

I See You Sisters Like Yesterday Today: *The Unnatural and Accidental Women*

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Abstract

This paper argues that Marie Clements' play, *The Unnatural and Accidental Women*, promotes a (re)creation of a women's community that empowers women and nurtures individual identity. Inspired by the true story of women murdered by a serial killer in Vancouver, British Columbia, Clements focuses on the indigenous women victims whose stories were not told in the media.

Résumé

Cet article soutient que la pièce de Marie Clements, *The Unnatural and Accidental Women*, fait la promotion d'une (ré)création d'une communauté féminine qui responsabilise les femmes et encourage l'identité individuelle. Inspirée par l'histoire vraie de femmes assassinées par un tueur en série à Vancouver, en Colombie-Britannique, Clements porte son attention sur les femmes victimes autochtones, dont les histoires n'ont pas été rapportées par les médias.

In "Archimedes and the Paradox of Feminist Criticism," Myra Jehlen writes that "feminist thinking is really *rethinking*, an examination of the way certain assumptions about women and the female character enter into the fundamental assumptions that organize all our thinking" (Jehlen 1981, 89). Métis playwright Marie Clements examines and challenges assumptions about gender and indigeneity in her play, *The Unnatural and Accidental Women* (*UAW*). Based on a true story of a man who killed at least ten indigenous women in Vancouver, British Columbia (B.C.), by poisoning them with alcohol, Clements recreates/rethinks the events from the victims' points of view. Ultimately, she reveals not only what has been rendered invisible about the women's lives, but also the possibility of a different cultural reality based on both inclusivity and respect for difference.

Marie Clements has been a performer, playwright, director, and artistic director in theatres across B.C. and parts of the United States. As a playwright, Clements' plays have been staged nationally and internationally, including at Ottawa's National Arts Centre, L.A.'s Mark Taper Forum, Minneapolis's Playwright's Center, the International Festival of Native Playwrights in Illinois and New York, The Literature Festival in Germany, and the Women, Text and Technologies Festival in Leeds, England. *The Unnatural and Accidental Women* premiered at the Firehall Arts Centre in November 2000. Clements wrote the screenplay for a film version of the play, which was produced in 2006. As a writer, director, and producer through her company, Working Pajama Lab, Clements is currently developing several film projects.

The accounts of serial killer Gilbert Paul Jordan, "a man who has been named in the news media as one of [Canada's] deadliest predators," inspired *UAW* (Hopkins 2000, 7). The Canadian mainstream media narrative told Jordan's story while the victims remained, for the most part, nameless, face-

less, and without history (Rose, Pemberton, and Sarti 1987); they were simply cast as victims, alcoholics, and prostitutes. Clements' play refocuses this story onto the women. By naming these women (although not using Jordan's victims' real names), Clements honours them as individuals with aspirations, histories, and families—something denied to them in the news and coroners' reports.

Plot and Structure

Clements intertwines three separate storylines in the play: the stories of the murder victims; interactions between indigenous and white women, represented by encounters through an old-fashioned hotel switchboard; and the story of the protagonist, Rebecca, who is looking for her indigenous mother, Rita Louise James (also known as Aunt Shadie), who she has not seen for twenty years. Ten characters are women murdered by Jordan (also known as "the Barber") during the play. Nine of these women are indigenous women living on, what Clements terms, "skid row": Aunt Shadie, age 52, described as having "mother qualities of strength, humour, love, patience"; Mavis, age 42, "a little slow from the butt down, but stubborn in life and memory"; The Woman (later named Brenda), age 27, who "looks and moves like a deer"; Valerie, age 33, "a big beautiful woman proud of her parts"; Verna, age 38, "sarcastic but searching to do the right thing, the right way"; Violet, ages 5 and 27, "an old spirit who grows younger to see herself again"; and The Barbershop Women, a "beautiful, sexy threesome that can move and sing," consisting of Marilyn, age 25, Penny, age 30, and Patsy, age 40. The tenth woman is a white English immigrant, Rose, age 52, a switchboard operator with "a soft heart, but thorny" (Clements 2005, 5–6). Clements portrays the women as isolated and alone before the murders. Their need for comfort and love leaves them vulnerable to the deceptions of the Barber. Rebecca is the daughter of an indigenous woman and a white logger. Her mother, called Aunt Shadie throughout the play, left their home because she was afraid her daughter would adopt the racist and sexist attitudes of Rebecca's father that rendered the mother invisible (Clements 2005, 82).

Rose and Aunt Shadie are the oldest women in the play and the first two women murdered (in 1965 and 1978 respectively). The final two characters are white men: Jordan, the Barber, in his 30s and 60s, "short, balding, nice and creepy" and a man who abuses and murders women; and Ron, a handsome cop "with a nice body and a good sense of humour" who becomes Rebecca's lover (Clements 2005, 6). The actor playing Jordan also "transforms" into The Man, The Romantic Partner, The Pillow, The Dresser, The Man's Shadow, The Airline Steward, and 2nd Fatherly Male Voice (Clements 2005, 6). Ron is the logger and is referred to as "It" until he is named Ron (Clements 2005, 6).

UAW uses surrealism and multiple narrators to normalize events in a way that accentuates the horror of the murders. Clements describes the atmosphere of the fictive world in the stage directions:

Scenes involving the women should have the feel of a black and white picture that is animated by the bleeding-in of colour as the scene and their imaginations unfold. Colours of personality and spirit, life and isolation paint their reality and activate the particular landscape within each woman's own particular hotel room and world. Their deaths are a drowning-down of hopes, despairs, wishes. The killer is a manipulative embodiment of their human need. Levels, rooms, views, perspectives, shadow, light, voices, memories, desires. (Clements 2005, 7)

The surrealistic setting allows Clements to portray the isolation of the characters and their desire for human connection and affection. The women's lives are bleak and without colour, but they are unique individuals yearning to love and be loved.

Each scene begins with slides and sound effects. The slides announce the title, date, and location of each scene. They also introduce each woman after her murder through short newspaper notes describing the autopsy results: "Marilyn Wiles, 40. Died December 04, 1984 with a 0.51 blood-alcohol reading. An inquiry at the time concluded Wile's death was 'unnatural and accidental'" (Clements 2005, 58). At first, sound is used to metaphorically connect the women with na-

ture and the destruction of nature. For example, Aunt Shadie enters the world of the play to the sound effect of “a tree opening up to a split. A loud crack—a haunting gasp for air that is suspended. The sustained sound of suspension as the tree teeters” (Clements 2005,9). A logger yells, “Timber.” Aunt Shadie yells for Rebecca. Over the course of Act I, the sounds become more complex, combining previous effects with new ones: the sound of a chainsaw gradually becomes a harmonica; the sound of the tide transitions into whispers. The screen projections function as scenery and help establish time as the play moves through both psychic and geographic space.

Act I begins with an appalling image of Aunt Shadie—naked, bruised, and dead—getting up and gathering her things. Rebecca intertwines her story of her search for her mother with the logging history of Vancouver, and how it created “skid row,” where the loggers spent their time drinking and nursing their wounds. Clements describes the development of “skid row” as a repercussion of logging:

Everything here has been falling—a hundred years of trees have fallen from the sky’s grace. They laid on their backs trying to catch their breath as the loggers connected them to anything that could move, and moved them, creating a long muddy path where the ends of the trees scraped the ground, whispering their last connection to the earth. This whispering left a skid. A skid mark. A row. Skid Row. (Clements 2005, 10)

Scenes of Aunt Shadie and white British switchboard operator Rose developing a friendship are intercut with scenes of the women’s isolation before their murders and with enactments of Jordan enticing them into his shop to kill them. Time is ambiguous, moving between memory, imagination, and the spirit world to create a dreamlike ambience where anything can happen. Inanimate objects become animated, both threatening and comforting to the women characters. In addition to these images, the script uses song, video, text, monologue, and dialogue to establish the inner lives of the women as well as the outside world.

Act II takes place in the fictive present. The other women have been murdered and their spirits hover around Rebecca and Jordan. In the spirit world, the women are not alone. They are reunited in a community of women that is strong, spirited, and loving. They interact with one another and react to Rebecca’s search for love and her mother and to Jordan’s efforts to seduce vulnerable women. While Rebecca and Jordan do not see or consciously acknowledge the spirit women until the very end of the play, Clements shows the audience that Rebecca and Jordan subconsciously hear and respond to their words. Despite their invisibility, the spirit women are able to affect the physical world; they knock off Jordan’s glasses and eventually help Rebecca kill Jordan by gathering around him and slitting his throat when Rebecca realizes he is the murderer.

The play is remarkable, in part, because of the balance between surrealism and realism in depicting the internal and external lives of the characters. The stylistic mix heightens Clements’ critique of the effects of both patriarchy and systemic racism. Within an episodic structure, the scenes move in a non-linear fashion, fragmenting time to create an ambiguous, mystical environment where all the experiences of the characters exist in the same moment. In this manner, Clements frees the women from possible blame for their own murders, by re/claiming and declaring an autonomous, independent identity that rejects the anonymity presented in the media depiction of the murders. The media described the women as prostitutes and alcoholics, but, in imagining the women’s stories, Clements creates rich individuals that are complex and likeable, women who refuse to remain silent and passive.

Clements understands that some horrors, like these murders, can never be accurately represented. Her depiction of the murders corresponds to James Phelan’s notion of “the stubborn”: unlike “the difficult,” which is “recalcitrance that yields to our explanatory efforts,” the stubborn is “recalcitrance that will not yield” (Phelan 1993, 714). Phelan recommends focusing not on “explicating” the stubborn, but rather on “explaining the purpose of its recalcitrance” (Phelan 1993, 715). Such a

shift, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan observes, “demands that we recognize the impossibility of mastering such an emotionally wrenching experience” (1996, 119). Instead of trying to master the experience by realistically portraying the homicides, Clements subverts the emotional connection of the spectator by sabotaging any glorification of or gratification from the slayings by refusing to represent them realistically. For example, in the beginning, Jordan cuts off the women’s braided hair to symbolize their deaths and keeps the braids in his drawer as trophies. Gradually, though, the murder scenes become more stylized and briefer. Clements decentres the act of murder by focusing on the experiences and actions of the women before and after death, emphasizing their individuality and the possibility of redemption.

Destruction and Resistance

UAW constructs a convergence of history and narrative that is marked by gender, race, and colonialism. At the same time, the play questions the idea of a singular reality. The characters are positioned as (re)makers of history, where their abusive pasts and eventual murders motivate them to explore strategies of empowerment and intervention. Simply, they reject their assigned roles as passive victims and decide to stop Jordan from killing other women. Clements refuses to depict the women merely as victims; she gives them a voice. She offers an example of “constructive” violence, one that upsets the dominant media narrative and encourages a different paradigm for remembering and telling the stories of the women.

The play begins with Rebecca telling the story of logging in Canada. Using sound and imagery, Clements connects the destruction of the trees with the destruction of women and indigenous peoples in the play. The story echoes Dee Horne and other indigenous writers in its critique of “settler values of progress and technology and settler exploitation of the environment. Settler efforts to master/tame the environment, like their attempts to contain American Indians, women, and all people of color prove futile” (Horne 1999, 40). At first, the trees are unresisting to the loggers’ efforts, but they later fight back,

falling on the male loggers, maiming some and killing others. In “Embodied Geographies,” Anne Raine, referring to the art of Ana Mendieta, notes that “the non-human material world is neither mere ‘background’ nor a ‘subjective earth’” and asks critical questions about “the relationships between human subjects, individually and collectively, and something I have been calling *whatever else there is*: the maternal body, the imaginary self, social and cultural Others, landscape and ‘nature,’ the Real” (Raine 1999, 261). Rebecca’s story about logging describes and symbolizes a complex, socially produced discourse of conquest that the trees/nature and, eventually, the women, resist. Their defiance offers the spectator an entrance into the “whatever else there is” that has been obscured by the dominant narrative.

The loggers’ destruction of the trees becomes a form of self-destruction, in that, ultimately, the result of masculine violence is men’s own death. At the beginning of the play, Clements foreshadows the ending of the play. The trees, alternately depicted as the men’s lovers and their enemies, foreshadow the spirits of the slain women as trappers/warriors who slay the murderer in order to save another woman and reclaim their community. The trees do not prevent their own death, but only slow down the loggers—no matter how many are killed and maimed, there is always another logger to take his place. In the same way, the female characters cannot save themselves, but only prevent this one killer from murdering another woman. There are other loggers/murderers who will continue the killing, but the women practise what Theresa de Lauretis terms “micropolitical practice” or “local resistance.” “Micropolitical practice is that activity that aims at understanding the margins, empowering those who inhabit such margins to represent themselves, and encouraging critiques that account for the ways in which ideology works first and foremost at home” (quoted in Donkin and Clement 1993, 28). According to Donkin and Clement, de Lauretis promotes “a radicalization of agency on the level of micropolitics,” rather than presuming “an authority to know what’s best for

the world.” Given that “differences between women are realized in specific contexts, or in the ‘micropolitical practices of daily life,’” she maintains resistance must take place within those contexts (Donkin and Clement 1993, 28).

Clements articulates a “micropolitical” resistance that requires a personal, individual choice to participate in a community in order to create change. This articulation mirrors the beliefs of many indigenous nations that a member’s separation from the network of community life, and the discord that arises from that disconnection, creates an unhealthy condition for both the individual and the community that can only be remedied through the return of the alienated to the community (Moss 1993, 62–63). In the fictive world of *UAW*, Clements charts a path to a new site where indigenous women are no longer characterized in relation to colonial culture, but rather in relation to their own communities—indigenous women’s communities that practise ongoing resistance to sexism and racism. As discussed in greater detail below, at the end of Act I, Aunt Shadie calls to the women and they answer. “Aunt Shadie calls to them in song and they respond, in song, in rounds of their original languages” (Clements 2005, 58). The call and response grows “in strength and intensity” until the end of the act, when “all their voices join force” (Clements 2005, 58). The women characters define themselves, foregoing colonial definitions, in order to restore/create an independent and collective identity.

Violence and Desire

Clements produces moments of disturbing contradiction and paradox in her depictions of desire, abuse, and death. Rebecca tells the logger she loves him, but he cannot hear or understand her over the noise of his chainsaw. In their quest for money, power, and violence, the male characters, who signify white, colonial, and patriarchal values and the “masculine” animated objects, are not seeking the connections valued by the women in the play. Repeatedly, the women characters seek love, companionship, and comfort, but these desires make them vulnerable. They are consistently reduced to the

physical, valued for their flesh and the pleasure women’s flesh can provide to the masculine characters; this process denies them an individual identity.

Clements highlights the danger to women living in patriarchal and colonial cultures when everyday objects become objects of pain and violence. For example, the hotel chest of drawers objectifies Valerie by focusing on her breasts, making crude jokes about “knobs,” attempting to grab her breasts. Eventually this escalates into a physical confrontation (Clements 2005, 26–31). A giant pillow is at first The Woman’s dancing partner, but later rapes her (Clements 2005, 42, 52). Mavis imagines an armchair is an old boyfriend with his arms wrapped around her, but when she returns to the chair she finds it occupied, not by the imaginary boyfriend, but by Jordan, who kills her (Clements 2005, 36, 56). The desires of these women are met with disproportionate patriarchal and colonial violence. In *UAW*, this tension culminates in more violence. Clements creates a woman-centred space in *UAW* that symbolizes the necessity for a conceptual/paradigmatic violence that challenges current conventional dichotomies of female victim and male assailant. The female characters are both victims and assailants; the male murderer is murdered.

Clements also suggests that the white woman, Rose, and the indigenous women experience similar desires and adversities. This theme also emerges when Rebecca takes offense at Ron’s characterization of indigenous people on “skid row”:

Since you ask, I don’t think so many of *them* end up down there. I think so many people end up down there. Period...It’s an accident. Something heavy falls on them. It might just be one Thing... one thing and then everything seems to tumble down and pretty soon there is no getting up...Like an accident—people drive by in their nice cars and stare at people on those streets, because they realize for a moment it could be them. So they might be saying “poor bastards,” but what they’re really thinking about is themselves and their own potential tragedy. (Clements 2005, 98)

Here Clements emphasizes human frailty. All people are vulnerable even though “nice people” like to imagine it is “those” people, “mentally ill or brown or addicted to one thing or another,” who are the only ones susceptible to loneliness and tragedy (Clements 2005, 98).

Identity and Visibility

In *UAW*, Clements creates indigenous women’s identities different from the ones depicted in the media and in patriarchal, racist, colonial culture. She refrains from identifying any particular woman by her specific indigenous community affiliation, not to ignore differences, but to express solidarity in their shared status. Rebecca remarks:

That begs the question, what does an Indian seem like? Let me guess. You probably think that if an Indian goes to university or watches TV, it makes her the same as every other Canadian. Only less. The big melting pot. The only problem is you can’t melt an Indian. You can’t kill a stone. You can grind it down to sand but it’s still there sifting through everything forever... (Clements 2005, 97)

Clements presents a collective indigenous women’s identity that allows the characters to join together to better resist the violent, racist, patriarchal colonizer as represented by the character of Jordan. The women share the experiences of sexism, violence, and colonial oppression as well as a history of empowered communities. So, while emphasizing the diversity of the individual women, Clements simultaneously designs a community that is stronger than any individual.

Within the play, Clements offers a place for indigenous and non-indigenous women to connect outside of the structures that separate them. When Aunt Shadie confesses her fear of being invisible, of being perceived by white people as if she is “not worthy of being seen,” Rose simply replies, “I see you. And I like what I see.”

AUNT SHADIE: I see you...and don’t worry you’re not white.

ROSE: I’m pretty sure I’m white. I’m English.

AUNT SHADIE: White is a blindness. It has nothing to do with the colour of your skin. (Clements 2005, 82)

The white woman and the indigenous woman are able to “see” each other through the revelation of their personal stories, even though they are different. “White” is never a description of a person’s colour or ethnicity, or lack of colour or ethnicity. “White” is coded, pointing to race as constructed rather than natural. In this moment, “white” is coded as racism. In “White Birds,” white is “the flutter of hope” (Clements 2005, 36). In “Violet,” white represents “uppity,” an empowered female attitude (Clements 2005, 63). When the women are able to see each other, solidarity becomes a possibility. LeAnne Howe describes a similar incident at the “Celebration of Native Women Playwrights” conference at Miami University in 1999. In the discussion following the staged reading of *Strength of Indian Women*, several non-indigenous women were upset and defensive because they had not known the history of the residential schools. The non-indigenous women began to tell their stories of oppression:

Others began to tell their stories: the Jewish Holocaust, of the horrors of slavery and what was done to African Americans, the hardships that the Italians and the Irish had faced at Ellis Island. What I believe was happening to the non-Indians was that they were threading their lives and experiences into ours. A shift in paradigm, it’s generally believed to be the other way around: Indians assimilating into the mainstream. (Howe 1999, 124)

Howe calls this “rhetorical space tribalogy,” indigenous stories with “the power to transform...Indigenous storytelling is revealed as a living character who continues to influence our culture” (Howe 1999, 118). At the beginning of the play, Rose and Aunt Shadie are “in their own spaces and places. They are in their own world. Happy hunting ground and/or heaven” (Clements 2005, 7). Clements decreases the distance between white and indigenous women by showing them to each other through the narrative, with respect and appreciation for their differences.

Ultimately, it does not matter that the switchboard is beautiful to Rose and gives Aunt Shadie a headache; it does not matter whether they wear white gloves or rabbit mitts, because they both know the desire to connect and be visible (Clements 2005, 81). However, it is significant that Rose is a white woman who is ready to listen to, communicate with, and care about the other characters.

Isolation and Connection

Clements presents the different social, racialized, and economic histories of the women characters—poor indigenous women; a white middle-class English woman; and a young indigenous woman searching for her mother. In presenting this diversity of backgrounds, she highlights the differences among the women and how these shape their complex interactions.

For example, Jordan murders Rose, the English switchboard operator, and the indigenous women because they are all vulnerable, but their lived experiences make these characters vastly different from one another. Aunt Shadie's mother wore big rabbit mitts to combat the cold, while Rose's mother wore white gloves to be a "lady" (Clements 2005, 17). Rose and Mavis both want to connect with other people, electronically and emotionally, but they are placed at odds with one another by "the rules" governing a colonial and patriarchal society—what Clements describes as "management" (Clements 2005, 23). These differences affect relationships between the female characters, especially along the lines of race.

In the scenes "I'm Scared To Die 1" and "I'm Scared To Die 2," Mavis is alone in a cheap hotel room, looking through her address book, trying to find someone to phone. She attempts a call, which the switchboard operator, Rose, answers. Rose wants to help Mavis, wants to connect with her, but Mavis is very distrustful. Rose is also isolated: "Well, to be honest...no one's ever reached me on the phone before, and I just don't know if it's house policy or not" (Clements 2005, 22). Mavis cannot understand Rose's limitations and, despite her efforts, Rose cannot help her reach the friend Mavis is attempting to call.

Mavis asks, "The operator? I didn't want any operator. I dialed the numbers myself. I'm more than capable of calling a long distance number...What kind of house are you in where people call and you don't help them?" (Clements 2005, 22). At the same time, Rose, seemingly unaware of the historical significance of her position as a white woman interfering in Mavis's life, fails to understand Mavis's anger: "You don't have to be rude. I was just trying to be helpful. I have a very demanding job and I don't need this static from you..." (Clements 2005, 32). Eventually, the conversation between Rose and Mavis disintegrates, generating a kind of poem or chant where they express similar feelings of isolation, but do not hear or understand one another:

ROSE: I'm just doing my job and that's all you can ask out of anybody, just that a person do the job they were meant to do and I try to do my job a million times a day.

MAVIS: Like you know it all when you don't know me, and you don't give a damn how I'm feeling or what I'm worried about or why I can't get off my ass and just leave my room.

ROSE: ...a million times a day.

MAVIS: I'm so scared I can't move.

ROSE: ...a million times a day...

MAVIS: I can't breathe.

ROSE: I get this static a million times a day...

MAVIS: I listen.

ROSE: ...times a day...

MAVIS: I cry.

ROSE: ...from the static of nothing.

MAVIS: a million times a day.

ROSE: I want...

MAVIS: I reach out for it.

ROSE: ...and nothing. (Clements 2005, 34–35)

The women are isolated from one another and their communities. They desperately want to connect with another person, to belong, to be visible. In their desperation, each misses the effort of the other to reach out through the darkness of the telephone switchboard (Clements 2005, 35).

Ritual and Redemption

While the effects of colonization/patriarchy had effectively isolated the women characters prior to their deaths, the creation of a survival ceremony that reflects their historical pasts empowers and restores them. Lee Maracle describes a ceremony as “anything that brings people closer to themselves ...The manner in which a person seeks the self is always based on the sacred right of choice” (Maracle 1996, 111). At the end of Act I, Aunt Shadie calls the women together “in song and ritual as they gather their voice, language and selves” (Clements 2005, 58). In four languages, she repeatedly exhorts them, “Do I hear you sister like yesterday today” (Clements 2005, 58–62):

Aunt Shadie: Do I hear you sister like yesterday today

The Women: Do I hear you sister like yesterday today

Do I hear you sister like yesterday today

Do I hear you sister like yesterday today

Under water—under time

Do I hear you sister like yesterday today

Hear your words right next to mine

Do I hear you sister like yesterday today

You are not speaking and yet I touch your words

So the river says to me drink me feel better

Like the river must've said to you first

Drink me—feel better

There is no sadness just the war of a great thirst

Do I see you sisters like yesterday today

See you as if you were sitting right here next to me

Under water—under the earth

My body's floating where all the days are the same

Long and flowing like a river

My root—my heart

My hair drifts behind me

[English lyrics only] (Clements 2005, 58–65)

Between each line, Clements shows us how the women were isolated. The Barbershop Women—Marilyn, Patsy, and Penny—are the first to answer, stepping out of mirrors, while the slide projections give their ages, dates of death, and blood-alcohol reading. They repeat, “Do I hear you sister like yesterday today” (Clements 2005, 58). Violet describes her death and equates drowning in alcohol with forced oral sex, before joining the women (Clements 2005, 59). Brenda is shown already dead, lying flat on her bed with “clothes up when they should be down. No pillow” (Clements 2005, 60). Verna follows a toy airplane down from the fifth floor of the hotel with a man's voice saying, “Can I get you a drink? Can I get you a drink?” following her with each step. With each repetition of the invitation—“Do I hear you sister like yesterday today”—another woman chooses to connect with the others and add her voice to theirs. The ritual re-establishes the women's community of the past in the present time.

The murdered women have the opportunity to redeem their pasts through “constructive” violence, killing the murderer and saving Rebecca. They give Rebecca the opportunity to change her future, to establish a different, non-violent relationship with a man. When Aunt Shadie and the murdered women band together to kill Jordan and save Rebecca, they disrupt the history of their “mundane” existence—they are alive within a transcendent moment in which they alter future possibilities. What is extraordinary about the murdered characters is not that they are victims of a serial killer, but that they create new historical selves by rejecting isolation and passivity. As a community, they devise a plan to turn Jordan, the hunter, into the hunted:

Rebecca braces herself. She takes the razor and is about to cut his throat.

The Barber's [Jordan's] eyes suddenly blaze open. He grabs her hand and they struggle with the blade. The blade draws closer to her neck and is about to cut her open.

Aunt Shadie emerges from the landscape as a trapper. She stands behind Rebecca. She puts her hand over Rebecca's hand and draws the knife closer to the Barber's neck. He looks up and panics and he sees Aunt Shadie and the women/trappers behind her. Squirming, they slit his throat. (Clements 2005, 126)

Individually, Rebecca cannot kill Jordan, but the collective is more powerful than the individual. When her mother and the other women join Rebecca, they are able to succeed.

After Jordan's death, the women are rewarded with the return of their braids, symbolizing their return to the community and spiritual health. Clements mixes images of the murdered women as contemporary women and historical trappers. The women exist in both the past and present moments; when they kill Jordan, they are also re-enacting the historical killing of trapped animals for food, for survival. The past and present merge in this moment in a ceremony of restoration to one another and to the community.

In the final scene of the play, "The First Supper. Not To Be Confused With The Last Supper," the women all sit down together to "a beautiful banquet à la the Last Supper" (Clements 2005, 126). Clements creates a space analogous to Homi Bhabha's "third space" (Bhabha 1994, 38) and a "hybrid moment of political change" that is "*neither the One...nor the Other...but something else besides*, which contests the terms and territories of both" (Bhabha 1994, 28). In this narrative, the women's survival compels them to band together to defeat Jordan. Rose is included in the community because she respects the indigenous women characters.

Conclusion

In *The Unnatural and Accidental Women*, Clements exhorts the spectator to re-examine their own perceptions of truth. This strategy works especially well for those who are familiar with the historical criminal case and the media representations of both the murderer and the murdered. However, in the current age of highly publicized serial killers, the principles of the play—to show vic-

tims as individuals with lives outside of their victimization—encourage spectators to question what is hidden from view in the narratives of these events. In this way, Clements asks the audience to interrogate their perceptions of gender, racialization, indigeneity, and class.

The Unnatural and Accidental Women also demonstrates the importance of solidarity, alliance, and community. Clements maintains the survival of women and indigenous peoples requires both knowledge/practice of traditional "Indigenous Ways" and the adoption of a worldview that challenges the destructive forces of racism, sexism, and colonialism of all forms. In the (re)creation of an indigenous women's community, and in killing the serial killer—the representation of those destructive influences—Clements offers a compelling image of hope for a different culture—devoid of colonial and patriarchal influences—that respects women, the past, individuality, and difference.

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