Proximities from Whiteness:

Negotiating White Privilege and Racialized Citizenship in Velma Demerson’s *Incorrigible*

Velma Demerson’s story of incarceration, loss of citizenship, and social death is a remarkable one. Convicted of being “incorrigible” under Ontario’s Female Refuges Act (FRA) in 1939 due to her relationship with Harry Yip, a Chinese national, a pregnant eighteen-year old Demerson was incarcerated at the Andrew Mercer Reformatory for Women and unknowingly experimented upon.¹ Later on, the Ontario Association Children’s Aid Society, which targeted women living out of wedlock, confiscated her son Harry Junior, with mother and son finally becoming estranged when he turned twelve (Demerson 158). In addition to this string of injustices, Demerson also lost her Canadian citizenship through her marriage to Yip as the 1946 Citizenship Act required women to assume the nationality of their husbands, and Chinese nationals were barred from obtaining Canadian citizenship.

Her story, which is shared by “the hundreds or thousands of women” who were unjustly imprisoned by the FRA between 1913 and 1964, received strong public support as Demerson fought for an apology and compensation from the Ontario government (Friends of Velma). In March 2002, Demerson received the J.S. Woodsworth Award for anti-racism from the Ontario New Democratic Party Caucus, with the committee describing Demerson’s struggles against the FRA and her vocal opposition to Bill C-36² as

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¹ The experiments were initiated by the Canadian Social Hygiene Council, and they have since been attributed as part of a eugenicist movement intended for social reform and racial improvement (Dalia Merhi).

² Bill C-36 is also known as the *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act* (or the prostitution bill) which seeks to abolish prostitution.
“an exemplary dedication to the struggle for the rights of minorities and immigrants and for working to eliminate racism” (Friends of Velma).

Demerson’s autobiography *Incorrigible* (2004) was published two years after she received a written apology from Attorney General David Young (165). Considering the struggle towards redress that took place outside of the text, it makes sense to read *Incorrigible* as a firsthand account of a “white” body that experiences the full brunt of sexist and racist laws in Canada of the mid-twentieth century, specifically the FRA and the Citizenship Act. The narrative in *Incorrigible* might appear to begin the moment Demerson meets and falls in love with Yip, and then to progress via the wrongful persecutions and prejudice directed towards the young couple and later family after the birth of Harry Junior. However, in addition to showing hostile social reactions towards a mixed-race relationship, *Incorrigible* also complicates this narrative by depicting how Demerson’s family members, officers of government institutions, and medical authorities invoke racist logics to rationalize the injustice that they themselves are complicit in. Structurally, *Incorrigible* is a narrative retelling of Demerson’s attempts to understand what happened to her family and herself fifty years earlier (159). The text is also preoccupied with dialogue, or rather the failure of dialogue: as readers, we witness how vital information is often withheld from her, how her pleas for help are often met with cold dismissal, and finally, how even the symbolic act of a government-issued apology is unable to bring about closure for Demerson with her past.

Towards the end, when Demerson writes about her process for researching her book, the answers she uncovers do not bring her closure (162). Despite learning the reason for her imprisonment and the names of the drugs she was given, Demerson is left with even more questions: would her life have turned out differently if she had known this information? And what is she to do now as the stigma is still associated to her (164)? In many ways, *Incorrigible* represents her attempts to understand the racial discourses that
have the power to *enact* and simultaneously to *deny* the tremendous violence meted upon herself and her son.

I want to begin by naming this racial discourse—this conviction in racial hierarchy that was used to rationalize and legitimate racial oppression—as whiteness. I refer to whiteness as a historical practice of white supremacy where the preference for white skin is institutionalized in legal and social regulations. *Incorrigible* identifies the systemic disenfranchisement of racialized groups of people, such as the Chinese, the Greek, and people of mixed ancestry, as produced by their perceived inability to assimilate to the normalized center that is whiteness. Deviation from whiteness is presented throughout the text as monstrosity, and this can be seen from her brother’s physical deformation—for instance, his mother’s insistence that his being born with two thumbs was due to an ancestral connection with the King of Greece (95)—coupled with his insecurity over his racial background and eventual suicide. What makes *Incorrigible* so fascinating to read is Demerson’s own intimacy with whiteness: as the daughter of a Greek father and an English mother, her familial association with whiteness is fraught. Her subsequent loss of her Canadian citizenship due to her intimate association with a Chinese man reveals the ideological fallacy behind the fiction of whiteness. *Incorrigible* demonstrates how a Caucasian woman’s sexual agency poses such a threat to communities, communities whose values and identification rely desperate on this fiction of whiteness, that her intimate association with a racial other incites panicked reactions, such as social exclusion and incarceration.

*Incorrigible* is not a book to supply quick answers to complex questions. It is however useful for contributing discussion about the mechanics of whiteness in mid-twentieth century Canada. As an ethnically Han-Chinese person who have settled on Coast Salish lands for close to a decade, I appreciate this autobiography as an opportunity to pursue critical whiteness studies and to study yet another testimony of the legacy of white skin preference in Canada. At one point of the text, Demerson asks,
“I’m thinking this can’t be true. Things like this don’t happen in Canada. A person can’t be tortured to death without someone saying a word.” (64) But Indigenous women knew, racialized women knew. So can we say that this is an example of Demerson becoming sensitized to her own whiteness? How are we to understand whiteness in this text? This essay will thus focus on how whiteness is critically portrayed, examined, and interrogated in *Incorrigible* and what insights it can offer us as we think through cross-cultural encounters in Canada during the interwar period. My intention is to analyze the text’s presentations of racial experiences and oppression in terms of limited access to the rights of citizenship afforded to these minority groups. In the first section, I define whiteness as it relates to race relations and immigration policies in mid-twentieth century Canada. Following that, I look at how the text’s depictions of whiteness, when placed in proximity with monstrosity, represent the “paradoxes of a racially bound citizenship” (Ranbir Banwait). By piercing through the very failures in dialogue—moments of interaction where people have attempted but failed to justify her and her son’s exclusion from their community—Demerson’s biography compels readers to consider the effects of white supremacy and its

**Normalizing Whiteness**

Towards the end of WWII, conceptions of race expanded from biological differences—the classification of humans per their physical features such as skin colour and body features—into cultural differences—the belief that one’s race would define a person’s level of intelligence or morality. Whiteness, however, resists racial classification as it takes upon itself the ability to wield “universal epistemological power” (Gunew 142). For this paper, I borrow from Ruth Frankenburg’s definition of whiteness as a set of cultural practices that are often “unmarked and unnamed” (1), and perceived as normal, invisible, and a given. But within the specific historical context of postwar Canada, whiteness is far from monolithic, as differently located communities have varying proximities to whiteness at various
points in time (i.e. Italian-Canadians, Greek-Canadians, and Irish-Canadians). Eve Mackey defines whiteness in Canada as an identity that has always “defined [itself] in relation to internal and external “others’” (22). Whiteness is thus an “imagined community” in which communities that share certain similarities such as skin colour, history, and language are subsumed under the ideological category of ‘white’ and normalized. I also want to further nuance this understanding of the racial mechanisms of race in mid-twentieth century Canada by approaching Canadian citizenship as a racial project, rather than a political category accessible to anyone born within Canada. Expanding on Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* (1983) where he defines the nation as “an imagined political community [that is] imagined as both inherently limited an and sovereign” (6), Bannerji argues that to examine the mechanisms of race is to scrutinize what beliefs and ideologies are at work, as well as whose imagination is considered advanced, and who gets included/excluded from this national imaginary (65). We see this the most viscerally with Harry whose identity as a mixed-race child is frequently used as a discussion point: reporters stumble over which adjective to refer to Harry— “double colour line”, “chink” or an “Indian” —and one of them finally asserts that Harry is ultimately “Canadian despite his mixed-up parentage” (137), proving that to be both racialized and Canadian at the time is a contentious condition.

*Incorrigible* identifies “whiteness” as something that is visible, material and lived: Demerson’s text explores whiteness as she shares what it was like growing up as a child of mixed ancestry in Saint John, New Brunswick, and how proximity to whiteness translates into access to the full rights of citizenship. As a young child growing up in Saint John, New Brunswick, Demerson knows herself as white as it is defined by her community. For instance, she is convinced that her classmate June Robinson must be less smart than her because June is black, and she deliberately cross the street to avoid the Chinese laundry man because it is rumoured that he would kidnap white children in his laundry bag (53-4). Conversely, the phenotypical attributes of whiteness such as fair skin colour or blonde hair are
sought after, as seen from Demerson’s mother feeling pride that she did not have “a black baby” (36), as whiteness not only acts as an invisible norm, but also confers structural privilege (Frankenburg). This is also seen in her family’s troubled dynamics: her father diligently follows the narrative of a hardworking model minority as he marries her mother to make up for his lack of proficiency in English, goes on to become a successful restauranteur, and later on expresses great anxiety over risking his hard-earned reputation in the Greek community in Toronto because of Demerson’s relationship with Yip. Her mother, like Demerson, is ostracized from both the British loyalist community and the Greek community for marrying “beneath the accepted standards” (36). This means that even in childhood, Demerson understands the “powerfully normative ethnocultural pairings” (Coleman 81) of whiteness, specifically its privileges, as we see these narratives informing much of her own family members’ decisions.

To further interrogate what it means to be white and to get to the root of why so much joy/relief is expressed when a baby looks white as opposed to black, I turn to Sara Ahmed’s “Phenomenology of Whiteness” (2007). To Ahmed, whiteness owns the mechanisms for governing the reachability of some objects, “not just physical objects, but also styles, capacities, aspirations, techniques, and habits. Race becomes, in this model, a question of what is within reach, what is available to perceive and to do “things” with” (154). And the moment a person experiences the mechanisms of race, such as expressing relief that your baby looks white as opposed to black, Ahmed writes that it is a recording of the moment when things do not “line up” to whiteness (159). Whiteness gets invoked as the comparative measure, the figurative yardstick. Ahmed’s phenomenology provides the vocabulary that young Demerson could have used to articulate the reasons for her tears upon learning that her father’s second wife does not speak English (46): when an “attractive blonde waitress” attempts to comfort her by asking if Demerson would prefer it if she had married her father instead, Demerson responds by saying “that would be fine,” suggesting that Demerson’s preference for an English-speaking mother would bring her closer to a sense
of belonging in her father’s home. As someone who is considered closer to the white English imaginary than her father due to her proficiency in the language, Demerson’s feeling of alienation is perhaps further exacerbated by her inability to speak Greek as well as having to address her second mother as “Mrs.” Her eventual distancing away from her father’s Greek heritage and community asserts whiteness as the yardstick to which difference and belonging are negotiated.

Conversely, deviation from whiteness is highlighted with themes of monstrosity, and it is often invoked by characters in the text to rationalize the loss of civil rights and inhumane treatment. Monstrosity is represented literally by her brother’s physical deformities, such as his two thumbs on one hand, his use of the crutch, and his hunch. He responds to his own mixed-race ancestry with self-loathing: “He raged against my father’s culture as backward and belittled his friends. “Greece is only a little country without a proper army,” he sneered” (46) and this same attitude is hypocritically applied to Demerson’s son when Demerson’s brother forbids his mother to see or accept her grandson. Demerson notes the irony in how his suicide mirrors Harry Junior’s as they both wrestle with feelings of self-loathing and shame over their mixed-race ancestry; it is heavily implied throughout the text that Demerson’s brother’s suicide was the result of an ongoing depression stemming from the oppressive mindsets of the time. While his suicide is not the result of inhumane treatment or the loss of civil rights, it is indicative of the vehemence of social pressures that can drive someone to suicide, and in some ways, can be read as a foreshadowing to Harry Junior’s death. Similarly, Harry’s presence in the text is frequently accompanied with descriptions of his ill health as represented by his botched circumcision and severe eczema. His appearance is shocking to people, as evidenced by the reporter who declares that Harry had “the worst case of eczema I’ve ever seen” (137) as well as the doctor who, upon examining Harry’s ill health, says that “[he] should never have been born” (135). We also see the racist logics employed to justify his inhumane treatment: Demerson suspects Dr. Edna Guest of willfully performing
experiments that endangered the health of her foetus because he was half-Asian, and Demerson’s mother’s passivity indirectly contributed to these cause of events (160). Ranbir Banwait convincingly argues that the lack of civil rights afforded to Harry as a foetus is because “Harry is racialized even before birth […] the unborn child’s ontological status (as half-Asian) calls into question Demerson’s access to social legitimacy”. Banwait goes on to argue that colonial science combined with the discourse of racial hygiene gave authority figures such as Dr. Guest the ability to disregard the health of a mixed-race foetus, as Demerson was administered sulphanilamide, despite the controversy at the time on the drug’s harmful effects (Demerson 355 qtd. in Banwait). This demonstrates how racial coding such as the shade of your skin or blood quantum continues to serve as murderous conditions for admittance into communities. Therefore, *Incorrigible* bears important witness to the normativizing effects of whiteness.

Daniel Coleman’s *White Civility* (2006) is useful in understanding Canadian whiteness and its roots in the murderous exclusion of racialized subjects. In fact, Coleman pushes this concept a step further by showing how Canada’s civility project ought to be understood as a *performance*, as “tolerance is passive, an endurance of difference, whereas civility involves manners and behaviours that must be *learned* and *performed*” (21; emphasis my own). *White Civility* examines the ways that English Canadian settler society rationalizes and justifies their invader-settler subjectivity in Canada as a civilizing mission, and how this belief forms the epistemological foundation of contemporary Canadian discourses concerning justice, law, and morality. The concept of “civility” originated when white Canadians, particularly those with a claim to *Britishness* or *Englishness*, needed to justify how they were more civil than their “mob-ruled, revolutionary [American counterparts]” (“Contented Civility” 222). Civility is then used as a marker of a progressive nation, which is imagined as a universally good, fair, and orderly government watching over its well-mannered and clean citizens. Civility then becomes an “obsession for White Canadians; that whiteness in Canada is consistently preoccupied with shoring up,
measuring, asserting, and reasserting itself” (222) because it requires the often violent suppression of alternate conceptions to civility as a marker of morality and ethics—particularly the attempted eradication of Indigenous epistemologies. In turn, *Incorrigible* dutifully records the moments in Canada’s history when civil rights were revoked based on a person’s racial background, and presents a nightmarish scenario in which whiteness is negated due to an intimate association with race. *Incorrigible* then holds up these hypocrisy and fraught reasoning up for scrutiny. The members of Demerson’s family perform in ways that demonstrate an awareness of whiteness as enabling class ascendancy and social acceptance. For instance, her father is willing to forsake his familial ties with her in order to preserve his reputation in the Greek-Canadian community, and Harry Junior grows up to be like her brother as they both share the same self-loathing over their proximities from whiteness: Harry grows up to be someone who keeps only ‘white’ friends and expresses happiness when he is mistaken as Italian instead of Chinese (154). Demerson even feels compelled to prove to Harry that she is now a respectable woman who is “married to a white man and have two children [and] own a house” (155). As an intimate life narrative that describes how racism and sexist legislation splinter a family, *Incorrigible* makes visible the labour involved in the performances of whiteness, specifically in terms of the sacrifices that can drive a person to suicide. *Incorrigible* captures this angst and implicitly critiques it by refusing to offer any form of reconciliation between Demerson and her father, mother, son, or her past. Demerson ends her story by sharing a conversation with a female relative on her father’s side. The conversation quickly turns hostile when her relative rushes to defend her father’s actions: “I know all about you” (164). The relative’s misogynistic upholding of gender norms and unthinking violence are the very qualities that Demerson seeks to expose throughout her story. The “I” troubles and discomforts because if the relative had truly known all there is to know about Demerson, such as her forced medical experimentation, her suffering of literally having her son taken away and eventually learning of his suicide, in large part
shaped by the actions of the State that claims to protect her, would Demerson’s relative still think the same way?

**Racializing Citizenship**

*Incorrigible* examines Canadian citizenship as it is actively imagined and racialized through state policies and social mindsets. The Chinese were considered one of the least capable of assimilation to the perceived white normative core per the racial discourse at the time, a discourse that placed racial minority groups on a hierarchy according to a “vertical mosaic”\(^3\) (John Porter, qtd. in Daniel Coleman 22). Around the time that Demerson lost her citizenship due to her marriage to a Chinese national, Canada passed citizenship legislation that codified racial requirements into law. This change in immigration policy in 1947 meant that a person’s ability to become a Canadian citizen was no dependent on where he was born, but rather who were his parents. Demerson’s experiences with incarceration and forced experimentation, as well as those of the marginalized women and men she encounters, contradict Canada’s image as a haven as historically conceived of by, for example, British Loyalists, runaway slaves, draft dodgers, and refugees (Vedal 69). This sentiment is echoed when Demerson writes, “I’m thinking this can’t be true. Things like this don’t happen in Canada. A person can’t be tortured to death without someone saying a word” (65). Demerson’s story demonstrates what Ranbir Banwait calls “the paradoxes of a racially bound citizenship” (n.p.). Upon marrying her fiancé who is a Chinese national, Demerson ceases to be a Canadian citizen because of the Naturalization Act and the Citizenship Act,

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3 Interestingly, the term vertical mosaic was based on John Porter’s analysis of J.S. Woodsworth’s book *Strangers within Our Gates, or Coming Canadians* (1909). The vertical mosaic looked like this: immigration policies ought to proceed according to a hierarchy of races organized in descending order from most to least assimilable: the British, followed by the Americans, Scandinavians, Germans, French, to southeastern Europeans, Austria-Hungarians, Balkans, Hebrews, and Italians, before we get to the non-white populace including Levantines, Asians, Blacks, and Indians (Coleman 22). Demerson will go on to be awarded the J.S. Woodsworth award for anti-racism work in 2002.
which states that natural-born Canadian citizens renounce their citizenship if they become citizens of another country through the laws of that nation (Banwait). This is a fact that Demerson was already aware of (39) as were most people in interracial relationships at the time (Chenier 36).4 *Incorrigible* highlights the systemic disenfranchisement of racialized groups in a manner that conceptualizes citizenship as an uncanny experience.

In “Citizenship Management: On the Politics of Being Included-Out,” (2015) John Erni presents a model of the included-out. This offers a framework for understanding the precarity of citizenship within modern day neoliberal conditions5 by moving beyond Hong Kong’s immigration and citizenship landscape to examine spaces of precarious citizenship in other parts of the world, namely detention sites, refugee camps, and communities that are expressly built to house foreign workers. Erni goes on to state that the uncanny in being included-out is that “you are always included. You cannot *not* want to be a citizen, and you cannot *not* desire human rights” (emphasis my own). John Erni’s uncanny citizenship is useful for thinking through the psychic dimensions of belonging, where questions such as “who gets to belong, who does not?” are discussed. In a similar vein, *Incorrigible* depicts scenes of the home where neighbours worry over who gets to enter and leave the space that they perceive as their own, often resorting to gossip and scandal. In this essay, I hope to emulate his method of using the uncanny to tease out the ideas of belonging and blurred subjectivity that is being explored in *Incorrigible*. Erni invokes the uncanny as a politically and legally induced affect. *Incorrigible* shows how exclusion is a form of

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4 According to Elise Chenier’s “Sex, Intimacy, and Desire” (2014) marriage laws at the time dictated that when women married, they would assume the nationality of their husband. As the Chinese men at the time were acutely aware of their precarious legal status in Canada, it can be assumed that is “common knowledge” for the women as well, that marrying outside of their national will mean a loss of their status as a British subject.

5 The model was first published in his essay “Citizenship Management: On the Politics of Being Included-Out” and then further developed in a presentation entitled “The Included-outs” (2015) which was given as part of a lecture series at the University of Melbourne.
haunting as the simultaneous experience of feeling included and excluded is prevalent in the text. This is because realistically, the experience between the two are not so easily defined, as many times the two will blur into each other out.

Freud defines the uncanny as something that is terrifying, yet familiar at the same time (1-2). Freud clarifies this to mean that “an uncanny experience occurs either when repressed infantile complexes have been revived by some impression, or when the primitive beliefs we have surmounted seem once more to be confirmed” (17). To analyse Incorrigible’s rendering of citizenship as an uncanny experience, we look at how the full rights of citizenship is revoked for racialized groups such as Demerson and Harry Junior, and how the records of such injustice get hidden and written over by official narratives. The repression of injustices inflicted upon citizens is seen in the moment when Demerson is hidden away in a toilet while Dr. Guest is out in public receiving accolades (82) as well as the scene when Demerson shares her process of searching through the archives to locate her medical files and court records. In fact, Demerson’s awareness of citizenship as an uncanny experience can be traced back to the home. In facing the uncanny, we run into the unhomely home, or the unheimlich. The uncanny is rooted in ideas of the home, or the familiar. The home is a strange and unsettling presence in the text: littered throughout are scenes of dirty rooming houses, decrepit rooms, and the Mercer Reformatory itself is a veritable “house of horror” (60). The home is also where brutal violations of privacy and safety occur as Yip and Demerson were interrupted in his home one morning when her father reported her to the police. Also, Belmont Home for girls strove to “rehabilitate” them through vocational training, and women from the church would try to make the place “homey” with drapes covering hard-wired grating, a façade that Demerson could easily see through (59).

Many of the incarcerated women she gets to know during her stint at Mercer were either escaping or protecting themselves from an abusive home environment. Home, in this text, is an idealized
space that the Canadian nation seeks to protect and reproduce. Home is the stable European middle-class imaginings that Demerson’s father feels anxious to maintain, thus feeling the need to report Demerson to police to maintain his reputation. Home is the “stable home” that young Harry wants, possibly because it is suggested to him by Mrs. Stanley of the Children’s Aid (151). While home is imagined in these terms, Demerson’s text suggests that in practice, homes instill a sense of unease and a general lack of belonging in their inhabitants. In this way, Demerson destabilizes Canada’s image of itself as a haven by depicting it as a country riddled with unresolved paradoxes regarding its treatment of its own citizens. Conversely, as a young girl, Demerson also actively sought safety and love, qualities that she cannot find in her homes with her mother or father, but instead finds with Harry during their courtship. She also notes how spaces are racialized as Yip cannot come and “rescue” her from the jailhouse without endangering himself (45), and white women who enter ethnic enclaves such as Chinatown are perceived as “rotten” (165). Conditional love and safety are found in spaces that run counter to popular perceptions such as Chinatown and safe houses from a family friend, temporary and spatial spaces that serve as a form of refuge for Demerson and Harry when they need shelter from state regulation and biopolitical control. For example, Demerson expresses dissatisfaction with family life as a young girl, and later finds “emotional stability” in her relationship with Harry, a virtue that she consistently praises him for until their falling out years later. This “emotional stability” is also a value that she projects onto the Chinese community in Toronto. Demerson and the other women transform the hospital into a heterotopia as they share their concerns and fears about the fate of their children. Similarly, a room in Jimmy Chen’s flat becomes a heterotopia where the “white” girlfriends of Chinese men can get together to discuss and brainstorm strategies for navigating Canada’s legal system. This is also the space where Demerson was first told that she might lose her Canadian citizenship if she married her fiancé (39). While these heterotopic spaces enable coalition-building, they are also fraught as access to them is limited.
Demerson and Harry were not fully accepted into the Chinese-Canadian community in Toronto because they could not speak the language. While, on the one hand, these spaces acknowledge the obvious power of white supremacy, on the other hand, they also work as coalition spaces that ensured mutual survival among marginalized communities.

On this note, I want to revisit the scene in the last chapter of the text where she describes her process for researching the book:

It’s a long way to Toronto by train from the province of my newly created life but I need time to plan. I’ve done everything I will ever do. I’m stepping out of my emotional attachments—an example of independence, for what it’s worth. I am re-entering the place where part of me has always been, I’m going home to attend to “unfinished business.” […] I’m going into a prison, not coming out. It’s a lonely trail. I feel as if I’m entering a monastery, not a place of peace but of purgatory. I must relinquish all ties to the present and entomb myself in the past to affirm that it actually existed. There must be some crumbs to scavenge. There’s been no revolution, no conflagration whereby everything was destroyed. It is my intention to transcend a formidable gap between the past and the present. (159)

By comparing her return to Ontario from B.C. as a trip back to purgatory, she demonstrates how the events of the past continue to haunt and traumatize her, and how she feels the need to confront her past to make sense of the baseless violence. In this essay, I have shown that Incorrigible is about the failure of communication, such as the times when medical authorities brushed off her pleas for answers, the times when vital information is withheld from her, and her parents’ silences and dismissals. Ultimately, she fails, as her attempt at finding answers is only met with more questions, frustrations, and apologies that do not satisfy. There is no reconciliation between Demerson and her past, as exemplified by the injustice in Dr. Guest’s accolades, and her inability to fulfil her revenge fantasy in confronting the
doctor in person since Dr. Guest has already passed on. Demerson is also unable to accept the apologies she receives, such as the one from her mother, and the official apology from the Ontario government as she makes it a point to state that the apology neglects to acknowledge the hundreds or thousands of other women who have been wrongfully persecuted under the FRA. *Incorrigible* does the important work of making legible a paper trail of incarceration, eugenic measures, and migration policies aimed at safeguarding white supremacy. When Demerson asks, “What could be worse than a white woman willing to challenge government policy designed to “protect” her?” (51), she points her finger squarely at the absent centre of whiteness, where her and Harry’s story bore the brunt of sexist and racist mindsets and legislations, despite the complete lack of protection from the Canadian state and the inability to be recognized as a Canadian citizen.
Works Cited


