Remember Me Nought: The 1985 Air India Bombings and Cultural "Nachträglichkeit"[1]

by Angela Failler
with artwork by Eisha Marjara

This paper engages with the politics of remembering and forgetting that surround the unsettled history of the 1985 Air India bombings. In particular, I use the concepts *Nachträglichkeit* and "affective recircuitry" to describe the way in which the bombings have been problematically and retroactively framed through a post-9/11 "war on terror" lens in recent, public recollections of this traumatic past. Examples are drawn from the federal Commission of Inquiry into the Investigation of the Bombing of Air India 182, as well as from public memorial sites and ceremonies dedicated to those killed in the bombings. The paper also centres on a reading of Eisha Majara's new photomontage series *Remember Me Nought* to consider how artistic commemorations might contribute to a critical counterpublic in response to the injustices that continue to manifest in the ongoing aftermath of this mass violence.

A History of Forgetting

In 2005, during the long overdue criminal trials of Air India bombing suspects Ripudaman Singh Malik from Vancouver, British Columbia (B.C.) and Ajaib Sing Bagri from Kamloops, B.C., plane wreckage stored in a "secret" Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) warehouse was revealed to the court as forensic evidence.[2] The wreckage, including pieces of passenger seats and a fuselage with windows still intact, had been recovered from the ocean floor after Air India Flight 182 crashed off the coast of Ireland on June 23, 1985. The flight had originated in Toronto, destined for Delhi via Montréal and London. All three hundred and twenty-nine passengers and crew on board were killed in the crash, which was the result of a mid-air explosion. Among them were two hundred and eighty Canadian citizens, the majority of whom were of Indian (South Asian) backgrounds. Less than an hour earlier, in a separate but ostensibly related explosion, Japanese baggage handlers Hideo Asano and Hideharu Koda were killed as they prepared another Air India flight to depart from Narita airport in Tokyo. The two suspects on trial, Malik and Bagri, whose alleged involvements with a radical Sikh separatist movement implicated them in the attack on India's national airline, were eventually acquitted by B.C. Supreme Court Justice Ian Josephson.[3] Josephson determined that the handling of evidence by RCMP and the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (CSIS) during the prolonged twenty-year investigation had been critically flawed, prompting the release of the accused.[4] His decision was met with dismay by the relatives and friends of those killed. For them, the ongoing lack of resolve in the case simply added insult to injury, deepening their already unanswered grief.

Yet, while the criminal trials were still underway, family members of the victims were invited to view the wreckage. "For me," commented Lata Pada whose husband Vishnu and daughters Brinda and Arti perished on Flight 182, "this was [when] I got to feel really in a physical way what this event was all about... To see a plane of this size and this strength shattered, I just couldn't even begin to imagine what it would have done to the living bodies in it."[5] Pada added that, in her view, preserving the damaged pieces of the plane would be the most powerful and visceral way of "enshrining" the tragedy.[6] Others also expressed their wish for the wreckage (still the property of Air India) to remain in Canada in order to be included in a memorial. Perviz Madon, who lost her husband Sam in the bombing stated, "It would be good if we could preserve it–the whole thing as it is...I think we should have a memorial site here in Vancouver. This is where the crime originated. This is where it was all planned and plotted and carried out... it is time we had a memorial."[7]

Susheel Gupta, whose mother Ramwati Gupta died on the flight, spoke on behalf of the Air India Victims Families Association (AIVFA) to request that the wreckage be incorporated specifically into a national memorial.[8] He explained that, albeit belatedly, its inclusion would be a gesture of acknowledgment on the part of the Canadian government which had hitherto been remiss in its failure to regard the Air India bombings as a national tragedy—a failure now well-documented in the findings of the recent federal Commission of Inquiry into the Investigation of the Bombing of Air India Flight 182 (hereafter referred to as "the inquiry") which saw dozens of testimonies by family members recounting the ways in which Canadian authorities did not support them in the aftermath of the deaths of their loved ones.[9] Embarrassingly, Brian Mulroney, Prime Minister at the time of the bombings, offered his condolences to the Indian government for *its* losses, ignorant to the fact that the majority of those killed were citizens of the nation-state he represented. Indeed, with their request for a national memorial, the victims' families were seeking an alternative means of redress in the absence of both criminal justice and official recognition. To date, however, no such memorial has materialized. Instead, the state-sponsored sites subsequently built in Vancouver's Stanley Park and Toronto's Humber Bay Park East (both unveiled in 2007), in addition to the "refurbishment" and "rededication" of an existing plaque in Ottawa's Commissioner's Park, are noticeably conservative in their design, offering highly symbolic, abstracted reminders of this particular history.[10] While AIVFA was reportedly consulted on certain aspects of these sites (including the location), their original desire to have an artifactual monument featuring the wreckage of the plane appears all but forgotten—at least by the public officials responsible for overseeing the memorial projects.

I introduce my paper with this instance of "forgetting" in order to raise the broader question of how particular representations come to stand (in) for the remembrance of historical traumas over others. In other words, how do certain memorializations of the traumatic past gain symbolic authority? And more specifically, how have memorializations of the 1985 Air India bombings taken shape? Which representational strategies have been privileged and which have been marginalized? Which (or whose) objects, sites, and narratives related to this history have been publicized and displayed, and which (or whose) have been overshadowed, omitted even? Moreover, what is seen to be at stake in remembering this traumatic past presently, and how is this reflected in the construction and design of memorials and other remembrance practices? And finally, what might be the consequence of particular, recent "rememberings" of the Air India bombings for how terrorism will be understood and responded to in the future?

"Nachträglichkeit" and Affective Recircuitry

Within recent official remembrances and mainstream media accounts, the 1985 Air India bombings have been retroactively framed through a post-9/11 "war on terror" lens.[11] This kind of framing

works not only to shape interpretations of the history of the bombings, but also the choice of actions that are seen as available towards redressing or compensating for its losses. Moreover, a war on terror framing works to ensure that any recollection of the bombings not representable within the prioritized/privileged framework of "anti-terrorism" or "national security" is marginalized in terms of its circulation as public memory of this history. Take, for instance, the critical account of University of Toronto Sociologist Sherene H. Razack. Razack was called to the stand as an expert witness during the inquiry in 2008 to comment on whether or not she thought systemic racism played a role in either the pre-bombing threat assessment or post-bombing response by the Canadian government and its policing and intelligence agencies. Razack testified that, indeed, she believed systemic racism played a role in both contexts, citing repeated instances where government officials, CSIS, RCMP, and Canadian airport authorities ignored, disbelieved, erased and lost crucial evidence including warnings by the Indian government and Air India officials as well as surveillance tapes of the acquitted suspects.[12] "In a nutshell," she explains, "systemic racism operates when all lives do not count the same and when those charged with protection are not inspired to do their best to ensure that no life was lost."[13] Following her testimony, Razack was lambasted by Barry Brucker, counsel for the Attorney General of Canada, who did *his* best to undermine her credibility, calling her opinion unfounded and superfluous to the mandate of the inquiry itself.[14] Tellingly, Brucker's main objection was that "[her testimony] was going to form part of the public record."[15]

A second example of this exclusionary framing occurs as Prime Minister Stephen Harper, during his speech at the unveiling of the Toronto memorial on June 23, 2007, the anniversary date of the bombings, declares this date henceforth the "National Day of Remembrance for Victims of Terrorism."[16] His new dedication, ostensibly a gesture to acknowledge the Air India bombings as a Canadian tragedy, nevertheless removes any reference to it. In doing so, he neatly sidesteps the specificities of this complex and largely unresolved past, including evidence that clearly implicates the state in its mishandlings. That is, by dedicating a "National Day," Harper repositions the state as a benefactor or advocate of the victims and their families, deflecting criticism of the government's own (in)actions and shifting blame for what may have been a preventable tragedy. Along with the inquiry, then, this site of remembrance, through its official framings, functions as an attempt to contain the unsettledness of a lingering past whilst encouraging sympathy for an anti-terrorist agenda—one whose modus operandi includes the intensification of policing and security measures which, as critics point out, encroach upon the civil liberties of Canadians, and where, ironically, the rights of racially marginalized groups become most vulnerable as profiling and surveillance practices are increasingly imposed.[17]

The retroactive framing or revision of the 1985 Air India bombings through a post-9/11 "war on terror" lens also performs a kind of cultural *Nachträglichkeit*. *Nachträglichkeit* is a Freudian concept that has been taken up by psychoanalysts and cultural theorists alike to complicate the idea of memory, or remembering, as a simple exercise of recalling a stable field of objects or experiences from the so-called "past." In psychoanalysis, Freud used *Nachträglichkeit* to describe how a memory trace of an earlier experience may be revised in order to fit in with new experiences, or what he called "fresh circumstances."[18] Moreover, as new experiences or fresh circumstances revise memory traces of the past, the past is re-invigorated with "psychical effectiveness" or unconscious meaning for the present.[19] *Nachträglichkeit*, thus, draws our attention to how the past and the present exist in a dialectical, dynamic relation to one another in remembering. That is, while the past can linger as an after-effect shaping interpretations in/of the present, the present retroactively revises impressions of the past. These "dual vectors of *Nachträglichkeit*,"[20] after-effect and retroactivity, are at work in interpretations of the history of the Air India bombings, as well understandings of what the bombings

mean now, particularly in light of the "fresh circumstances" of 9/11. Stephen Harper makes this plain in an interview with the *Vancouver Sun*: "In some ways," he opines, "9/11 has given all this [the Air India bombings] more life many years after in the sense that people now clearly understand that these were the victims of the biggest, the most significant, the most deadly terrorist act in Canadian history."[21] *Nachträglichkeit*, as such, becomes part of the frame of recognition in how the Air India bombings are remembered today, twenty-five years later.

These dynamics can also be understood in light of what cultural studies theorist Jenny Burman has termed "affective recircuitry."[22] Burman argues that during times of perceived crisis, such as 9/11and the subsequent "war on terror," public vectors of trust and suspicion are re-aligned (or sometimes, I would add, re-entrenched) according to projected fears and anxieties.[23] That is, in times of insecurity, peoples' fears and anxieties can prompt them to seek out old and/or new representatives to attach both trust and suspicion to in an attempt to stabilize a sense of precariousness and vulnerability. In this context, the state can also be seen working to shore up public confidence in its ability to protect citizens—most obviously through increased security measures, but also through processes such as federal commissions and memorial projects where history and memory are strategically invoked in the name of preventing any similar crisis in the future—"lest we forget."[24] In the case of the Air India bombings, controversial issues that continue to surface in its drawn out wake are being appropriated as opportunities for public authorities to re-draw fears around certain suspect (i.e., potential terrorist) "others." The impact of this in the everyday lives of Canadians, namely those perceived as "not-quite citizens"[25]—including not only citizens born elsewhere, but also second generation, Canadian born children of racialized immigrant parents such as those who, like the majority of the victims in the Air India bombings as well as their relatives, may identify as Indo Canadian, South Asian Canadian, or Sikh Canadian—is that they disproportionally become targets of suspicion themselves: potential "home grown terrorists."[26]

Interestingly, an air of suspicion has also been drawn around artistic representations of the Air India tragedy. In a summary report of the first phase of the federal inquiry, Commissioner John Major (retired Canadian Supreme Court Justice) cites ways in which individuals and communities have memorialized those killed in the bombings through the dedication of scholarships, sporting events, and a hospital nursery. He also cites the publication of certain memorial books that contain, in his benign words, "inspirational messages" and "touching memorabilia." "These," he cautions, "must be distinguished from other books and films based loosely on the events of the tragedy. [For] in the latter case, the authors may have used artistic license to develop stories which are not necessarily based on facts."[27] Major's caveat on the "other books and films" here is worth noting not only for how it casts doubt about artistic interpretations of the bombings, but also for how it sets up or frames the fact-finding endeavor of the inquiry (alongside scholarships, sporting events, nurseries and touching memorabilia) as memory-work that is beyond suspicion—the implication being that while efforts like official inquiries that purport to transparently and objectively document the traumatic past through formal (legal) means can be entrusted to commemorate this particular history, art cannot.[28]

Not surprisingly then, in terms of public circulation, artistic commemorations of the bombings remain marginal to official and mainstream mediatised ones,[29] despite the existence of a significant number of works by South Asian Canadian artists and writers ranging from Nicky Mehta's musical recording "Truly,"[30] to Uma Parameswaran's poetry in *Sisters at the Well*,[31] Bharati Mukherjee's short story "The Management of Grief,"[32] Anita Rau Badami's historical fiction *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?*,[33] Eisha Marjara's docudrama *Desperately Seeking Helen*,[34] Srinivas Krishna's feature film *Masala*,[35] and Lata Pada's multi-media dancework *Revealed by Fire*.[36] Artists have also, thus far, been excluded from involvement in state-sponsored memorial designs dedicated to the Air India bombings

where, rather than hosting design competitions (as is often practiced in the memorialization of victims of mass violence), public officials have commissioned landscape architect firms to work alongside parks and recreation boards and city planners on these projects. This form of exclusion and the suspicions raised around the work of artists speaks precisely to the potential of artworks to disrupt and challenge the symbolic authority that official accounts of the bombings have maintained. Moreover, artworks have the capacity to evoke experiences or expressions of traumatic pasts that formal and official efforts (especially those committed to nationalist agendas and producing concrete, conclusive evidence towards securing inviolability) cannot—namely, the less tangible effects of trauma that linger as unconscious desires, memories, and unfinished grief; in other words, those traces of trauma that remain largely ungraspable but nonetheless bear upon the force of the past for the present and future.[37]

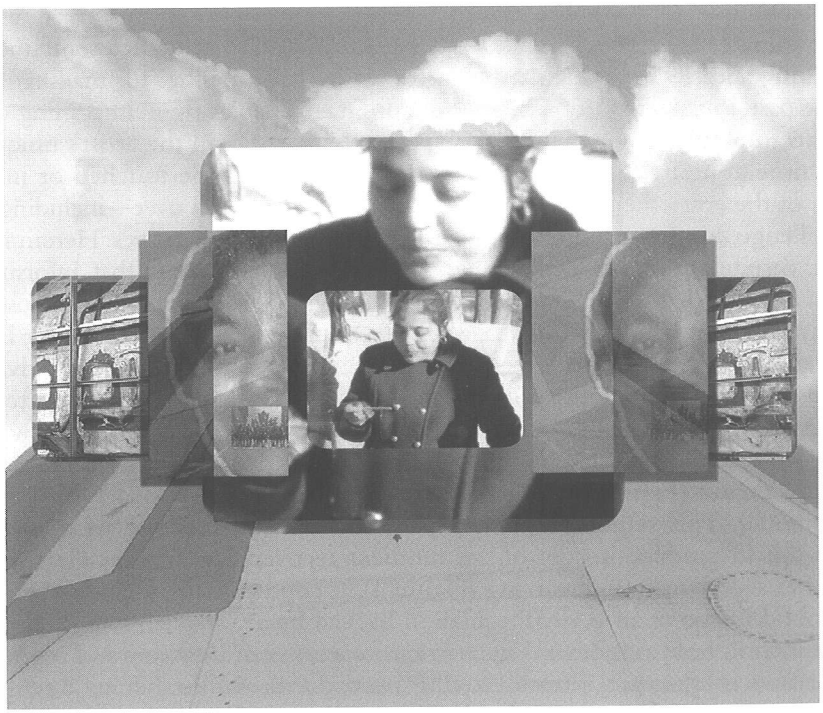

Figure 1
MAPLE SUGAR from *Remember Me Nought* (2010) by Eisha Marjara, reproduced with permission of the artist.

Remember Me Nought: A Technique of Awakening

Remember Me Nought,[38] a provocative new photomontage series by Montréal artist and filmmaker Eisha Marjara, grapples with the less tangible, lingering effects of trauma and the exclusions that have characterized formal and official remembrances of the Air India bombings to date. Marjara is intimately connected to this history having lost her mother and sister on Flight 182. She also directed the critically acclaimed film *Desperately Seeking Helen*,[39] a docudrama that interweaves the event of her mother and sister's deaths with negotiations of girlhood and South Asian Canadian identity. The eight piece series *Remember Me Nought*, four of which are reproduced here with narration in the

artist's own words (italicized), layers public and personal impressions of the bombings through the juxtaposition of official documents and media images with family photographs and personal effects recovered from her mother and sister's bodies post-mortem. My exploration of this series hinges around a specific set of questions aimed at considering its significance, as an artistic commemoration, for public memory: What kinds of representational strategies are employed in this series, and to what effect? How does Marjara treat "the frame"? How does this work intersect with official frames or narratives of history? What does this work say about the relationship of the present to the past (or vice-versa), and how might this shape the way in which the stakes of remembering are understood? And lastly, what is this work's potential to engage counterpublics towards cultivating a critical understanding not only of the Air India bombings, but of the broader context within which "anti-terrorist" efforts are currently being waged?[40]

Beatrice Hanssen, scholar of German cultural criticism, cites Walter Benjamin in describing montage as a "technique of awakening" for its potential to compose history in "newly vivid, newly graphic, newly palpable forms."[41] That is, by deconstructing, remixing, reassembling, layering, and combining existing and fresh materials, montage offers new possibilities for making meaning of and interpreting the past. Put slightly differently again, montage enables the reimagining or reinscripting of history and its implications for the living present, relying both on the artist's unique approach to conjuring up "time gone by," and the willingness of spectators to be touched or incited, here and now, by aspects of the past otherwise unknown, forgotten, or covered over—including (or especially) aspects that challenge dominant frames of recognition and official narratives. Herein lies the hope of Marjara's work: despite the unthinkably tragic and unjust circumstances that inform *Remember Me Nought*, through artistic expression she has re-envisioned the significance of traumatic loss by articulating the still relatively unheard voice(s) of unassuaged grief and protest surrounding the Air India bombings.

The power of this series undoubtedly lies in the way Marjara invokes private and public memory in tension with one another. She does so by neighbouring objects that represent private memory, such as family photographs and personal effects (Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4), with objects that represent public memory or official record, such as images of the Air India plane wreckage that circulated in the media (Figures 1, 2) and the autopsy report included with her sister's death certificate (Figure 4). This tension is also highlighted by Marjara's use of a macro-perspective (extreme close-up) to produce images of her mother's recovered watch, bangle and tangle of hair (Figure 3) and her sister's recovered earring (Figure 4) in contrast with, for instance, a distanced and miniaturized found image of an RCMP squadron backed by a Canadian flag (Figure 1). While the macro images function here as indexical signs to create a sense of intimacy and immediacy—that is, a sense of Marjara's mother and sister's "having been thereness"[42]—her treatment of the latter, iconographic signs and national symbols, evoke the detachment and neglect she and others felt from Canadian public officials upon the loss of their loved ones.

Despite these tensions, the private and public are not simply cast as binary opposites in *Remember Me Nought*. In fact, their proximity suggests their interimplication; by layering, insetting, and transpositioning private and public signifiers, Marjara acknowledges how the private and public are simultaneously constitutive and interruptive of each other—both in the formation of subjectivity and in the practice of remembrance. Take, for example, the feature of her mother's identification cards in "Id_entify" (Figure 2). Notably, identification cards are, at once, indexical signs *and* official records. In the accompanying narration, Marjara describes the contradiction between the promise of inclusion, represented by the cards, and her mother's actual struggle to be recognized as a Canadian citizen—a discrepancy emphasized by the appearance of her mug shots having slid off or been severed from the legitimizing context of the official documents. In the middle card, Marjara blocks

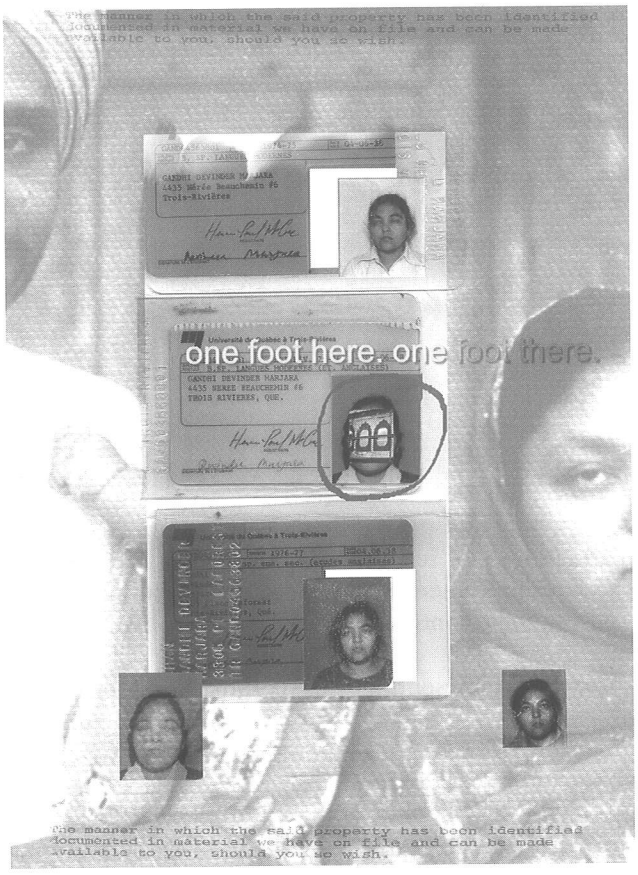

Figure 2
ID_ENTIFY from *Remember Me Nought* (2010) by Eisha Marjara, reproduced with permission of the artist.

out and transposes her mother's face with a thumbnail icon of the plane wreckage, then traces around it in her own hand (an effect also visible in "Maple Sugar"). This redaction not only references Devinder's final expulsion in the bombings, but deliberately points to prior exclusions from her full participation in the citizenry on account of being considered a "foreigner." As such, the montage and its accompanying text illustrate how individual histories are entwined with social histories; or, in Joan Gibbons' words, how "the personal inevitably sits within a public or collective framework."[43] In this instance, the life and death of the artist's mother are remembered as embedded within a history of colonial relations and ongoing systemic racism, frameworks that continue to be denied or "forgotten" by Canadian public authorities with respect to the Air India bombings and other racially-based historical injustices.[44]

Also prominent across the series are Marjara's use of repetition and a frame-within-a frame technique. In "Maple Sugar" (Figure 1), for example, photographic images of the artist's mother are multiplied and nested within each other as well as flanked by images of plane wreckage which are, in turn, framed by the wing of a plane and a clouded sky. In "Id_entify" (Figure 2) repeated mug

shots are framed by multiple ID cards which are also framed within an archival family photo that serves as the montage's backdrop. Majara's extended attention to framing here suggests (at the very least) that the technique of photomontage is, itself, particularly suited to exploring or perhaps even shifting the frames of recognition and conditions of recognizability in terms of whose lives are worth remembering. Moreover, her repetitions and nestings aptly metaphorize the echoes of trauma, embeddings of loss, and compounded injuries experienced by those left behind who continue to suffer through the lingering injustices enfolded within this history.

In a play, perhaps, on what has been made visible and invisible in other recountings of the Air India history, throughout *Remember Me Nought* Marjara renders figures and images transparent, or semi-transparent, blurring and fading them into and out of one another. The ghostliness achieved by this effect, seen particularly in "Tangle" (Figure 3) and "Last Words" (Figure 4), can be understood to evoke not only the tenuousness of life, but of memory itself. In other words, it is as if to say: memory comes with no guarantee of permanence or fixedness. As literary scholar Nicholas Miller argues, memories (and their expressions) are places where the past is more often than not imagined and revised in order to satisfy "a desire for subjective and cultural stability and control in the present."[45] This view of memory, alongside Marjara's semi-transparencies, returns us to the notion of *Nachträglichkeit* wherein the present and the past become inextricable from one another in the highly subjective and symptomatic process of remembering. Memory traces, like semi-transparent figures, hover at the edges of consciousness where they "cannot be bound in time or space," as Marjara puts it ("Tangle," Figure 3); and yet, their continuing force upon our lives is what necessitates our reading and re-reading of them.

In its particular approach to representing the Air India bombings, *Remember Me Nought* might be understood to function as a "countermemorial." The countermemorial, James Young explains, works against the tendency of conventional memorials "eager to assign singular meanings to complicated events and people"[46]—a tendency that I argue characterizes existing sites commissioned and designed by the Canadian government and public authorities. Rather than fixating on historical resolution or attempting to secure the meaning of the past for the present, countermemorials, like Marjara's, draw attention to impermanence and inconclusiveness, recognizing the "dynamic, unfolding, unfinished relationship of the past and present."[47] In doing so, an emphasis is placed not on accuracy and control, but instead on the creation of openings that might allow critical counterhistories to emerge and circulate among public discourses.

The creation of openings is crucial at a time when public authorities are hastening towards closure around the Air India bombings and its ongoing reverberations. This hastening has been palpable at recent, officially sponsored events such as the twenty-fifth anniversary memorial ceremony held on June 23, 2010 in Toronto. Here, Stephen Harper simultaneously announced the conclusion of the federal inquiry and offered an apology to the relatives of those killed in the bombings for "the institutional failings of twenty-five years ago and the treatment of the victims' families thereafter."[48] His speech encouraged a sense that with the inquiry's report and an official apology in hand, these failings were now more or less reconciled, and that it was time to move forward with his government's plan to "make the skies safe for travel"—a plan that includes a promise to "carefully and systematically marginalize [those] extremists who seek to import the battles of India's past here," and to "struggle against destroyers and murderers of all kinds." This, Harper concluded, "[is] the greatest legacy we can leave to your loved ones."[49]

According to the Prime Minister's address, neither commemoration nor moving forward necessitates pursuing the still largely unacknowledged question of *why* the Air India bombings failed to be acknowledged as a national trauma in the first place, or how systemic racism contributed to

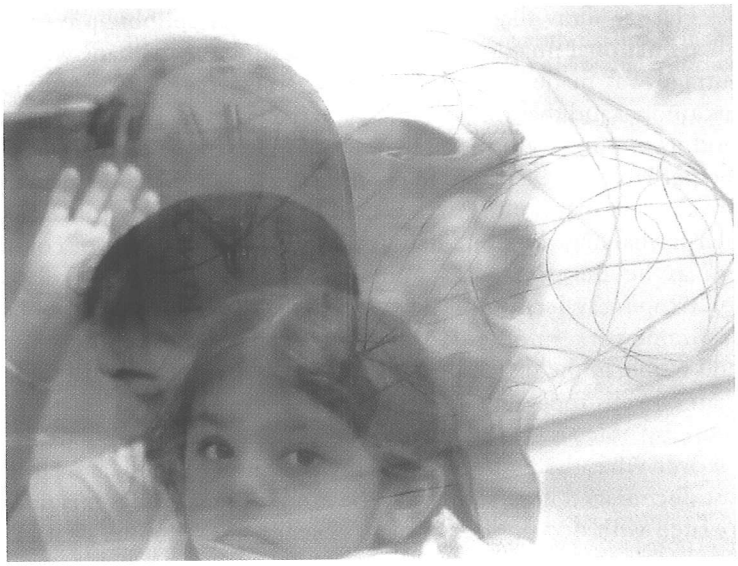

Figure 3
TANGLE from *Remember Me Nought* (2010) by Eisha Marjara, reproduced with permission of the artist.

Figure 4
LAST WORDS from *Remember Me Nought* (2010) by Eisha Marjara, reproduced with permission of the artist.

this disavowal. Nor does Harper allow that systemic racism and xenophobic projections of "foreign otherness" *continue* to shape national imagination, instead asserting: "Canadians who sadly did not at first accept that this outrage was made in Canada, accept it now... This was not an act of foreign violence. Canadians now understand that this atrocity was conceived in Canada, executed in Canada, by Canadian citizens, and its victims were themselves mostly citizens of Canada"[50]—the subtext of his assertion being that perhaps in 1985 and for some time "thereafter" Canadians (read: white Canadians) were naïve to the fact that South Asian Canadians are Canadians, too. But now, of course, we understand. What Harper has actually done here is to dismiss this instance of colonial violence—this "misunderstanding," as he frames it—as an unfortunate yet relatively isolated moment in Canadian history while, "escaping reflection on how such violence and its legacies remain enmeshed with the present."[51] This framework, in other words, refuses consideration of how Canada's colonial past remains traceable and visible in the discriminatory treatment of South Asian and other non-white and "not-quite" Canadian citizens today.[52]

The staging of closure by officials on this and other recent occasions of public mourning reveals a desire to assert control over what the past means for the present. Not only are varying or complex interpretations of the past discouraged here, so may be the kinds of possibilities imagined for redressing losses and "failures" associated with occurrences of mass violence in the future. That Harper presented to the relatives of those killed in the Air India bombings a plan for ramping up national security and anti-terrorism as "the greatest legacy we can leave for your loved ones" bespeaks a distinct and worrisome closing off of curiosity about alternative, non-violent means of remembrance and redress. It is precisely this closing off which necessitates that other voices—particularly ones that challenge the official narratives upheld in mainstream, publicized accounts of this history—finally be heard through diverse stories, ideas, and critiques about the Air India bombings. Marjara's photomontage series *Remember Me Nought*'s impact on the lives of Canadians presently, and for its impact on the potential to build a democratic future.

NOTES

1 This paper is dedicated to Dr. Alice Pitt with whom the author first learned about *Nachträglichkeit*. Thanks also to Oliver Botar and Sandee Moore for their insightful comments, and to the editors and anonymous reviewers who gave helpful feedback during the draft stages of this paper. In addition, the author acknowledges support of this research by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

2 "Air India wreckage to stay in storage," *CBC News*, 25 May 2005. <*http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2005/05/25/airindia050525.html*> (accessed 13 February 2009).

3 Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to explore in any depth the relationship of the Air India bombings to the complex historical conflicts between Sikh separatist and Indian nationalist movements, many others have written about it and, in particular, about the series of violent attacks and counter-attacks between the two "sides" that took place in Punjab the year prior to the bombings. These attacks had deep resonances within the Sikh and Indian diasporic communities in Canada. For a journalistic account on the subject see Salim Jiwa and Donald J. Hauka, *Margin of Terror: A Reporter's Twenty-Year Odyssey Covering the Tragedies of the Air India* Bombing (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2006). For a version in historical fiction see Anita Rau Badami, *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2007). For the Government of Canada's version see GoC, "Dossier 1: Background and Summary of the Facts," *Commission*. <*http://www.majorcomm.ca/documents/FINAL_Facts_dossier_EN.pdf* > (accessed July 2008).

4 A third suspect, British citizen and former resident of Duncan, B.C., Inderjit Singh Reyat, was convicted earlier on a lesser charge of manslaughter and aiding in the construction of a bomb. As I write this paper (in May 2010), Reyat has

just completed serving the time for the manslaughter sentence but awaits a new trial for additional charges of perjury. A fourth suspect, former Burnaby, B.C. resident Talwinder Singh Parmar, popularly referred to in the media as the "mastermind" behind the conspiracy, was killed in 1992 while in custody of Punjab police and was thus never brought to trial in connection with the Air India bombings.

5 Kim Bolan, "Air India plane proposed as memorial: families say wreckage should be permanent reminder of the tragedy that killed loved ones," *Vancouver Sun*, 6 November 2004.
<http://www.canada.com/vancouversun/features/airindia/story.html?id=2b957fd4-7841-4aed-9b5a-7935b19feccd&k=13047> (accessed 4 March 2008)

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 "Air India wreckage to stay in storage," *CBC News*, Wednesday, May 25, 2005,
<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2005/05/25/airindia050525.html> (accessed February 13, 2009).

9 For a description of the various ways in which the government of Canada failed to recognize or respond to those who suffered personal losses in the Air India bombings in either symbolic or practical terms see Government of Canada (GoC), "The Canadian Response" in "The Families Remember: Phase 1 Report," *Commission of Inquiry into the Investigation of the Bombing of Air India Flight 182*, *<http://www.majorcomm.ca/en/reports/phase1/canadianresponse.pdf>* (accessed 10 May 2010).

10 For a more in-depth discussion of the design of the Toronto memorial, in particular, see Angela Failler, "Remembering the Air India Disaster: Memorial and Counter-Memorial," *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies* 31, no.2/3 (2009): 150-176.

11 Angela Failler, "Representing the 1985 Air India Bombings: Anti-terrorist Frames of Redress," *Reconciling Canada: Historical Injustices and the Contemporary Culture of Redress*, eds. P. Wakeham and J. Henderson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, forthcoming).

12 Sherene H. Razack, "The Impact of Systemic Racism on Canada's Pre-bombing Threat Assessment and Post-bombing Response to the Air India Bombings," *Commission* (expert witness report submitted December 12, 2007).

13 Ibid., 3

14 For a more in-depth discussion of this and other contradictory aims and practices of the federal Inquiry, see again, Angela Failler, "Remembering the Air India Disaster: Memorial and Counter-Memorial." For Brucker's own words, see GoC, *Commission* (Hearing transcripts, 13 December 2007), 12616; CPAC on-line video, Commission (Session 1 of 15 February 2008 hearings), *<http://www.cpac.ca/forms/index.asp?dsp=template&act=view3&pagetype=vod&lang=e&clipID=910>* (accessed 29 February 2008); and GoC, *Commission* (Hearing transcripts, 13 December 2007), 12618.

15 GoC, Commission (Hearing transcripts, Dec.13, 2007), 12618.

16 GoC, "Prime Minister unveils memorial dedicated to the victims of Air India flight 182," *<http://pm.gc.ca/includes/send_friend_eMail_print.asp?URL=/eng/media.asp&id=1719&langFlg=e>* (accessed 4 March 2008).

17 Alexandra Dobrowolsky, Sandra Rollings-Magnusson, and Marc G. Doucet, "Security, Insecurity, and Human Rights: Contextualizing Post-9/11," *Anti-Terrorism: Security and Insecurity after 9/11*, ed. Sandra Rollings-Magnusson (Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2009), 1-31.

18 J. Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: WW Norton & Company, 1973), 111.

19 Ibid.

20 Friedrich-Wilhelm Eickhoff, "On *Nachtraglichkeit*: The Modernity of an Old Concept," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 87 (2006): 1453-1469.

21 Kim Bolan, "Our tragedy: In an exclusive interview, Prime Minister Stephen Harper said Canada finally sees Air India bombing as a 'Canadian' tragedy," *Vancouver Sun*, 23 June 2007.
<http://www.canada.com/vancouversun/features/airindia/story.html?id=e6ee0024-f0e4-4770-86e0-b51ab845680b> (accessed 2 July 2009).

22 Jenny Burman, "Suspects in the City: Browning the 'Not-Quite' Canadian Citizen," *Cultural Studies* 24, no.2 (2010): 200-213.

23 Ibid., 204.

24 I am invoking the notion of "strategic remembrance" here in the sense that Simon, Rosenberg and Eppert describe to mean remembering or memory structured within particular spatiotemporal frameworks in an effort "to mobilize attachments and knowledge that serve specific social and political interests." See Roger I. Simon, et al., *Between Hope & Despair*, 3.

25 Rinaldo Walcott quoted in Burman, "Suspects in the City," 208.

26 Ibid.

27 GoC, "The Families Remember: Phase 1 Report," Commission, 140–147,
<http://www.majorcomm.ca/en/reports/phase1/> (accessed 4 March 2008), 139.

28 I have also discussed these particular comments of Major's in my article "Remembering the Air India Disaster:

Memorial and Counter-Memorial," cited above. See page 166. And for further discussion on how representatives of the government, including the Commission's lawyers, frame their accounts of the bombings during the inquiry as unquestionable "truths," see 156-157.

29 An example of a recent mainstream mediatised representation that is receiving widespread circulation and recognition as "the definitive film about the Air India tragedy" is Toronto director Sturla Gunnarsson's documentary *Air India 182* (2008). Gunnarsson's documentary has been licensed and aired by Canada's national public television and radio broadcaster, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), and was featured as the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival's "Opening Presentation." I have offered an extensive critique of this film in the above mentioned article, "Representing the 1985 Air India Bombings: Anti-terrorist Frames of Redress" (forthcoming).

30 Songwriter and performer, Nicky Mehta, "Truly," *Weather Vane* (Edmonton: Spirit River Records, 2002).

31 Uma Parameswaran, *Sisters at the Well* (New Delhi: Indialog Publications Pvt., 2002).

32 Bharati Mukherjee, "The Management of Grief" in *The Norton Introduction to Literature: Shorter Ninth Edition* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988): 272-283.

33 Anita Rau Badami, *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2006).

34 Eisha Marjara and D. Wilson. (Producers), Marjara, E. (Director). (1998). *Desperately Seeking Helen* [Motion Picture]. Montréal: National Film Board of Canada.

35 Srivinas Krishna, (Director). (1991). *Masala* [Motion picture]. Toronto: Divani Films Inc.

36 L. Pada. (Choreographer, Director) and J. Rudakoff (Dramaturg, Writer), *Revealed by Fire* [Dance performance]. (Toronto: Sampradaya Dance Creations, 2001).

37 I take my lead on this point from Anne Anlin Cheng's discussion in *The Melancholy of Race: Psychoanalysis, Assimilation, and Hidden Grief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). [pp. 172-175]

38 *Remember Me Nought*, Photo series, Eisha Marjara (Montreal: independently produced, 2010).

39 Eisha Marjara (Director). (1998) *Desperately Seeking Helen* [Motion picture]. Canada: National Film Board of Canada.

40 My observations on the reception of *Remember Me Nought*, or its potential contribution to a counterpublic, are necessarily limited by the fact that Marjara has yet to publicly exhibit this series in any other venue. As such, there have been no other reviews or responses to it. Its inclusion in this essay marks the premiere of this new work.

41 Beatrice Hanssen, *Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, (London and New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006), 183.

42 I have borrowed this phrase from Joan Gibbons' discussion on indexical signs. Gibbons, in turn, borrows this idea from Roland Barthes' theorizing on the photographic image and Charles Sanders Pierce's distinction between indexical, symbolic, and iconographic signs. See Gibbons, Joan, *Contemporary Art and Memory: Images of Recollection and Remembrance* (London and New York: Taurus, 2007), 30.

42 Ibid., 52

44 A recent and blatant demonstration of this denial occurred during Stephen Harper's speech at the G20 summit in Pittsburgh, September 2009, where he declared that Canada had "no history of colonialism" —this, just a year after he apologized on behalf of the Canadian government for a residential school system designed to systematically annihilate Indigenous culture and identity. See David Ljunggren, "Every G20 nation wants to be Canada, insists PM," *Reuters*, 25 September 2009. *<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE58P05Z20090926>* (accessed June 10, 2010). On other instances of historical injustice and similar denials of Canada's colonial past see *Reconciling Canada: Historical Injustices and the Contemporary Culture of Redress,* eds. P. Wakeham and J. Henderson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, forthcoming).

45 Nicholas Miller, *Modernism, Ireland and the Erotics of Memory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 15.

46 James E. Young, "Memory and Counter-Memory: The End of the Monument in Germany," *Harvard Design Magazine* 9, Fall (1999): 1-10.

47 Ibid., 10

48 GoC, "PM speaks at the commemoration ceremony for Air India 182" from *http://pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?category=2&pageId=46&id=3478* (accessed 5 September 2010). See also the program handed out to ceremony-goers, GoC, "Message from the Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper," *Canada Remembers: In Commemoration of the 25*th *Anniversary of the Air India Flight 182 Tragedy*, 2010.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 Amber Dean, "Public Mourning and the Culture of Redress: Mayerthorpe, Air India, and Murdered or Missing Aboriginal Women," *Reconciling Canada: Historical Injustices and the Contemporary Culture of Redress*. eds. P. Wakeham and J. Henderson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, forthcoming).

52 Again, I have drawn directly here on Amber Dean's keen analysis from her forthcoming chapter cited in the endnote above.