate instead a turn to sustainable affects.*

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1. Introduction

In an interview conducted by literary critic Mariam Pirbhai, Shani Mootoo, upon admitting that she is "angry with Trinidad for not taking care of its citizens who live alternative lifestyles" (2015, p. 230), expresses her desire to write stories that remind marginalized people of themselves, of their worlds (Salcedo, 2020, p. 57). Shani Mootoo was born in Dublin in 1957, to a white Irish mother and an East-Indian-Caribbean father, grew up in Trinidad and moved to Canada at the age of nineteen. Mootoo's strengthened Canadianness will allow her to gradually take a stand against discrimination of lesbians in Trinidad, as elsewhere, and to write on behalf of the queer minorities of diaspora (Charczun, 2019, p. 104).

> The stories I write, the art I make" Mootoo says, "all speak of the desire to break and simultaneously braid given identities, to make transformative leaps into […] a self-defined 'other.' […] It is through my writing […] that […] I dare […] to attempt to purse [my] lips and blow at the borders of lesbian identity, create new spaces where […] the inequalities and discrimination of genders within lesbianism itself get addressed, and where that multiplicity of genders is celebrated (Pirbhai, 2015, pp. 83, 94).

This attempt at abolishing the official boundaries makes her build new forms of knowledge and move towards new routes in diasporic writing in Canada. There is no exilic tale of longing for a romanticized and idealized Trinidadian past, nor does Canada open up hospitable spaces for non-heteronormative Indo-Trinidadians. The limits of Canadian hospitality become evident when Mootoo's protagonists do not relate to Indianness and show how the demands to fit in are reproduced in everyday living practices in urban and rural areas (Chakraborty, 2012, p. 70). The 1990s were a time when the poetic and cultural worldmaking of queer writers started to transform the literary traditions produced in Canada, counteracting the "sedative politics" of "official multiculturalism" (Kamboureli 2009, p. 82).

Together with other writers of the South Asian diaspora in Canada, Mootoo complains about the precarity of queer diasporic subjectivities and Canada's complicitous stance in *Polar Vortex* (2020). Mootoo's queer narrators unveil the perverse affects to which sexually and racially marginalized communities are exposed, and explore the ways by which affective relations move in heterogeneous ways to validate their own identity. Accordingly, Kamboureli approaches the concept of transnational solidarity posing the question *Should I be Here?* in order to challenge the importance of the practice of self-location: "What is at stake in declaring and practising solidarity is the validation of alterity, not the production of a common alterity" (2009, p. 5). It is not surprising that diasporic writers in Canada are publishing their work while positioning intersectional approaches to race and ethnicity at the centre of their creative inquiry.

Several writings in the last thirty years have drawn their attention to crucial aspects in the establishment of new diasporic ideologies in order to fight the absolutist notions of sexual, gender, religious and national identities (Hall 1990; Gopinath 2005), and also the reproduction of heteronormative and hegemonic assumptions purported by nationalisms. The current heterogeneity of diasporic experience in the 21st century challenges such nationalist ideologies by considering queerness as a significant factor shaping the diaspora experience. Recent studies (Braidotti 2022; Ahmed 2010) work to dislodge the old concept of diasporic anxiety from its traditional loyalty to nostalgic nationalist ideologies and, accordingly, "recuperate those desires, practices and subjectivities that are rendered impossible and unimaginable within conventional diasporic and nationalist imaginaries" (Gopinath, 2005, p. 7). This feminist and transnational stance tries to challenge the fictions of purity and essence that lie at the heart of dominant nationalist ideologies and also of conventional diasporic beliefs (Gopinath, 2005, p. 11). The notion of queer diaspora, however, is not intended to function as an all-encompassing, totalizing concept, but different diasporic communities perform queer diasporas in disparate ways, and to diverse ends, which amounts to the necessity of providing studies that provide exhaustive accounts of the different affective relations (Gopinath, 2005, 2010; Walcott, 2012; Ferguson, 2004; Mbembe, 2018). Shani Mootoo offers a valuable insight into the Indian-Trinidadian queer diasporic experience so a consideration of queerness in a South Asian diasporic context is now required (Salcedo, 2020).

In the last twenty years, Canada has functioned as a productive interface between the diaspora and its originary cultures and a planetary concept of the *homeSpace* has been refashioned in response to the new chronotope (Spivak, 2005). This renewal tries to "reimagine a new life that would be planetary, or a consciousness of planetary entanglement, where a new shift becomes necessary, in a search for safety, away from the fear and anxiety that pervaded diasporic writing twenty years ago" (Mbembe, 2018). A new paradigm of the transCanadian network has evolved into a new relational construct, "through an inseparable mixture of coalitions, ruptures, entanglements, tensions, and alliances" (García Zarranz, 2017a, p. 9). We should not, however, overlook the negative and shameful feelings that have been central in queer existence, and Canada's complicitous actions against the First Nations, immigrants and refugees, which make us implement new epistemologies in Canadian literature as a field.

Not all Canadian writing that details migrancy evolves from a postulation of wretchedness. Some prose works that tentatively gesture towards resistance unsettle far more than those that reinscribe a recital of otherness and suffering (van Herk 2021). How, then, asks van Herk, to read stories that refuse to live on their knees, refuse to succumb to the very vulnerability that they expose? If, as Marianne Hirsch says, "an acknowledgement of vulnerability, both shared and produced, can open a space of interconnection, as well as a platform for responsiveness" (n.p.), surely stories of immigration offer opportunity to explore exactly that responsiveness. We will try to find these connections, closely tied to notions of agency and responsibility and to what Gayatri Spivak has called "the cultivation of an imagination that can flex into another's space" (2018, 169). These are new forms of reflection and critical response to a poetics, as Fred Wah argues, "in its practical and applied sense," as "the tools designed or located by writers and artists to initiate movement and change" (in Beauregard, 1999, 56-7). This engages South Asian Canadian diasporic writing with Hirsch's "embodied openness" (n.p.), García Zarranz's "sustainable affects" (2020b), and with Braidotti's affective solidarity (2022). In this context, Mootoo's narratives have evolved towards an affective "worldbuilding" that derives from the field of affect theory, and will be the process the writer uses to come up with the imaginative world of her story, as Nora Jemisin reflects in her conversation with Ezra Klein (Ezra Klein Show, 2018, 55:45). This worldbuilding refers to an atmosphere that can also provide allegories for problems that people are dealing with in our own world by presenting similar situations in the world of the text (Troeung, 2022).

Braidotti's affirmative politics will help us analyse these immanent interconnections to better understand new embodied and embedded transnational ethics of place and time (*Posthuman Feminism*, 2022). We need to braid relational and affective cartographies of the new power relations that are emerging from class, race, gender and sexual orientations, which are, more than ever, significant markers of human "normality" (Braidotti, 2006, p. 36). The diasporic *homeSpace* has thus evolved as the site of multiple identities and histories, which call attention to the importance of geopolitics and the multiple transformations various bodies go through during the process of acquiring identity. Recent studies and cultural texts which examine the complex entanglements of Southeast Asian sites open new critical frames to revitalize and transform these affective alliances. Texts such as Mootoo's *Polar Vortex* move under radical different circumstances within and across South-Asian spaces in Canada.

2. Narrating the Queer *homeSpace*

Kamboureli encourages the reader to have a "transtemporal methodology" approach and examine how diasporic politics and poetics operate transversally along time and space, but "without maintaining the illusion of innocence or non-complicity" (p. 25). Accordingly, affects may be read "as dislocated transtemporal assemblages of intensities and forces caught in endless circuits of power and, thus, of political, cultural, and ethical relevance" (García Zarranz, 2020b, p. 89). As Mootoo's narrative has been exploring in her narratives since the 1990s, a more inclusive worldbuilding within queer communities of the world can be reimagined, taking new routes to represent the multiplicity of identities and subjectivities of lesbians of colour in a foreign setting. Our focus lies on García Zarranz's critical reorientation to sustainable affects and passions, and on "a call for love as a mode of action that can reorient the system by embracing our potentia as feminist subjects" (2017b, p. 48). Braidotti's

vitalist philosophy throughout her trilogy on Posthuman ethics (Braidotti, 2013, 2018, 2021) is now relevant to read this affective commitment which is imbued with paradoxes, tensions and contradictions. Affects such as happiness, love and joy are normative and non-sustainable when they are imposed by official narratives of anthropocentric humanism or belonging. We are interested, nonetheless, in the fact that "[l]oves that depart from the scripts of normative existence can be seen as a 'source' of shame […]. Queer desires become an injury to the family, and to the bodily form of the social norm" (Ahmed, 2014, p. 107). In this time of precarity, disease and transfobia it is crucial to forge "sustainable affective reorientations" (García-Zarranz, 2020b).

In her study of the queer diasporic experience in a South Asian context, Gopinath categorically asserts that, within patriarchal diasporic and nationalist logic, to be "woman" and "lesbian" is configured as mutually exclusive categories and a threat to "Indianness" (2005, p. 11). Being a lesbian and a woman is unthinkable, unimaginable and unmentioned, the figure of the "woman"- constructed as a pure and immaculate sexual being - becomes the boundary marker of ethnic/racial community in the host nation, which entails that "notions of chastity and sexual purity" are representative not just of "the family's reputation but also, in the context of diaspora, of the purity of tradition and ethnic identity, a defense against the promiscuity of "'American influences'" (Maira, 2012, p. 27). This being so, the woman is the preserver and the symbol of India, so any other sexual behavior would endanger proper Indianness, identity and loyalty (Salcedo, 2020). If that is so, in what ways are queer diasporic subjectivities produced through the criminalization and exclusion of particular bodies, practices and identities? (Gopinath, 2010). At the beginning of the novel Mootoo's narrator shows her (non)diasporic re-sentment when she travels backwards to her youth in Trinidad in a transtemporal voyage that will reveal her affective transposition:

> when I was growing up on my little island in the Caribbean, women from families like mine remained girls in their family's care until they were married, regardless of their age. You were so sheltered, so watched in my kind of family -an Indian family- that unless you were wayward or just stupidly brave, you didn't get to flirt or experience sexual intimacy with another person until you were married, or, if it was in the cards for you, you left home and went to another country where, in the case of people from families like mine, you attended university – which allowed you more freedom than you'd ever imagined possible. And what do you do with freedom like that? You learn to kiss and you learn to fuck. You learn what's possible, you experiment, and you figure out in the dorms or in your little bachelor apartment off campus what you like to do and to whom, and what you like to have done to you, and by whom, who you are in bed, who you can and can't be. All of that, a vital part of your education abroad […] When you went back home, you went back a different person. (pp. 21-22)

Polar Vortex is a powerfully unsettling novel about Priya and Alex, a lesbian couple who leave the big city to relocate to a bucolic countryside community. It seemed like a good way to leave their past behind and cement their later-in-life relationship. Their affects move and are moved relationally after choosing a rural Canadian space which will unveil, as in a planetary awakening, Priya's "human corporeality, in all its material fleshiness, inseparable from 'nature' or 'environment'" (Alaimo, 2008, p. 238). But Priya has a secret. A relationship with Prakash, an old friend who has tracked Priya down in her new life, and before she realizes what she's doing, she invites him to an overnight visit. Throughout the decades Prakash always seemed to want more, but Priya was apparently only interested in women. "The Bed" opens the book with Priya lying awake in bed on the morning of Prakash's visit:

> That dream again. In it I always want him so badly. I am shaking from my waist down, like a dog yanked off a human leg.
>
> I wonder if I moved about in my sleep. If Alex has any idea of the kind of dream I had lying next to her […]. Funny, you can't hear a thing from the rest of the house, but you can hear a dog out on the street barking and, from outside the window behind the bed, a bird […]. Could be a squirrel. A chipmunk maybe. Or a mouse trying to get in from the cold […]. I doubt I'll ever get used to critters wanting to share space with me.

> The desire I felt in the dream lingers in my body. Ripples of pleasure torture me […] a feeling of regret descends on me […] I wonder what she's doing. We hadn't ended the night well […] We'd come to bed, both of us, with heavy hearts. The silence between us crouched on my chest like a small animal breathing in my face. (pp. 13-14)

Priya notices Alex's concern and wonders "if it's unthinkable that I could have an old friend who'd want to visit me. Am I that unlovable?" (p. 15). The quietness in the house starts being "plagued by the odor of decomposition" (p. 102), displaying new and uncanny senses around her, no longer feeling "so safe in this house that she isn't bothered by movement in her peripheral vision" (p. 103). Soon the existing cracks in their relationship widen. Prakash's visit to her rural space transforms hospitality into hostile feelings in Priya's Canadian partner, and her abject home, becomes "a dead and rotting animal" (p. 143) stalking her. In "The Visitor," Alex's friend, Skye, comes to visit unravelling Alex's narrative voice: "I was experiencing in our kitchen what Priya experienced constantly among our friends: the revealing fact of difference, this time them -Priya and Prakash- from me. He and she could have passed for each other's family […] I was born here" (pp. 199-200). This, for Alex, gradually becomes "unbearable when you're hiding […] from each other" (p. 205). In "A Drive in the Country" we come back to Priya's narrative voice which expresses the need to flee from the countryside, to move forward: "I miss the city. I sometimes feel as if I've removed myself from the hustle and bustle, the diversity and the unexpected, wonderfully crazy flow of life. It can be lonely down here" (p. 245).

There are no easy answers as Mootoo reveals layer after layer Priya's memories ranging from Prakash's unwelcome advances in their youth when he offered to marry Priya to disguise her sexuality. Now, they are "on the edge" of their foreign cultures, and their diasporic bodies underline the multiplicity of Indian diasporas, countering the way different diasporic routes and traditions are read in Canada. Priya knows that, despite being Indians who were born and grew up outside of India, "[t]here were -are- so many things between him and me, separating us" (p. 159). Impressively, some of Priya's most vital memories emerge in the last twenty pages where, instead of weighing the reader down to with backstory, they unlock the impossibility to erase full memory of her youth's impulse at assimilating.

The embodiment of sexual, racial and cultural affects defies easy classification in Mootoo's text. Both Priya and Prakash are diasporic Indians but Priya's family moved to Trinidad long before her birth, and she came to Canada during college in search for a new life and identity. Prakash's family, meanwhile, left India to settle in Uganda before fleeing to Canada as refugees. His identity remains more outwardly connected to his heritage, a refugeeness that did not allow him to fit in, entering an arranged marriage and speaking Gujarati with his wife. Even if Priya and Prakash's initial connection stems from their racial similarities, their cultural differences -which Mootoo explores with superb complexity- only deepen an already complicated entanglement that distances them from both the novel's other Canadian characters and each other. Animatedness (Ngai, 2005) invades his-story when he talks about the expulsion of 80.000 Indians from Uganda in 1972, while Priya watches and listens to whom has become a stranger,

> his experience *in Uganda itself* was not only a story about his family or about the history of Uganda, but it was part of Canada's history too […]. It was interesting to watch him, as he seemed, at least in my opinion, to be figuring out how to create a narrative out of his family's experience. (p. 218)

In contrast, Priya's (non)diasporic growth in Canada has taught her that difference does not mean opposition but rather empathy; not instability but coherence, but finds in Alex a settler consciousness which is incapable of sharing the different narratives of exile: "You expect me to be happy that a strange man will come and spend a night here with us?" (p. 36), Alex blindly asserts, "[y]ou have more in common with this man than you have with me […] You have history with him. You and I, we don't share a past" (p. 49). Prakash is a ghostly trope which haunts both Priya's perception of the past and Alex's insecurity of the place she now occupies triggering her racist affect towards Prakash.

In his provocative reflections on hospitality, Jacques Derrida points out that there is a semantic and etymological link between hospitality and hostility (2000a, p. 15). Hospitality is a giving gesture, but it is characterized by a limitation, for the host welcomes/invites the guest into his/her home with its

attendant rules to which the guest becomes subject. In this way the guest is allowed to enter the host's *homeSpace* under conditions that the host has determined. This conditional hospitality entails that the host remains the host at home, and the guest remains an invited guest (2000b, p. 4). Derrida's deconstructive reading of the contradictions inherent in (conditional) hospitality allows us to tease out the implications of the welcome offered to, and perceived by, Mootoo's narrators who resist these unviable normative scripts, thus opening spaces for the decolonization of such affects (García Zarranz, 2020b, p. 89). This gives credence to Sara Ahmed's poignant critique of Western multiculturalism as the acceptance of difference within the *homeSpace* actually serves to conceal difference. Certain differences are "tolerated," and there are differentiated racializations of immigrant communities in the name of liberal inclusion or multiculturalism (Ahmed, 2009).

Polar Vortex reflects both Prakash's and Alex's inability to move forward in Mootoo's proposal of new ways to think about our positionality in the *homeSpace*, alongside and beyond national and transnational discourses (Kamboureli & Miki, 2007). Translating the subject geographically will entail an emotional and affective relocation which opens a new way of approaching the text with political and cultural processes which are clearly related to the body (Felksi, 2015). This geopolitical and spatial movement will affect Priya's queer relocation as a (non) diasporic subject. It is through animatedness and resentment where Mootoo addresses the affective ruptures of the transCanadian subject (García-Zarranz, 2017a) living in this contemporary age where the vitality and toxicity of queer relations remain at the centre of affective solidarity.

3. Narrating Heterogeneity

After having identified the narrator's difficulties with her national and gender identities as a queer diasporic individual, the narrator is permanently aware of her own bodily gestures and of what other people might be thinking of those; such fixation with the surface of her body is consistent with Ahmed affirmation that "the sense of out-of-place-ness and estrangement involves" being fully aware of one's body, "when one cannot inhabit the social skin, which is shaped by some [heteronormative] bodies, and not others" (2004, p. 148). Prakash's assimilation, however, is the result of his success in his public performance, even if it "involves a desire to approximate an ideal that one has already failed" in his search for happiness (Ahmed, 2004, p. 140). Aware of the fact that the public space he inhabits is tailored to the normative gender roles and sexual codes, Prakash feels, at some points, compelled to perform the gender role society expects of him as a man (Tonkiss, 2005, p. 94-95). In contrast, Priya exemplifies Brah's assertion that diasporic identity is by definition plural, shifting and multi-locational (1996, p.194), and finds Prakash's resentful and monolithic identity the reflection of a nationalist discourse of cultural purity and authenticity, a "failed subject" (Ahmed 2004, p. 140), whose assimilation to what is expected as an Indian who complies with what is culturally accepted is legitimate.

Priya's tactical ambivalence in her relation with the Indian Prakash may constitute a weapon of everyday life through which to recompose the most fundamental places of resistance. Ambivalence consists of insinuating the queer diasporic self "into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance" (De Certeau, 1984, p. xix). The tactic of ambivalence hence depends on adopting "well-accepted attitudes" and, at the same time, introducing "subversions, deviations" (De Certeau, 1984, p. 32). By that combination, Mootoo's narrator, "without leaving the place where they have no choice but to live and which lay down its laws for them, establish within it a degree of plurality and creativity" (De Certeau, 1984, p. 30). Accordingly, the ambivalence Priya displays, this being neither here nor there, but somehow, through play, in both, becomes a highly subversive oppositional strategy on account of the potentiality that surfaces out of escaping the very ontological categories she is being forced into. By introducing this playful ambivalence, Mootoo's narrator is indeed reconstructing the system she inhabits and proposing alternative modes of living. Lying close to nature as a resilient queer diasporic subject, may destabilize the rigid and normative boundaries of a static place and introducing a different logic and organization of such space (Gopinath, 2005, p. 28).

The interest now lies in how Indian's multiple diasporas travel to Canada, and how Prakash's Indian diaspora is incapable of reconciling inclusiveness, or "imagin[e] a more heterogeneous sociality"

(Ahmed, 2009, p. 113). Priya's white Canadian partner, Alex, assumes her "conditional tolerance" to racial intersectionality in the name of liberal inclusion or multiculturalism. Alex, who attempted to fit Priya into a normative model, is now incapable of crossing the threshold of difference (Derrida, 2000b).

Mootoo's careful delineation of the shifting boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, as well as the arbitrary belonging of her characters, exhibits these difficulties and these multiple sites of struggle encountered by her queer diasporics (Chakraborty, 2012, p. 77). Any form of transgression on the part of Priya,

> may result in [her] literal and symbolic exclusion from the multiple "homes" that they as immigrant women inhabit: the patriarchal, heterosexual household, the extended "family" made up of an immigrant community, and the national spaces of both India and the host nation. (Gopinath, 2003, p. 208)

In this transtemporal mindscape, Priya starts tracing her family history and its women's affective ruptures in ways that have shaped her Trinidadian-Canadian queer subjectivity through "[d]iscretions and half-truths, pirouetting on a dime, even as I feared my caginess was much too apparent" (p. 33). *Polar Vortex* parts from a current transnational tendency towards neo-rural narratives worldwide, where territoriality is a marker of identity, and Priya's initial desire to escape the city in search of a utopian future becomes an act of moving sideways instead of forward, "a way of living *with* difference" (Ahmed, 2009, p. 95). In her re-sentment and resistance to accommodate her (non)diasporic identity, Priya struggles to incorporate various intersectional subject positions to her new *homeSpace*, such as class, race or gender, but her cultural hybridity surprisingly reveals new alliances and ruptures in her queer self (Charczun, 2019, p. 103). On the other hand, Prakash, a "cultural insider" (Gilroy, 1993) is consciously dependent on the multiple tides of traditional belonging to which he is subject. Prakash's Ugandan Indianness ties him to normative positions that Priya is now unable to grasp due to her inability to identify his diasporic animatedness, and his performance of a normative Indian cultural identity, "an intrinsic comedy, a constant parody of itself" (Butler, 1990, p. 122). Through Prakash, Mootoo embodies a relation with the land and the soil we inhabit. Priya's exploration of the embedded ambiguities of the diasporic *homeSpace* is framed as an act of normalized confidence that deteriorates as we read, moving towards a transnational and queer affective sustainability.

Mootoo suggests an heterogeneous enactment in Priya's affective worldbuilding that escapes the dangerous rhetorical dichotomy of nostalgia and euphoria so present in the figure of the Indian Prakash. Priya, by contrast, recreates a new movement forward in order to challenge traditional renderings of diasporic experience. Priya's rural relocation contrasts Prakash's neoliberal subject tied to the cityscape, whose animatedness and psychological violence prevents him from having sustainable ways of living a (non)diasporic life. Priya's rural *homeSpace* becomes a necessary affective connection to the welcoming land, while Prakash is convinced that his "adjustment to certain forms or practices of living and thinking will secure [his] happiness" (Berlant 2011, 75). "Is there anyone who's really happy? Priya asks Prakash: "You have to be willing to be blind, to be deaf, to not think too much. To not feel. To not feel sadness or happiness, and it's that search that makes people unhappy" (p. 246) replies Prakash, contradicting Priya's need to complain, she is now able to dissent and resist the knock at the door, as Sara Ahmed underlines in conversation with Nael Bhanji (Trent University, 2022, 15:00). Queer (un)happiness matter to dissent and resist Prakash's notion of the "general will" and social control. Priya realizes how a perverse affect between racialized and diasporic communities reveals the inability to move forward, unravels resentment, and fear and anger become unsustainable ugly feelings (Ngai, 2005): "I see it still in my generation of queer people-that we needed to be careful and to be fearful. These were not conditions conducive to healthy, happy relationships, even between women who loved one another deeply" (p. 284).

If Priya was resilient in her youth when she experienced the world as alien, her mature queer self will gradually perform cultural dissidence (Ahmed, 2010; Berlant, 2011). In her new *homeSpace*, she dissents Prakash's —and Alex's— heteronormative happiness which always functioned as a potent instrument of Prakash's social control. In her college days Priya tried

> to remind him that he was living in Canada, and this was the place where we could question traditions and the blind following of old ways. I felt myself, too, on the verge of dissuading him from leaving Canada. But as much as I did not want him to marry, I also knew it would have been wrong of me to discourage him. (p. 125)

Now she finds, instead, a new territorial *homeSpace*, which will make her queer relation with Alex, and her poisoned memory of Prakash, a polar vortex which unveils new ethical encounters with the land and new modes of ecological relationality (García Zarranz, 2020b, p. 92). As Priya tries to overcome the transtemporal burden of guilt and prejudice, she becomes aware of Alex's animatedness (Ngai, 2005): "One of the differences between us, Priya," Alex tells her," is that your boundaries are far more fluid than mine" (p. 50). Alex's hos(ti)pitality gradually becomes a practice of power, similar to Prakash's stubbornness, where the definitions of host/guest and native/stranger become contextual categories. Alex's "liberal tolerance" attempts to create a new identity for Priya as power and dominance function through liberal and assimilating practices to consolidate a white Canadian identity.

In *Polar Vortex*, Mootoo's queer (non) diasporic female narrator consolidates an affirmative stance towards sustainability, leaves behind Prakash's fear and anxiety and directs her attention to the multiplicity of "homes" of the Indian diaspora, making room to allow for a heterogeneous worldmaking. This reorientation of the diasporic subject is a necessary step towards the development of sustainable affects in the new South Asian Canadian narratives. As Mariam Pirbhai puts it, "there is always an underlying spirit of empathy and compassion in the way [Mootoo approaches] these subjects, even toward those who may be the object of critique" (2015, 230). "We might be different," Priya says, "but room has to be made to allow for both our differences" (p. 51).

It is then vital to be attentive to the *emergent insurgencies* of the world that can update the diasporic nostalgia of the last 30 years (Lai, 2018), to counter racist structures and forge more ethical futures (García Zarranz, 2020a, p. 170). Mootoo's novel provides an example of affirmative transpositions through Priya's voice, which, in contrast to Prakash's, manages to reorient her queer body away from the emotional fractures that shaped her life in Trinidad. At the end of the narrative she feels the need to reorient her affects towards the sensuality of worldmaking, *zoe* is blooming here for Priya, in a moment of "floating awareness" that Braidotti describes when "life rushes on towards the sensorial/perceptive apparatus with exceptional vigour" (2006, 145). Priya reckons the movement towards an uncanny rural space has been key to her affective transposition. As for Priya and Prakash's chronotope, "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" (García-Zarranz, 2017b, p. 51).

Mootoo's poses, in *Polar Vortex*, a critique of liberal individualism, while generating new affective frameworks for self-other relations. In Priya's relation with Alex and Prakash, Mootoo builds new insights of the (non)diasporic queer self, always in relation to other subjects, playing the positivity of difference as a specific theme for future generations. Priya's resistance to Prakash's emotional harassment, and Alex's hos(ti)pitality, deploy a new way to dissent to some form of destructiveness in the past. In her process of resisting destructive forces such as sexism, heteronormativity, or racism, Mootoo's narrator activates relations with other modalities of feminist resistance where "antagonisms have to be understood as part of the field of intensity and relationality, for relationality does not necessarily mean love, union, or agreement" (Butler, 2016, p. 26). Priya's passion without resistance would not imply the affective processes of subject transformation in this time of increasing feminist misunderstandings. Accordingly, complaint becomes key to this transtemporal methodology, relating the texts with larger social and historical contexts, as Sara Ahmed comments in conversation with Nael Bhanji (Trent University, 2022, 10:20). If Priya's transformation is an attempt at affective worldmaking we may consider that "these cartographies of resistance, these affirmative passions, are paradoxical assemblages where tension and contradiction accumulate as part of their intensities" (García Zarranz, 2017b, p. 54). They may promote change and dialogue in the literary world as Braidotti's affirmative politics help propose, "creati[ng] links and zigzagging interconnections between discursive communities which are too often kept apart from each other" (2006, p. 7). It may be precisely through such acts of renaming, reframing, and recontextualizing that we can devise ways to

change the field of what is possible, to verbalize a new *homeSpace* acknowledgement, invoking her belongingness to the land she shares at the end of the book:

> [H]ow fortunate I am to be able to live here, within the traditional territories of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. I am thankful to the land itself - that is, to the flora in its amazing variety, all the land, water, and air animals, the rivers aboveground and running underground, the big lake and all the smaller ones. (Acknowledgements, n.p.)

4. Conclusion

The exploration of queer diasporic practices has revealed an extremely complex picture of the intersection and collision of gender, sexual and national identities. Above all, a more comprehensive understanding of the manner in which queer diasporic individuals experience diaspora has been attained by reason of considering not only displacement but also sexual and sustainable affects as theoretically significant factors shaping diasporic lives. Through Priya's affective transposition we read an alternative cartography where the emergence of an intersectional ethics can be delineated. Braidotti's and García-Zarranz's articulation of a feminist ethics of sustainability, accountability, and relationality is clearly concerned with human affectivity as the motor of subjectivity. This worldmaking narrative examines the complex entanglements of new Canadian sites in order to open new critical frames to revitalize and transform them. Utopian insurgencies can update the diasporic nostalgia of the last thirty years of diasporic literatures into affective worldmaking of planetary subjects, reorienting themselves towards the validation of alterity (Kamboureli, 2021). Acting response-ably will involve listening to these stories that have remained largely unheard in received versions of what Canadian literature is.

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