

Ethics, Intention, and Affect: A Proprioceptive Poetics in Roy Miki's *Mannequin Rising*

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“WE MEAN THE SEA TRADE has forged / the links that unite the earth's / nations in a single marketplace,” writes Canadian experimental poet Roy Miki in *Mannequin Rising* (69). In this collection of collage poems, Miki reflects on the politics of memory and historical consciousness by charting the history of European imperialism and its economic expansion across the globe. As Jeff Derksen argues, Miki is among a group of Canadian writers who address the spatial complexity of global flows and who “articulat[e] the effects and discourse of neoliberalism from its global heights to its impact on bodies, identities, and possible social formations on the ground” (19). Kit Dobson also observes that Miki’s writing “suggest[s] ways of politicizing subjectivity as a strategy for dealing with the contemporary moment, one in which the dialectic between the nation and the world is renegotiated” (162-63). *Mannequin Rising* continues Miki’s larger project¹ of mining, sifting through, and recording the possibilities foreclosed by various processes of globalization,² transnational capital, and racialization as well as exploring how creative acts might make room for agency (Miki, “Between” 217).

In *Mannequin Rising*, Miki reimagines our encounters with the world, recontextualizing biopolitics — understood in the first sense as a nationally and geographically bounded exercise in political sovereignty — in terms that exceed the boundaries of the nation-state. In *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*, Mel Y. Chen argues that a “lingering Eurocentrism” implicitly limits biopolitics to discussions of national bodies and human citizens (6-7). Specifically, Miki explores how a biopolitics of life — intent on policing, manipulating, and mining the parameters of human life and human sociality — consumes and melds into the material world. In what ways, the poet

questions, does the material — and perhaps not so inanimate — world move, shift, and modulate the structure of everyday life? How do affects become attached to objects, to people, and to the relations that hold the two together? What part does this play in the ongoing racialization of bodies? Miki sheds light on these questions by animating and shifting the terms of the debate on the human to consider our consumption of the non-human and material world. Indeed, in moving among different discursive, visual, and critical-creative registers, Miki writes through the body as a proprioceptive, feeling, and affective entity, staging an encounter between these forces of the present and a critical postcolonial politics and poetics of memory.

Archiving the Past and Space-Time Materialities

In Miki's view, globalization introduced shifts in the political structure of the Canadian nation-state during the last decade of the twentieth century, making "its borders much more porous than they had previously been" and reconfiguring the racialization of Asian Canadians in terms different from those of previous decades (*In Flux* xiii). This moment is a critical one for Miki, who writes how, even as Japanese Canadians finally received an apology from the Canadian government for its internment of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War, this historic political paradigm was unsettled at that very moment by an emerging economic order. As Miki observes, the previous century's emphasis on Canadian citizenship and nationality gave way to transnational corporate power and free trade in the 1980s. In some respects, these economic shifts removed the container of the nation-state against which the political protest had been mounted (*Redress* 324). What does the formal apology mean, Miki questions, with the arrival of new economic formations and cultural narratives about citizenship (324)? Fears about dissolution of the nation-state never came to fruition, of course, given contemporary debates about citizenship and its growing set of exclusions in Canada. But it is crucial to examine how the frames of globalization are bound up with Miki's ongoing critical engagement with race, racialization, and displacement in his poetics. Consequently, in what follows, I examine how Miki codes consumer culture through colonial and imperial history, providing a backstory to how the body moves proprioceptively through contemporary, urban spaces.

In *Mannequin Rising*, the poet leads us through local landscapes in the Kitsilano and Granville Island neighbourhoods of Vancouver to Japan, Germany, and Taiwan. Layered histories in the collages defamiliarize modern urban cityscapes and highlight another remarkable aspect of the images, the figure of the mannequin, present in every photo montage in the book. The mannequins in the collages are taken from different cityscapes that the poet visits, and as such they become emblematic features of his critique of global consumerism. Miki's palimpsestic juxtaposition of collages and poems playfully opens up the space of the page, an endeavour that unsettles different visual and linguistic regimes. In the collages themselves, mannequins move outside the window display and onto the street, the beach, the trees, or other social geographies. Conversely, the street and various scenes of nature come to inhabit the shop display, as with the collage in Figure 1.

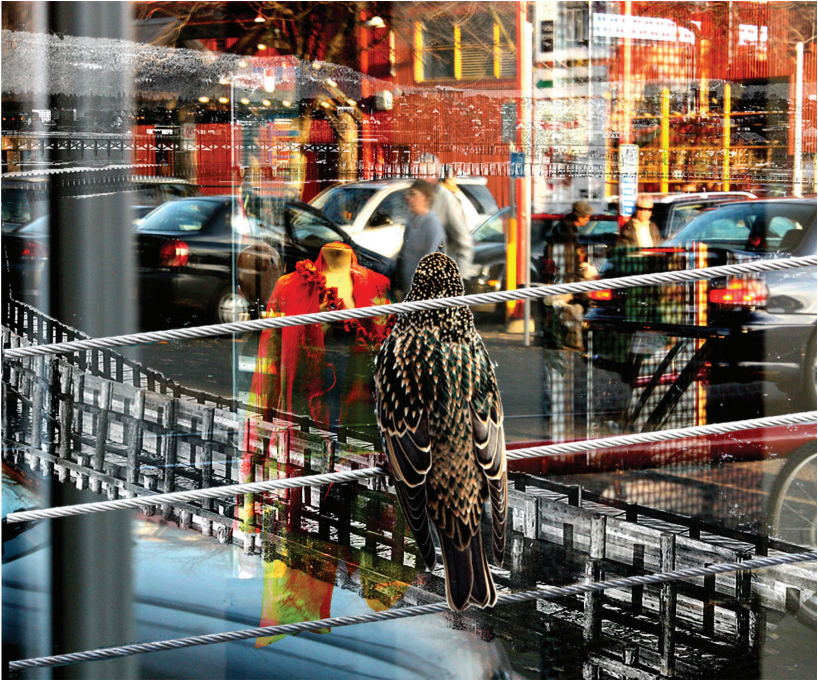


Figure 1. Collage from *Mannequin Rising* (60). Courtesy of Roy Miki.

The collage above disorients the viewer: an image of a bird counterposes that of a mannequin bust, and the cityscape behind the two figures is unsettled by images of the city from the past. Through the

juxtaposition of these different sites, Miki brings to attention the social forces that shape subjects, reflecting on the body as an affective, living, and feeling entity. A focus on writing through the body reveals, as Miki points out, the “effects of [his] own physical movement through” local spaces (“Always” 151). Yet, in creating a palimpsest of a diverse range of images, the poet does not privilege the human body in his representation of space (see, e.g., the barely perceptible bodies in movement behind the bird in Figure 1); rather, the sensory juxtaposition of bird and blurred humans displaces the primacy of the individual body and allows the poet to explore the limits of subjectivity. As Kirsten Emiko McAllister explains, a theme of fusion in the collages brings together “different orders of existence, different sites” (Miki, “Always” 150). *Mannequin Rising* consequently destabilizes notions of a coherent, teleological, and transparent self. This project is even more urgent now because, as I will explore shortly, Miki’s poetics shows how forms of power rely on targeting and manipulating a self that is non-coherent, affective, and fragmented.

In an interview with McAllister when *Mannequin Rising* was still in its preliminary stage of development, Miki notes that, even though the text observes the disappearance of historical layering in Kitsilano, it is also attentive to how the local is being reconstituted in the present (“Always” 149-50). This approach, he asserts, allows for the emergence of a poetics that interrogates how the living human body is “a social being that is always in process, always producing as it is produced at the same time” (150). Commodity culture overwhelmingly conditions our bodies, Miki notes, and *Mannequin Rising* channels a need to address poetically the historical processes that shape a place, while being attentive to the body’s contemporaneity (153). As he asserts, “The concerns around social justice, memory, and the politics of representation still remain strong for me. It’s just that I think I’m working from a different approach. . . . [Q]uestions of ethics, intention, desire, and affect have become more immediate” (157). *Mannequin Rising* explores this tension between historical consciousness, the workings of memory, and the ongoing and active constitution of the subject in the present:

We are consumers get used to
it we are here because you were
there and there is always a here

That brings fear of trembling to
 the daily born exists that oft call
 to the pause in the amber light. (13)

In these evocative lines, the poet draws attention to the postcolonial temporalities that structure space, referring to a “here” shaped by a “there” and a present structured by the “there” from the past. This line playfully draws attention to the postcolonial critique: “we are here because you were / there.” Placing the discourse of consumerism in a wider discussion of time-space materialities, the poem suggests that the materialism of our everyday patterns of consumption must be opened up to a more disjunctive notion of time.

The different temporalities at work in *Mannequin Rising* are equally apparent in the collages, and Miki specifically focuses on how places are rewritten over time. This rewriting gives birth to time-space lags from which to consider how specific histories are erased. In a collage on page 71, for instance, Miki transposes archival images onto a waterfront photograph of Vancouver. In contrast to the waterfront picture in Figure 2 on the right, the collage (left) incorporates an image of a mannequin behind the Erickson building in False Creek and pictures of pigeons to the left. The more important aspect of the collage, however, is that Miki transposes archival images from when First Nations residents still inhabited the waterfront site onto the contemporary scene. Conversely, the Erickson building, marketed for its unique contribution to the Vancouver skyline and for its luxury condos, is still under construction in the collage. Its construction suggests that the landscape itself is under reconstruction or, better, deconstruction, a process that writes over the past histories of the place. Miki indicates on the adjacent page that the buildings are not the only indicators of this elision of indigeneity; water has also been turned into territory and territory, by extension, into the “modal call of the ages” (70). This line refigures the spatial dynamics of the collage in temporal terms, an intonation stressing that we understand spatial dynamics temporally and temporal dynamics spatially: in the text, this occurs through the dialogue between the visual image and the script, a translation that takes place between the grammatical structures and images on each page.

In fact, this dialogue between language and the visual field reflects a tension at the heart of the text. In a later interview with Miki,



Figure 2. Collage from *Mannequin Rising* (70, on the left), courtesy of Roy Miki, and Figure 3. Photograph (by the author) of the same location (on the right).

McAllister observes that his work exhibits a sense of disquiet through technologies of seeing such as the photograph:

I've been interested in your exploration of the interrelation between language and visual fields — scopic regimes — as fields of power and the creative possibilities that you open up in these spaces of confinement and erasure. It seems that the photograph as a technology of seeing has been present in your work for many years. First photographs enter your work textually, through descriptive imagery, and, then, it is as if through language you began to undo their discursive power over memory and bodies. (“Between” 222)

As in much of Miki's writing, photographs raise problematic questions about the limits of representation. Miki explains that he became fascinated with “photographic representations of the JC body” in internment pictures as a child (206). Given that much of government-promoted media represented Japanese Canadians as silent, passive, and alien inhabitants of the Canadian landscape, there was often an elision, he asserts, of Japanese Canadians as active and vocal responders to the government's racist initiatives (206-08). Some of these photographs became iconic representations of that moment.³

Michel Foucault explains in his writing on Jeremy Bentham's concept of the panopticon that technologies of seeing such as the gaze organize the “whole social body into a field of perception” (214). In other words, power resides not only in the act of seeing but also, more

significantly, in “arrangement[s] whose internal mechanisms produce the relation in which individuals are caught up” (202). These relations string the social body into a more acutely tuned domain of power, one that produces not only objects of knowledge but also those that craft and apprehend them. In this regard, the act of seeing might also be understood as an act always already complicit with certain modes of power. Although *Mannequin Rising* moves in a direction different from Miki’s redress work and his critiques of racialization, it offers a multifaceted critique of visual regimes much like his earlier work. His collages, in particular, destabilize what we understand as visual space by blending the visual and linguistic registers together, adopting novel strategies for critiquing the multiple modes of power at work in structuring our visual perception of space.

This occurs in another poem when the poet transforms fashion, understood in the first sense as the stylistic self-display of bodies, into a part of an address:

I am only a
transfer point

an unreliable
witness to fashion

in a network of
waning apostrophes. (112)

In the poem, the metonymic slippage of apostrophe indicates both a form of address and a site of grammatical erasure. Apostrophe is a textual reference to a linguistic convention: it is a “figure of speech, by which a speaker or writer suddenly stops in his discourse, and turns to address pointedly some person or thing, either present or absent.” It might also be understood as “an exclamatory address.” Alternatively, apostrophe also refers to the sign indicating either “the omission of a letter or letters” or the genitive and possessive cases in English (as in girl’s, girls’, conscience’) (*OED*). Turning “fashion” into “form” or reading fashion as form, as a mode or manner of something, Miki turns the visual politics of fashion, part of expressions of identity and commodifying regimes that shape and interpellate subjectivity, into the address of language.

Proprioceptive Poetics, Race, and the Post-Human

In what follows, I examine how Miki writes proprioceptively in *Mannequin Rising*, exploring the socio-political, cultural, technological, and material processes through which human life is modified on a routine basis. Following debates about post-humanism, I locate the “human” historically as a shifting socio-cultural, political, and biological entity that changes in accordance with technological and environmental shifts. Although post-humanism has spawned numerous interpretations of how it might be defined, in the most common sense of the term it is described as a theoretical frame for destabilizing “the human” and the humanism that underlies it. The cybernetic vein of post-humanism relies on the figure of the cyborg to shed light on the constructedness of the nature/culture divide, on species-ism, and on technological thresholds that shift our understandings of “the human.” According to Cary Wolfe, post-humanism decentres the *epistemologies* that correspond to humanism: “Everything we know (scientifically, theoretically) and say (linguistically or in other forms of semiotic notation) about the body takes place within some contingent, radically nonnatural (that is, constructed and technical) schema of knowledge” (xxv). According to Wolfe’s conceptualization, the human is prosthetic and modified on an ongoing basis. In *Mannequin Rising*, Miki specifically turns a biopolitical lens to the human body’s imbrication in a vast network of material and social processes to examine how the body as a living system interfaces with its material environment.

The post-human perspective unsettles the practices by which human life is naturalized and “human nature” is considered to be inviolate. Miki asks us to dwell on these processes and to do so through a proprioceptive attention to the body’s ongoing movement through time and space. Kaja Silverman explains in *The Threshold of the Visible World* that proprioception refers to “the body’s sensation of occupying a point in space, and with the terms under which it does so” (16). Proprioception involves “bodily sensation in general” and includes “a nonvisual mapping of the body’s form” (17, 16). In this respect, it is essentially about our sense of our bodies in space and encompasses our muscles and movements in the tactile world. Brian Massumi also explains that proprioception refers to a body’s engagement with object matter and its translation of that relation into muscular memory, a memory that comes to be retained in the body’s movements (59). By his own account, Miki acknowledges the significance of a poetics that moves “‘beyond’ the

reproduction of dominant expectations of aesthetic correctness towards a proprioceptive reflexiveness for racialization” (*Broken Entries* 212). In positing the body not as a singular entity but as one opened up in a field of perception, Miki addresses the psychosomatic aspects of racialization but with the intention of subverting them as the definitive or only narrative that a minority writer can produce. He observes that racialized subjects always already inhabit the frames of the dominant racial culture or that these frames are always already within: given this paradoxical and fraught psychic space, Miki asserts, it is important for cultural producers to expose “the race codes that bind” and, in doing so, to evade the normative narrative forms that such racial codes take (212-13).

In one poem in *Mannequin Rising*, readers get a sense of how Miki performs such a creative exercise. Taking a synesthetic approach, he focuses the reader’s attention on visual perception:

We are always at a loss when it comes
to the question of vision whether it is
better to fasten on a figure . . .
for optimal apprehension (20)

The poet reflects how vision is imbricated in the desire for apprehending and mapping the world, but the lines that follow quickly subvert this impulse to code the world through vision, turning to other modes of sensory experience — touch and subsequently smell — to chart the body’s movements through space:

I slid down the face of the intersection
. . .
. . . led by the fierce tenacity
of a nose ever close to the window dressing (20)

Translating first vision into the “ministration of a healing touch” and then touch into smell, the poet ends in another act of translation as the poem’s stream-of-consciousness approach leads to a playful enactment of writing racialization proprioceptively:

to chalk up the losses to the prescience of
the mannikin who leaps out of the frame
breaking the mould for the typecast role
as a hanger on or even a model minority
breaking the synergetic bonds wide open (20)

In these lines, the frames of racialization rupture through a reflection on the body's movement in everyday urban space, marking the poetic space as ductile, filled with seething contradictions. The lines metonymically play out the semantic associations of "mannequin,"⁴ "model," and "model minority."⁵ Miki's use of enjambment and his play on words animate and trouble the slippages between words. There is a "synergetic" relationship between the two terms, we are told, and this relationship reflects how bodies are racialized through objects. Chen argues that subjects are racialized in "affectively embodied ways" that unsettle the lines between human and non-human, and living and non-living, things (10). In ascribing movement to the mannequin, Miki draws attention to how racialized minorities are *modelled* on the characteristics of "silence, discipline, obedience" (Phu 10).⁶ Troubling and breaking the "synergetic bond" shared by the terms, Miki, however, subverts this metonymic relationship; in doing so, he attributes a sense of liveliness to mannequins, employing a proprioceptive approach that resurfaces the buried significations of racialization for the poet.

In this respect, Miki draws the reader's attention to both the poet and the voice of the critic in his poems, complicating the generic boundaries of critical and creative writing. Indeed, his long-standing engagement with language as a site of both speakability and profound silences, of interruptions and capture, suggests a robust commitment to writing language palimpsestically. As the editors of *Tracing the Lines: Reflections on Contemporary Poetics and Cultural Politics in Honour of Roy Miki* point out, his writing is multiply situated and thus should be multiply read vis-à-vis his various roles as "important activist, thinker, writer, poet, and editor, while at the same time tracing the lines of relation that extend to the communities that Miki has been, and continues to be, so much a part of building" (Joseph et al. 1). It is precisely for this reason that the palimpsest of his poetry cannot be adequately measured without a look at his critique of race in relation to nation; his critical engagement with a history of the dislocation and internment of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War, a personal history of activism in response to marginalization, and academic and community-based collaborations for anti-racist creative and political work deeply inform his writing.

Viral Globalization

For Miki, a proprioceptive poetics does not take the body to be a self-contained entity. Instead, it is alert to how the body interfaces with the world. A fascinating poem, “Viral Travels to Tokyo,” which reflects on his arrival at the Narita airport in Tokyo in 2009, extends this poetic approach to reveal an interwoven set of threads: discourses of disease, hygiene, racial and interspecies contact, bodily vulnerability, global mobility, race, and ultimately the contingent boundaries of the human:

We are the guinea pigs the lowly relatives of the swine
targeted for the global ruckus disseminating we hate to
say it just like a virus that seeks a host (an us) to
reproduce its kind. Colonies of restless sojourners bent
on global migration to forge mobile identities.

In this surge of hybrid coalescence our bodies are
conductive to being human or not. Viral as infrastructure
finds voice in molecular networks in forms of “social
distancing.” Instead of shaking hands let’s bump elbows
and forget hugs and kisses. That’s so pre-H1N1. Physical
contact of any kind is so socially passé. (75)

The poem comments on the 2009 H1N1 scare, the hysteria over a particularly virulent strain of influenza that quickly spread across the globe, to showcase how fears about disease are dramatized in airport settings through a range of surveillance techniques. In America, for instance, the swine flu immediately brought to the surface racial anxieties about diasporic Mexicans as carriers of the virus, since it first originated on Mexican pig farms. But this instance of scapegoating was not unique to the swine flu pandemic, given long-standing “cognitive scripts that blamed Latino immigrants for a variety of social problems” in the United States (McCauley, Minsky, and Viswanath 1). The example of scapegoating in the context of American-Mexican relations is a familiar narrative about diseased racial minorities that erupts in Western societies every so often. Processes of racialization intensify during the outbreak of infectious diseases, stabilizing racial identities and national boundaries in the liminal zones of airports and border controls.⁷ Alison Bashford and Claire Hooker also note that in such instances the “‘dream of hygienic containment’ recurs, as fully justified fears of new viruses, antibiotic-resistant bacteria, inter-species mutations or biological warfare

find expression, albeit in often unjustifiable ways: as homophobia, as racist restriction of immigration” (6). Miki’s poem, of course, considers the virus in the context of panic over the spread of disease around the world. Unsurprisingly, the H1N1 pandemic also highlighted anxieties about interspecies contact and the intimate interchange of viruses between humans and pigs.

In the poem, Miki explores this process of exchange between the two species, reversing the economic and cultural role that swine play in human food consumption around the globe. “We are the guinea pigs,” he writes, “the lowly relatives of the swine.” The interrelation of humans and pigs — our food consumption of, medical experimentation on, and slaughter of them — reminds us of Foucault’s point that biopolitics invests in the *production* of human life. Looking at the human/non-human divide more closely allows us to see the myriad ways in which this “production” takes place in relation to everything that enters the shadowy outer edges of human life: that is, the edges at which human life is as intensely policed as other forms of life are consumed. The slaughter of innumerable pigs, poultry, and other animals in response to the threat of infectious disease is merely one example of this biopolitical terrain (Blue and Rock 354).⁸ But Miki also asks us to examine how quickly this hierarchy is unsettled when human bodies become the carriers of a virus found in pigs, exposing the uneasy inter-viral, bodily, and genetic intermingling of the two species: humans and swine are “related,” he tells us, and this relation is part and parcel of “global migration” and “colonies of restless sojourners” that move virally across the globe, swine and human folded into one another. The “latest evolutionary phase” of globalization is viral globalization, the poet reflects, recasting migration and globalization in viral terms as contagions and infections that defy national borders and the liveliness of the dead and deathly life forms that we consume. As Eugene Thacker explains, “Epidemics are an exemplary case of [a] de-scaling of the human, in which it is not simply a particular manifestation of the living (human host, microbial parasite, animal vector), but rather a whole network of vital forces that course through the human in ways that function at once at the macro-scale and micro-scale (global travel, inter-species contagion, protein-protein interactions)” (135). Thacker observes that epidemics make visible human bodies’ interconnectivity with each other and with non-human matter at both the micro-level and the macro-level. Miki goes even further in

his poetics of “mobile identities,” noting that “[i]n this surge of hybrid coalescence our bodies are / conducive to being human or not.” These two lines offer significant insights for the twin elements of the proprioceptive and post-human threads that I see at work here. The first line mimics global movement in its form but questions to what extent the sweep and swelling of bodies in the heterogeneous rush of globalization raise ontological questions about being: “our bodies are,” the poet tells us, introducing a pause in the stanza, a pause that, for a mere second, returns us (the readers) to our own bodies. This reaching out from the poem from the present indicative plural of “be” returns us to the bodily instance of existence. The line’s rhythm echoes the rhythms of the body. The poem reflects the body’s continuous incorporation of the boundary/edge of language and other registers of meaning-making in this way, marking language as a fraught site of inquiry. Yet this proprioceptive attention to language also shifts as our gaze moves on to the following line and its query about “humanness.”

The following line in the poem posits a fascinating query, attributing an inherent instability to the state of being human: “our bodies are / conducive to being human or not,” the poet ironically writes. The conjunctive “or” does not indicate a full stop or conclusion: that our bodies are non-human because of our bodily and biological hybridity. Instead, Miki rather paradoxically retains the possibility of “the human” but with a crucial difference: he highlights the instability of the movement between the human and the non-human, suggesting that our bodies are both. The negative “or not” alters the potential for “being human” offered by the first part of the line, reflecting on the ambivalence of “humanness,” however we might choose to define its parameters — socially, culturally, temporally, politically, or indeed biologically and scientifically. The poet concludes on this thought, writing that we live in a time of viral globalization, “A globalization all but / invisible and dependent on a host of monitoring devices / gone post-visual post-traumatic and tellingly post-pig” (75). That the 2009 H1N1 pandemic was also known for being an amalgamation of genetic elements from several different strains of flu viruses — human, avian, and swine — also highlights the ongoing hybridization of interspecies interaction on a global scale. The poem’s concluding lines ask us to dwell on globalization not merely in terms of the global mobility of bodies but also in terms of the surveillance of those bodies through a “host of [invisible] monitoring

devices” (75). Read in this way, globalization vis-à-vis surveillance, the poem gestures toward how such strategies not only shape our relation to the non-human (here the pig in “Viral Travels”) but also constantly reshape the spaces that we inhabit.

The Affective Structure of Desire

By exploring how the body is modified and subjected to power, Miki suggests that desire is one modality through which we are opened proprioceptively to the world. However, rather than exploring the feeling human body as the only site of this affect, Miki addresses desire as an affective structure in global consumer culture. This approach foregrounds a poetic attention to the processes through which the body and subjectivity are opened in a force field of effects and affects. In one poem, Miki approaches the notion of desire by situating it in relation to another feeling — that of compassion. As the poet humorously questions,

Are you suffering from compassion fatigue?
 Does it bother you that you think you're
 the only one who is not a victim? Do you
 wake in the middle of the night and ask
 why me? Then bingo hold on to your stirrups.
 You've won an all expense paid cruise
 through the discourse of your choice
 with vocabulary tailored to your needs
 and all perceptual states a projection of your
 desires and your desires alone. A full message
 massage is yours too if you please. (*Mannequin Rising* 38)

The poem's verbal play and its contrast of “compassion fatigue” with “a projection of your / desires and your desires alone” posit a crucial question: in what terms do we adequately address how forms of commodification seize upon and transform the political function of feelings such as compassion, thus neutralizing or repackaging their potential? Ann Pellegrini and Jasbir Puar assert that “concepts like affect, emotion, and feelings aid in comprehending subject-formation and political oppositionality for an age when neoliberal capital has reduced possibilities for collective political praxis” (37). According to this view, because

emotions and feelings constitute not just individual but also social and collective identities, they also pose urgent political questions.

Miki, however, also points out how feelings, emotions, and affects themselves have been (and continue to be) transformed by neoliberal capital. As the poem indicates, “compassion fatigue” suggests a rupture between the self and the “other”; the term indicates weariness, and “fatigue” imposes a limit on “compassion,” defining it temporally. Commonly understood as the weakening of empathy for others, compassion fatigue is a symptomatic feature of contemporary public culture. In the poem, the metonymic slippage between “message” and “massage” similarly juxtaposes the potential of affects and feeling states as modes of communication, translation, interconnectivity, and an economy of pleasure and self-gratification. The question, “Are you suffering from compassion fatigue?” turns the notion of compassion on its head, asking how it — a social act of empathy — becomes reframed as an expression of individualist narcissism or bodily weariness. Pointing to the limits of compassion, Miki links the commodification of compassion with the production of desire.

In this poem, Miki thus playfully reminds us that marketing strategies often work at multisensory levels to attract a consumer. The poem sardonically identifies key (material) markers in a discourse that appeals to consumers’ individual needs and longings. As the poem suggests, interpellation does not occur at the level of language alone since it relies on individuals’ own projections of desire, a kind of subjection in which, to draw on Judith Butler, the subject is subject to foreclosure time and again (“Changing” 739). This can also be taken to mean that the marketing principles of consumer culture enable its norms to “operate as psychic phenomena, restricting and producing desire [and] . . . circumscrib[ing] the domain of a livable sociality” (*Psychic Life* 21). In this respect, we can understand compassion as the *desire* to exhibit compassion, monitored and marketed in a variety of ways.

Desire in Miki’s text thus offers a conceptual map for attending as much to questions of material culture and market demands as to the body’s potencies in these contexts. It asks us to think about the body as an interface, one in which larger political and economic mechanisms involving the hyper-surveillance, for example, of individuals and marketing patterns extend to the body’s internal subjective states. I am specifically interested in understanding desire as an affective structure

because it exceeds the conscious articulation of emotion and holds the potential to affect subjects through material and subconscious registers. Such an approach not only allows us to disturb the notion that desire pertains to the oedipal moment of subject formation but also indicates that desire is affective in the sense that Jeremy Gilbert describes: “affect’ is a term which denotes a more or less organised experience, an experience probably with empowering or disempowering consequences, registered at the level of the physical body, and not necessarily to be understood in linguistic terms” (3). Desire is structural, given that it affects the body, sometimes by design and sometimes by accident, and because it is implicated in the circulation of capital and its goods.

As Miki also shows, we might understand desire as not an altogether human characteristic; rather, it is both technological and affective and functions within various systems of power to mine human potential. Locating both “foreknowledge” and “desire” outside human consciousness in “Scoping (also pronounced ‘Shopping’) in Kits,” the poet writes, “The mannequins must share / foreknowledge of the rise / and fall of human desires” (13). These lines suggest, as Miki also writes elsewhere, the extent to which our consciousness is shaped by the “tyranny of the commodity” (47). In this respect, *Mannequin Rising* decentres what we take to be the sphere of individual autonomy and locates our relation to desire outside ourselves. Ultimately, the poem’s movement from mannequins to consumers, from the mannequins as objects that transmit human desires, is significant because it asks that we historicize affect in a postcolonial reimagining of a “there and there is always a here” (13). This contextualization of desire is consistent with the poem’s suggestion that we should not take material reality as a given but destabilize the frames of reference for what we generally take to be an objective perception of reality. For instance, the poet’s reference to “the montage of frames” in the poem parallels the collage that faces the poem, which incorporates an image of a photographer poised to take a photograph in the collage (12). This gesture to framing devices returns us full circle to a key impulse in Miki’s poetics — the impulse to explore how we perceive and receive the world as we encounter it proprioceptively.

Yet, in *Mannequin Rising*, desire is not only intertwined with the language of ownership and commercialism but is also the site at which to articulate an alternative ethos to commodification. Miki writes, for example, that the “question rises / from an unpatented move / that

desire makes” (106). Desire has the capacity to escape the capitalist appropriation of everything, the poet tells us. Indeed, his textual renditions of desire provocatively draw our attention to its enabling as well as disempowering dimensions and the necessity to pay attention to the objects that channel desire. This necessity is perhaps why the poet engages with affect through desire, whose topography carries implications for thinking about the larger problem of globalization and commodification with which his writing engages. As Matthew Tiessen argues about understanding the relation of place to human desire, the question of desire always leads us to the question of agency. But, he insists, we can adequately theorize agency only when we think about how non-human objects are implicated in shaping, mediating, and intervening in human desire. He asserts that “[r]eframing our desire and hopes as expressions not of ourselves alone, but of relationships, intertwining, and interdependent becomings has the potential to reveal the degree to which the ‘humanistic’ boundaries that have defined us have been a *conceptual* reality rather than one that adequately describes the relationship between us and the world around us” (131). *Mannequin Rising* explores desire in the context of a similar form of human–non-human interchange, taking the human to be a compositional site of change and modification in its encounters with the material world.

Conclusion

Mannequin Rising consequently reveals Miki’s engagement with the workings of memory and historical consciousness through a proprioceptive poetics. In examining the commodification, appropriation, and consumption of different forms of life, the poet situates the human body within a vast network of globalizing processes and the array of human and extra-human infrastructures underlying them. Indeed, Miki draws attention to the body as a feeling, receptive, perceptive, and affective entity, one that is shaped and co-opted as we perform our daily lives.

AUTHOR’S NOTE

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NOTES

¹ *Mannequin Rising* is the latest in a series of poetry publications: *Saving Face* (1991), *Random Access File* (1995), *Surrender* (2001, which won the Governor General's Award for Poetry), and *There* (2006).

² I borrow my understanding of globalization from Saskia Sassen, who writes that it marks "transboundary spatialities" that unsettle the "scalar hierarchy centered in the national state" (*Sociology* 14). Globalization reflects "massive trends toward spatial dispersal of economic activities at the metropolitan, national, and global levels" ("Locating" 3). According to this model, globalization, first and foremost, is characterized by the rapid development of financial structures and communication networks that cross national boundaries (1). Neoliberalism is an ideological formation dominantly expressed within processes of globalization. According to David Harvey in *The Enigma of Capital and the Crisis of Capitalism*, the discourse of neoliberalism emerged in the 1970s bearing the rhetoric of individual freedom and the pursuit of liberty, free trade, and the free market; its language of personal responsibility sought to legitimize privatization, ultimately consolidating and centralizing capital and power in the hands of a select few in countries such as the United States (10).

³ In this interview with McAllister, Miki observes that documentary photographs from the internment of Japanese Canadians objectify and silence them ("Between" 206-07). These images, he observes, contrast with the photographs taken by Tak Toyota, which "embody a sense of fear and uncertainty in the faces of the women, the men and the kids" (208).

⁴ Although in the contemporary sense of the term a "mannequin" refers to a "model of (part of) a human figure, used for the display of clothes" (*OED*), in the first decades of the twentieth century the term referred to both an artificial replica of the human body (used for the display of clothes) and a human fashion model who *modelled* clothing. Caroline Evans notes in her study of the New York fashion model that the mannequin paralleled the increased public presence of women in the city and that the fashion model, named a mannequin, "was variously represented as both an object and a subject" (261).

⁵ In *Redress: Inside the Japanese Canadian Call for Justice*, Miki observes that eventually "Japanese Canadians would enter the dominant (white) Canadian nation . . . becoming a model minority — more 'Canadian' than Canadian. These model citizens would simultaneously retain, in the folds of their memories, their historical connections to the experience of being marked" (256).

⁶ Thy Phu also observes in *Picturing Model Citizens: Civility in Asian American Visual Culture* that "the model minority myth seeks to remedy injurious exclusions from the full rights of political and social citizenship, dangling accommodation and assimilation as compensation for a history of exclusion and alienation. . . . [But the characteristics] of silence, discipline, and obedience . . . cause worry when they are construed as an inhuman penchant for deceptiveness and robotic hyperefficiency. Vilified as part of the Yellow Peril menace, the inscrutable Asian is . . . the obverse of the beneficent model minority" (9-10).

⁷ See John Mckiernan-González's *Fevered Measures: Public Health and Race at the Texas-Mexico Border, 1848-1942* for a detailed history of migration, disease, and medicalization in the United States with respect to Mexican Americans and other minority groups.

⁸ In "Trans-Biopolitics: Complexity in Inter-Species Contact," Gwendolyn Blue and Melanie Rock propose another term for reading the relationship of humans to non-human animals, calling it "trans-biopolitics." Donna Haraway has also offered salient critiques of interspecies contact and the human commodification and consumption of animal life. See, especially, her treatment of animal patenting.

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