Canadian Studies

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experimental for the way they flow between the documentary privileging of the tokens of experience – which the use of photographs, author-modified maps, palimpsests provides – and the vernacular voice or storytelling which is implied in the narrative potential of the long poem. What seems to emerge from the reading of the latest editions of The Ledger and Steveston is that the “particulars of place” (Kroetsch 1989a: 76), in very different ways for each poet, suggest a powerful formula for dislocating the written word from the page. Their use of the visual element enables them to achieve a new animation of the text: place names, newspaper headings, old photographs, business ledgers, diaries, journals, tall tales come alive as possible points of entrance into the poetry of place. The central concept for both writers – and the reason for which I decided to bring their works together – is the link to the place their poieties grow out of and the “alphabet of place [that they write] in more ways than one” (Kamboureli 1991: 123).

Concluding with the questions I set out to tackle in my essay, could we interpret these poems without relating their words to the images or the photographs they contain? I hope I have shown how much of the poems’ pregnancy is actually lost if we only read, without seeing, these poems.

CHAPTER 7

Dialectical Images in Canada:
Joseph Dandurand, Stan Douglas
& The Conjectural Order

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Kwantlen First Nations poet and playwright Joseph Dandurand and photographer/film installation artist Stan Douglas both utilise dialectical images of Canada as a medium for cultural and artistic exploration, producing in the process internationally known works. The term “dialectical image” derives in this usage from the work of Walter Benjamin, where dialectics at a standstill is the actuality or “now of knowability” brought about by the interruption of historical contemplation with the collocation of recently outmoded objects and ideas that reveal concrete (and potentially revolutionary) insights concerning the present. As I argue elsewhere: “Benjamin’s historical materialism is not an attempt to uncover the constructedness of history, its fictional status as theorised by postmodernists, but is instead a destruction of the ‘fictions’ of a commodified or hyperreal world, an unleashing of forces which occur simultaneously with ‘the birth of authentic historical time’” (Lane 2005: 65). The point of reading Dandurand and Douglas using the concept of the dialectical image is to avoid recycling tired notions of postmodernism and/or image manipulation, and to show how both artists create powerful, revolutionary images that cross and at times disrupt theoretical domains, or, more accurately speaking, are complex constellations. As Benjamin argues:

To thinking belongs the movement as well as the arrest of thoughts. Where thinking comes to a standstill in a constellation saturated with tensions – there the dialectical image appears. It is the caesura in the movement of thought. Its position is naturally not an arbitrary one. It is to be found, in a word, where the tension between dialectical opposites is greatest. Hence, the object constructed in the materialist presentation of history is itself the
diialectical image. The latter is identical with the historical object; it justifies its violent expulsion from the continuum of historical process (475).

Both Dandurand and Douglas also engage with the performative in their image production: for Douglas, this involves processes of digital control and random film-looping, for example his installation work Journey Into Fear; for Dandurand the performative is theatre, for example with his two “cigar store wooden Indians” who are the protagonists of his play Please Do Not Touch The Indians, or, the images that are juxtaposed with his poems in his book looking into the eyes of my forgotten dreams, which will be of concern here. In many ways seemingly different artists, I am bringing Dandurand and Douglas together to create my own montage or creative-critical constellation, which links with postcolonial counter-discourse (Cf. Lane 2006a: 27), but also to think about how indigenous and other Canadian peoples are represented and recoded in their work. With Douglas the main images I will focus on are his photograph called Every Building On 100 West Hastings and the images that make up his multi-media text Journey into Fear; with Dandurand the main photograph studied is found twice in his poetry collection looking into the eyes of my forgotten dreams, but I will focus on its use in conjunction with, or as part of, his poem “Fort Langley”; the photograph is by Frederick Dally, and it is titled “Indians, Fraser River circa 1868.”

My theoretical argument, in summary, is that:
- both Douglas and Dandurand create what Walter Benjamin calls “dialectical images”
- in both instances, regardless of the variations in technologies used, the images are created via montage
- in both cases the dialectical images create a powerful “memorial aesthetics” which is both a memorialisation and an intervention in the present-day representation of indigenous and other peoples in Canada.

**Dandurand & Fort Langley**

**Fort Langley**

you can see the fort from where I live.

wooden walls,
trees,
desperate voices.

ey call to me,
come on over,
come on over,
come on.

shut up,
I say.

shut up and stay over there.

used to drink at their bar,
used to sip whiskey,
used to fight,
used to be blind from it all.

now
I stare at their walls.

wooden walls,

thick with history.

many men and women never made it home.

they found them trying to climb over the walls.

whiskey bottles broken and empty roll down to the river,

laceless shoes sit silent as if waiting for someone else,

a picture of someone’s mother blows away and over the walls,

the gate is closed.

the fort.

over that way.
over past the mass grave.
smallpox.
you ever seen smallpox?

pretty ugly.

not as pretty

as wooden walls (6-7).
The poem is not printed in isolation: it works in conjunction with a powerful image, one of the many that Dandurand found while browsing in his local library at Fort Langley, BC, one of the images which he wanted to reclaim. The image is cropped, which is understandable, given the caption handwritten by Dally directly onto the photograph: “Indians shamming to be at prayer for the sake of photography. At the priests request all the Indians kneel down and assume an attitude of devotion. Amen” (Davison 1981-82: 19). The word “shamming” juxtaposed with the image-based photographic performance is intriguing; also, the spurious homonymic etymology that could produce a link with “shaman.” Dandurand has recoded the “sham” here: instead of indigenous peoples performing a mode of belief that was imposed upon them by colonialism, the image is now seen as a “sham” imposed by Dally, i.e., he becomes a *synecdoche* and repetition or return of that colonial imposition. Instead of indigenous peoples looking foolish here, Dandurand creates a pathos in his juxtaposition of photograph and poetic text, which recodes the actors in the photograph in a subversive manner. This recoding is not simply a postcolonial reversal; instead, it creates a dialectical image, a “now of recognizability” whereby images are subtracted from “sham” narratives of progression or evolution, and exposed instead to a different configuration which has an explosive potential. Why explosive? Because dialectical images simultaneously function as memorial aesthetics and a rupture in time. For example, after a huge amount of work has been done by critics cataloguing, critiquing, and rejecting “inauthentic” images of indigenous peoples, e.g., the work of Curtis, indigenous peoples in the US and Canada are re-appropriating those very same images and giving them a new value, inserted into a new context, with recoded memorial significance. This is a radical gesture of re-recognition and a temporal intervention, although such a process generates what Lyotard calls “a differend”: non-indigenous academics want to condemn “sham” colonialist images while respecting at the same time the right of indigenous peoples to assert critical and creative autonomy in their use of them; holding both contradictory positions together is a differend, or, the recognition in law that both sides here have a legitimate claim. From either side of the issue, the differend does not exist; but juxtaposed, as in a montage, the differend

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1 This reading of Dandurand’s work is also my identical starting point in an essay called “Sacred Community, Sacred Culture: Authenticity & Modernity in Contemporary Canadian Native Writing,” in Deborah Madsen (ed.), *Native Authenticity: Transnational Perspectives on Native American Literary Studies* (SUNY UP, 2009). In this latter paper I develop my reading in relation to Dandurand’s *Please Do Not Touch The Indians*. 

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does exist, with powerful repercussions. We can of course think about this issue in the context of treaty negotiations.

**Douglas and Every Building On 100 West Hastings**

*Every Building On 100 West Hastings* appears to be a wide-angle photograph of the 100 block in Vancouver’s downtown eastside. The inhabitants of this neighbourhood are often homeless or low-income people, drug users and sex-trade workers. Many indigenous peoples, especially vulnerable young women, have been abused and murdered in this neighbourhood over the last few decades, a haunting fact considering that Douglas’s image is devoid of human beings; another reason for this absence is that the 100 block is part of a neighbourhood that property developers are planning to demolish and rebuild, with high-end loft apartments, condos and office space. What has this got to do with Dandurand’s recoding of text and image? First of all, Douglas’s image is a deliberate “sham” in the postmodern sense of being digitally manufactured: it isn’t a wide-angle lens image at all, and it presents a picture that no single point-of-view could reproduce:

Douglas shot twenty-one photographs, which loosely correspond to the number of lots on the block, on the night of August 27-28, 2001 [...] and converted them into digital imagery with a high resolution scanner. The artist meticulously sutured these representations together on a computer using microscopic digital pixels to blend the joins between the individual shots and smooth out their perspectival disjunctures. He then printed the image in two parts using a light jet printer, seating them together at the centre to form a sixteen-foot panoramic vista of the entire block (Oleszjczuk 2002: 108).

The word “panoramic” gives us a clue as to the status of this image: while it utilises many of the technologies of virtual reality and postmodern hyperreality, it also utilises a slightly older technology, that of the montage, even if the end result is a montage without borders. In other words, the suturing together of scanned images means that the original images were not in digital format and that they have been converted into a hyperreality that still maintains connections with the modernity of second-order simulation. So why is this a dialectical image? I suggest that the resistance to a singular point-of-view and the absence of human beings points to and foregrounds the desired and ongoing evacuation of this urban space which is actually home to many people; the evacuation is coercive: the removal of tenants through various legal or illegal means. There is also an allusion in this absence to the murder of many of the neighbourhood’s inhabitants. For example, the Missing Women’s Task Force in this area was set up after media and
other pressure to investigate missing sex-trade workers and others; the
case that a serial killer was at work in the neighbourhood had not been
deemed worthy of initial investigation by the authorities because of the
low status — or lack of status — of the killer’s victims. So while
Douglas’s image is ostensibly of a neighbourhood in its “death throes,”
the image is also a memorialisation through absence of all of those
individuals, known and unknown, who have been murdered in their
downtown eastside homes. The montage works by intersecting the
homely and the unhomely, or the homely and the uncanny: there is
absence or death where we expect life, and life where the commercial
redevelopers of this neighbourhood want us to perceive absence (or
death). This connects with Dandurand’s dialectical images in looking
into the eyes of my forgotten dreams, where the text is “about” the
impact of the residential school experience for Kwantlen First Peoples,
and also the intersection of the homely and the unhomely or uncanny.
The residential school, supposedly a place of care, was of course also a
place of abuse; some of those in charge, who had the legal status of
guardians or parents, also engaged in a cultural genocide project. I do
not wish to reduce the complexities of this historical event, one which
I believe is integral to understanding Canada’s relationship with its
indigenous peoples; I am merely pointing out that the memorial
aesthetics of both Dandurand’s and Douglas’s dialectical images reject
mainstream Canadian narratives of humanistic progress, and instead
return to certain architectonic sites and imagistic sights for reasons of
critical intervention.

As noted, the dialectical image is a key part of what Benjamin calls
dialectics at a standstill” explored most profoundly in his Arcades
Project and “On The Concept of History”; but why in this case
dialectics” at all? I argue that it is crucial to separate and distinguish
such a montage image from a fully commodified and commutable
“hyperreal” image of the sort theorised by Jean Baudrillard and others
(Cf. Lane 2000). In other words, dialectics at a standstill, while initially
theorised by a messianic German-Jew at the time Europe became
overshadowed by the horrors of Nazism, is a large enough concept to
deal with modern technologies of representation and notions of the
mysterious and the sacred, such as indigenous belief systems; in other
words, Dandurand and Douglas either want, or inadvertently produce, a
more radical if not revolutionary notion of the image, one that does not
engage in a postmodernist abandonment of the sacred or the traces of
humanity.

PoMo Vancouver: Permutational Narrative Images

Douglas’s Journey into Fear is a multiple series of texts, first and
foremost being a film installation with a large number of permutations:
“a picture track loops while its dialogue tracks are constantly changing”
(Douglas 2002b: 26). The setting of the film is a container ship heading
into the port of Vancouver, with two main characters visibly on board:
Moller and Graham. Moller is a “supercargo,” an individual who deals
with the passage of sensitive, dangerous or simply extremely valuable
goods, while Graham is a ship’s pilot. It is the film’s form and timeline,
however, that is the most obvious complicating device, making strange
the normal chronological development of narrative:

The timeline is broken in four positions (1-4) to permit branching. At these
junctures, a computer randomly chooses which one of five dialogue
variations (A-E) will be performed. Each time the picture track repeats, a
different combination of dialogue segments is heard until all permutations
have been presented. There are 625 possible combinations, however, this
script [the Serpentine publication] presents only five. Segment 1A is here
followed by 2A, although it might very well be followed by 2B, 2C, 2D, or
2E — just as 2A could be followed by 3A, 3B, 3C, 3D or 3E, etc.

Additionally, there are two variations of picture track montage and
performance blocking. In one, for example, Moller passes a letter to
Graham, and in the other Graham passes a letter to Moller. Between the
interior dialogue variations, two halves of a foot chase are presented. One
complete loop of the picture track is thus composed of four sections...
(Douglas 2002b: 26).

Journey into Fear is also a printed document, composed of: a film
script, temporarily “frozen” into five permutations with visuals, essays
(“Journey into Fear: An Introduction”, “Journey into Fear and
Melville’s The Confidence-Man”), the author’s comments (”Journey
into Fear [2001]”), and a series of photographs (Journey into Fear
Pilot’s Quarters 1 [2001]; Journey into Fear: Pilot’s Quarters 2 [2001];
Damaged Containers, Mitchell Island [2001]; Every Building on 100
West Hastings [2001]; Rookery, Burnaby [2001]; and Impounded
Fishing Vessels, North Vancouver [2001]). While the printed document
can only give a sampling of the film installation, its own complex
arrangement of different written and visual texts/images is mimetic of
the installation’s complex form and functioning. Intertextual relations
are also flagged up, as Matt Thorne notes: “Stan Douglas’s film
installation has one timeline derived from Journey into Fear, a twice-
filmed thriller based on an espionage novel by Eric Ambler, and four
from The Confidence Man, His Masquerade, a novel by Herman
Melville” (2002: 19). Intertextuality, while commonly thought of in
terms of thematics and the transference of iconic objects and characters, also functions at the level of form. As Thorne suggests:

Douglas has described his project as a “machine,” stating that, “like any machine, this ‘remade’ Journey into Fear has the effect of transforming time into space, by translating mutability and transience into a constellation of elements that are simultaneously present within a defined system.” It has been argued that Melville designed The Confidence-Man to be a project of endless possibilities (20).

One of the most representative aspects of the text’s postmodernism is the fact that it is produced via a constantly morphed environment: that is to say, the location of the installation and/or text is divided internally and externally, so that naturalistic mimesis falters. The claustrophobic setting of the cargo ship means that mimesis is in fact cliché, but not necessarily in a negative sense: it is the cliché or recycling of statements as such from other films, other dramatic performances. The cargo ship is moving towards the port of Vancouver (the plot of the bifurcated sequence is that Möller wants to delay the ship’s arrival), but within the parameters of the story world, it never arrives; whereas Malcolm Lowry’s October Ferry to Gabriola is driven by the desire for arrival, Journey into Fear is driven by the necessity to slow down the arrival of the ship. Vancouver is in fact the destination that is never represented, or, represented in its absence. The latter has, in some quarters, become a way of identifying Vancouver’s uniqueness: that it can stand in for some place else, which means that “it” disappears as such in the process. Stephen E. Miller calls this notion of identity “cultural schizophrenia” and he argues that it: “has been the norm for so long – almost two decades – that for artists and craftspeople living in the city it has become a point of intense pride that, with a little preparation, Vancouver can become virtually anything, anywhere, anytime” (1994: 283). Implicit in this statement is the notion that Vancouver is more than just a city that becomes a morphed setting; rather, there is the finer point, that Vancouver itself is the work of art, the plastic substance that can be moulded and shaped in myriad ways. This can be seen in the work of Jeff Wall, which can be read as an interpretation of Vancouver as a specific locale. As Trevor Boddy notes, after seeing Wall’s work at an exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London:

it was quite evident that specific conjunctions of landscape, capital, and passions in these suburban Lower Mainland [of Vancouver] venues could not be substituted for other locales; they literally could not be ‘replaced.’ His [Wall’s] readings of place were specific and resonant, even if the sites of their consumption as images were elsewhere (1994: 45).

Even though Vancouver is the absent referent of Journey into Fear, failing to be placed directly (in itself, a complex notion) in representational space, this is still a way of representing Vancouver’s specificity: indeed, one of the main intertexts of Journey into Fear, the 1975 motion picture with the same name, was itself filmed in Vancouver. The sequential re-makes thus perform the same acts of erasure and aporetic affirmation of setting.

The text of Journey into Fear does juxtapose the aporetic installation extract with the sorts of photographed locations expected of, say, Vancouver photographer Jeff Wall; the similarities may not be entirely accidental, for example, Douglas’s photograph of Impounded Fishing Vessels, North Vancouver (2001) not only has the vast blue Vancouver sky as the background, with the industrial vessels and dock lamps in the foreground, but there is also a compressed and flattened view of downtown Vancouver, all of which is reminiscent of Wall’s The Thinker (1986). In fact, Douglas’s Impounded Fishing Vessels, North Vancouver is in many respects the reverse image of Wall’s The Thinker: the latter print has downtown and the north shore as the background, and is taken from the land mass we are looking at as the background of Impounded Fishing Vessels, North Vancouver. In both shots the image is cut horizontally by a line, which creates a right-angle with a lamp-post: in Wall’s image the horizontal line is a power or phone line, in Douglas’s it is a cloud trail possibly caused by an aeroplane. In both shots, downtown Vancouver is framed, and sits behind, industrial landscapes; in both shots the space is divided into three blocks. Perhaps the only significant difference between the two shots (apart from the fact that they are almost mirror images structurally and formally speaking) is that Wall has a human subject posed dramatically on the right-hand side of the image, while Douglas has focused on the absence of human subjects, represented by the three bicycles parked at the base of a ramp leading up on to one of the ships. As such, these photographs function very differently, although they are both very carefully composed and framed. An even more significant photograph that accompanies Journey into Fear is Every Building on 100 West Hastings; Borchardt-Hume, for example, argues that this photograph firmly locates the overall setting of the film installation (2002: 17). Looking closely at this photograph, as noted above – the viewer notices no people whatsoever, and more significantly, the subject matter is a series of shop buildings that are semi-derelict or run-down, and/or up for sale. The relationship between the film installation and the photograph Every Building on 100 West Hastings is clearly one which focuses on their oppositions: the installation is a self-enclosed space generated via postmodern intertextuality whereas Every Building on 100 West Hastings is mimetic,
being literally a photograph of an entire block of buildings. The latter are not represented, however, in the modernist sense of achievement and dominance of the urban space, rather, the evocation of impending doom or redevelopment is closer to the driving force of perpetual exile found in Malcolm Lowry’s Pacific Northwest writings, particularly October Ferry to Gabriola. Rebuilding is a postmodern process par excellence: it signifies not the possibility that the city space can be transformed, but that it must always be in the process of transformation. The latter, taken to its logical conclusion, means that buildings themselves represent their own destruction and transformation, at all times. This may simply be processed as spatio-temporal confusion, or, architectural complication; as Fredric Jameson suggests, with the Bonaventure Hotel in mind, postmodern buildings

no longer attempt, as did the master-works and monuments of high modernism, to insert a different, distinct, an elevated, a new utopian language into the tawdry and commercial sign-system of the surrounding city, but on the contrary, seek to speak that very language, using its lexicon and syntax, that has been emblematically ‘learned from Las Vegas’ (1998: 11).

The apparent signification of potential destruction and rebuilding generated by Every Building on 100 West Hastings is not utopian, rather, it is one of semiotic replication and morphing within the lexicon which Jameson is elaborating upon. Baudrillard asks if postmodern architecture has gone beyond what has conventionally been accepted as the “architectural”:

Is this still architecture, this pure illusionism, this mere box of spatio-temporal tricks? Ludic and hallucinogenic, is this post-modern architecture?

No interior/exterior interface. The glass facades merely reflect the environment, sending back its own image. This makes them much more formidable than any wall of stone. It’s just like people who wear dark glasses. Their eyes are hidden and others see only their own reflection. Everywhere the transparency of interfaces ends in internal refraction. Everything pretentiously termed “communication” and “interaction” – walkman, dark glasses, automatic household appliances, hi-tech cars, even the perpetual dialogue with the computer – ends up with each monad retreating into the shade of its own formula, into its self-regulating little corner and its artificial immunity (1988: 59-60).

For Baudrillard, postmodern architecture is a detachment from the city space rather than an expression of its language; in other words, Baudrillard has a conception of the city space that he is holding outside of, possibly before, postmodernism, one which is real, rather than hyperreal. Douglas, in the collection of texts called Journey into Fear, appears to have a chastic notion of representing Vancouver; whether this means that Vancouver can be infinitely and solipsistically morphed, in a private, self-enclosed hyperreality or language game, or, whether this is a reflection upon contemporary reality for this major Pacific Northwest city, remains to be seen.

Images of Architecture: Modern vs. Postmodern

An apt comment made by Douglas in his own reflections on Journey into Fear is that the historical placing of his installation is ambiguous: it could be now, or it could be the 1970s, the setting of the original film’s re-make. Apart from the fact that this ambiguity doubles the temporal ambiguity of the re-make itself, it could also be taken as an unwitting comment on Vancouver architecture. If Journey into Fear speaks the architectural language of postmodern Vancouver, then how do we account for the vast amount of unimaginative, dull and dreary modern architecture in Vancouver? If postmodernism is a recycling of the past, sampling or quoting it as part of a new process of aesthetic construction, then how can some of the most boring architecture in the western world be accommodated in this scheme of things? These questions are mediated by a contemporary novella, Mark Macdonald’s Flat (2000). Like Douglas’s collection of texts, Macdonald’s Flat is a multimedia production: the novella is composed of hand-drawn maps, architectural drawings, and photographs of Vancouver’s West End, as well as the written narrative, each chapter being given a location instead of a more traditional number or subtitle. The opening chapter, “#805 – 1461 Harwood Street” juxtaposes a photograph of a modernist apartment block with the narrative concerning the death of “J” the mysterious object of the protagonist’s obsession. J lies sprawled, dead, surrounded by pills and alcohol, but also more interestingly “journals and pads filled with frantic notes, sketches and diagrams” (Macdonald 11). There are more materials pasted onto the wall:

The walls are entirely covered. He has collaged a million scraps and postcards, writings, news clippings, paintings, photographs, maps. No one looking for the first time would recognize a pattern, but he knew how to read it all. Drawings of buildings around the West End, with pure, even lines, and from dozens of angles, are stacked neatly beside rows of sagging book cases. Above the couch, above the body, there is a large satellite image of the whole neighbourhood, stolen with care from the city archives (Macdonald 11-2).

The novel switches to the first person in the second chapter, “#318 – 1235 Nelson Street,” and the story-line connects with this unnamed narrator, a distant friend of J’s, who has been contacted to deal with the J’s “estate.” Death as an inconvenience – see Jim Crace’s Being Dead
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(Lane 2003) – shifts to becoming a drawn-out post-mortem that impacts upon the living. The unnamed narrator, in cleaning through J’s flat, discovers that the collage on the wall actually has a depth to it, it is a palimpsest made up of layers: “pictures behind pictures, layers of images and words sometimes four deep” (Macdonald 21). As with Beckett’s Trilogy and Paul Auster’s The New York Trilogy, the unnamed narrator eventually appears to morph into J, for example, becoming addicted to the Flutoxocet drug that he has overdosed on. What sends the unnamed narrator “crazy” is his attempt to make sense of the collage and the notebooks that he has discovered. The novella also has a self-reflexive, mirroring quality that both frames and exceeds J and the unnamed narrator; there is the resident of “2401 Comox” in chapter three who lives next door to the resident of “2402,” both of these characters reflecting upon one another; there is yuppie who takes over J’s flat at “805 Harwood” with no idea that a man has died in it; and the voyeurs at “1005 Harwood” who have watched J’s life and death, the new yuppie moving in and the unnamed narrator go insane. Finally, the novella switches to the perspective of the landlord of the unnamed narrator’s flat, who is already mentally planning the eviction of this man who has deteriorated so suddenly. Creating analogies with the right-angle in Douglas’s and Wall’s photographs, this self-reflexive mirroring suggests a non-organic equivalent to the industrial landscapes of Vancouver: in this case, the brutalist architecture of the residential West End, which reached some kind of apateosis, ironically, with the campus of Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, BC, which Paul Delaney has called “the most imposing monument of late modernism in Canada” (16).

Dialectical Image Morphs Into The Conjectural Order

Dandurand’s montages create permutational looping between printed and photographic texts; this permutational looping is also apparent in Douglas’s suturing of images-without-end and experiments in film narrative. I suggest that such permutational looping creates a dialectics at a standstill, where recoding intensifies the image so much that it becomes “explosive” and reaches a point of what Benjamin calls “profane illumination.” This intensification, also partakes of what I have called the Conjectural Order (Lane 2006b). The Conjectural Order is a re-staging of subjectivity, “one which occurs in everyday life when a crisis point has been reached or a transformational event occurs”; it is also a powerful psychoanalytical investment and projection of “the auto/biographical subject” (Lane 2006b: 80). The dialectical image, thought via the theory of the Conjectural Order, can also be theorised “as a desublimatory convergence of fluctuating intensities or tonalities” (Lane 2006b: 84), the discourse drawing here upon the work of Deleuze, Guattari, and Klossowski. What I am suggesting, in conclusion, is that Dandurand and Douglas work with transcultural dialectical images, that cross theoretical and national domains, images that cannot be reduced to traditional representational or more contemporary postmodern and postcolonial categories. Both artists under consideration produce explosive images that deconstruct and reconstruct notions of subjectivity and place, therefore the return to Benjamin’s ideas in this context is productive in the sense of the radical metaphysics at work in the images under study, where “that which seems wholly esoteric and impenetrable” in the montage form, “becomes lucid and full of meaning” (Buse et al., 105). The postmodern draining away of “meaning” is of course re-charged in the intensities produced by various critical and artistic assemblages; in the Conjectural Order, the re-staging or re-performance of subjectivity bridges the deconstruction of the subject and the previous metaphysical reliance on the subject. The bridging is not intended as a synthesis or unification, but more an awareness of the importance of new subjectivities in Canadian First Nations writing, and, in the artistic outputs from the ever-morphing, but still Canadian, ethnically diverse city of Vancouver.