

Mapping Violent Intimacies: A Study of Mother(ing)

by

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This text is my attempt to expand on the wealth of ideas traced in Jackie and Rita Huggins' memoir *Auntie Rita*. In doing so, I wished to explore and exploit the text's potential.

Notwithstanding the narrative's geographical and historical specificity, in this text, Huggins' narrative succeeds in merging itself with the voices of other "languish[ed]"ⁱ authors, including the Greek author Vasilis Alexakis, the prominent French thinker Luce Irigaray, the renowned Canadian poet M. NourbeSe Philip, and eventually myself, the author of this text. All united by a visceral understanding of violent intimacies, as well as the craving for a comprehensive lexicon of/for it.

Evidently, motherhood is the very crux of my narrative, which reproduces respectfully and yet deviantly the Aboriginal mother-daughter relationship found in *Auntie Rita*. It is crucial to register the particular political and cultural implications of that dynamic. As Jo-Anne Fiske notes "Aboriginal women must create their own histories in the simultaneity of a dual oppression as aboriginal people and as women"

(31). In this instance, it is done so by "constitut[ing] a vastly different meaning of mother" (31), by forwarding the equation of daughter (archivist) and mother (the subject of the archive).

There is an inherent violence in the act of archiving that reminds us most vividly of the similar violent practices that rest in mothering a child and making a mother out of a woman – two different facets of the same violence as explored in the text before you. To clarify, let us realise this: the daughter (Jackie Huggins) will be the one choosing which parts of her mother's narrative (Rita Huggins) will make it to the page. This quite banal action of selection and respective omission become an insurmountable obstacle in their efforts to care for one

another in a painless way. Echoing Christina Sharpe's theorization of the archive, Jackie Huggins is expected to "discard, discount, jettison, abandon, and measure those ways of [Aboriginal] knowing" (12-13). She produces an irrevocably violent intimacy, one that fascinated me deeply.

On that note, I think it is necessary to speak of the figure of the older sister; one greatly intimidated by such intimacies. It is relatively easy to misinterpret her withdrawal from the archival rendez-vous and her absence from the narrative itself as my intention to criticize those opting not to participate in similar efforts of archiving. I have chosen to articulate this experience because I wish to acknowledge her need to abstain from the violence inflicted by the archiving ventures of her family. It is a gesture whose legitimacy should not be questioned.

This text aims to make space for the radical intimacy that is motherhood and daughterhood, one violently immersed in practices of remembering and forgetting. It is dedicated to all women who dare to cultivate and archive such intimacies.

Works Cited

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ⁱ The word is borrowed from M. NourbeSe Philip's poem "Discourse on the Logic of Language." Arguably, it is a key line in understanding the text.