

Editing Brazil and Mexico: Light and Shadow, Strands and Gaps in P.K. Page's Mid-life Writing

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In preparing the first critical editions of P.K. Page's *Brazilian Journal* (Bailey 2011) and *Mexican Journal* (Steffler 2014) as part of the Collected Works of P.K. Page project, we discovered themes and patterns in Page's life-narrative that conversed with, complemented, shadowed, and highlighted one another across the two works. Never simple or straightforward, the process of researching and editing these journals has been a journey through geographical, artistic, and intimate spaces that have challenged and excited us in our role as editors and critics. This paper details part of the story of how we detected and responded to emerging patterns in Page's record of two watershed periods in her extraordinary life, represented respectively in *Brazilian Journal* and *Mexican Journal*.¹

Although the research and editing process began initially as part of two independent projects focused on two different texts, we eventually worked more collaboratively as we wrote our critical introductions, considered the nature and content of the textual apparatus—the inclusion of an index, the scope of annotations, and choice of illustrations—and began to discuss possible relationships between the two journals as literary texts. In effect, Page's years in Brazil and Mexico, taken together, form a remarkable record of the mid-life experiences of a woman who suffers deep losses that are often veiled or muted in the journal writing. Considered as documents of mid-life, these journals explore the female body, which, in the case of Page during this period, is the site of a profound loss that informs all other losses. We read *Brazilian Journal* and *Mexican Journal* together as a female narrative of mid-life that touches on physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual losses and compensations. By paying attention to moments in which Page signals the importance and impact of the body and its changes, we see new and revised ways to understand Page's work at all stages.

Editing *Brazilian Journal* and *Mexican Journal* for print publication, we were concerned with “preservation, access, dissemination, and analysis-interpretation,” the “basic procedures and goals of scholarly editing” as

identified by Dino Buzzetti and Jerome McGann (53). We also emphasize in our introductions the “dynamic quality” and “volatility” of the documents (Buzzetti and McGann 54) and are aware, as advised by Peter L. Shillingsburg, that current critics are demanding “something more than a single, simple authenticated text” (37). As we were preparing these texts for a general readership, we were limited in the nature and amount of editorial material we could provide. We decided therefore to emphasize accessibility in terms of the scholarly apparatus of the print edition but were also committed to paying close attention to the aesthetics of the physical book. These decisions reflect qualities valued by Page herself and resulted in the attractive editions published by the independent press, The Porcupine’s Quill, Page’s own chosen publisher for most of her later work. These print editions also represent the first stage of a larger project, the Digital Page. The full textual apparatus that used to be included within a scholarly print volume will now be divided between the print and Digital Page. Our preparation necessarily involved a foundation of extensive research and editing work, much of which is not directly apparent in the two print editions. This work will be visible in the Digital Page—a web-based project that will include all published and unpublished journals (among other creative works by Page)—thus providing the “multiplicity of textual forms” as described by Shillingsburg (165). Such “forms” include source materials as well as connections to “explanatory notes” and “contextual materials” so that readers can explore the text’s “history, its connective tissues, its roots and ramifications” for themselves (Shillingsburg 165). We see our print editions then as one element in this larger and more comprehensive digital mounting of Page’s work.²

The two journals pose very distinct editorial challenges based on their divergent textual histories. The journals Page wrote in Brazil from 1957 to 1959 were edited, amended, at times re-ordered, and expanded by Page, in collaboration with her husband, Arthur Irwin, and Lester & Orpen Dennys editor Gena K. Gorrell, leading to the publication of *Brazilian Journal* in 1987. Multiple copies of corrected publisher’s proofs exist for the 1987 edition, in addition to the primary journal Page kept during her years in Brazil. The Mexican journal was not published during Page’s lifetime, although two short excerpts appeared in 1994: “Malinalco, Mexico” in *Canadian Literature* and “Settling In” in *Writing Away: The PEN Canada Travel Anthology*. Thus, the decisions we faced as we prepared our editions were quite different. In the case of *Brazilian Journal*, the differences in content and tone between the unpublished 1950s manuscript and the 1987 published edition were significant. New opportunities to trace the interven-

tion of Page selecting and ordering elements of the original narrative raised a series of rich interpretative issues. The retrospective shaping of material from the perspective of an artist who was seventy-one in 1987 became an important element in the editorial and critical work associated with preparing the volume. In the case of *Mexican Journal*, the long and rather sprawling manuscript required extensive cutting and a concerted effort to retain the spontaneity of the original document.

In both instances, we were aware of the journals as deliberate constructions at all stages of writing, designed to convey a sense of the country and era as well as the personal life, not unlike Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family*.³ We also read the journals as narrating significant moments in Page's mid-life. These years in Brazil and Mexico marked a mid-life transition during which major personal events—physical, artistic, emotional, and spiritual—shaped the course of the rest of her life. Often understated or even silenced, these private moments are acknowledged in our editions, as our research provided information that allowed us to explore such gaps. Our editing approach has been guided, then, by the knowledge that Page intensified the correspondences between herself and her setting while ironically emphasizing, through omission or understatement, some of the most significantly personal moments in her mid-life years.

Time-Travelling: Editing P.K. Page's *Brazilian Journal*

As Page explains in her original *Foreword*, the text published as *Brazilian Journal* is based on letters to family and on what she describes as “excerpts” from the journal she wrote when she and Irwin, Canadian ambassador to Brazil, lived in that country. Describing the journal as “a period piece,” Page must have been conscious of the substantial gap in time separating the writer at age forty-one and the writer now in her early seventies. Narrating her life-story in *Hand Luggage, A Memoir in Verse* in 2006, Page at age ninety describes chronology as “a temporal squint”: “what was clearly consecutive no longer is” (19). Many of Page's later works are autobiographically inflected and touch on issues of identity. Page's review of the Brazilian journal material and associated experiences in the 1980s may have prompted reflections on the nature of memory and the self in time that led to this kind of patterning in the later work. Indeed, one early passage in the original journal, omitted in publication, presages this later turn towards self-examination. In this cancelled passage, Page assesses herself as passionate and sensitive: “I think this is me—the sensation type,” she writes, “concerned almost entirely with my own feelings.

Isn't 'feel' almost the only verb I use? I don't think, opine, consider—I feel" (27 March, 1957, unpublished journal). As I compared Page's unpublished Brazilian journal to the text published as *Brazilian Journal*, noting such omissions and shifts in emphasis, I became absorbed in the larger issue of the nature of memory in Page's work. In her shaping of the published work, Page must also have been very aware of the autobiographer's intervention in retrospective self-writing, as well as the effects of memory on remembered experience.

The Lester & Orpen Dennys edition of *Brazilian Journal* subsequently went out of print, making the task of preparing a new critical edition all the more urgent. Rights to the text were obtained by publisher Tim Inkster of The Porcupine's Quill, with the consent of P. K. Page, as part of the critical series *The Collected Works of P.K. Page*. As the new 2011 edition of *Brazilian Journal* uses the 1987 edition as its copy-text, one key editorial task involved ensuring accuracy in the transcription and preparation of this material. Co-editor Christopher Doody and I are likely the only people, other than possibly Page herself, to have had the experience of reading the entire *Brazilian Journal* out loud, twice, as we worked to ensure that we had transcribed material correctly. As I read the text and Christopher checked our text against the original, we also had the extraordinary experience of discovering the voice in the text, of 'hearing' P.K. Page or her textual persona speak her observations of Brazil in the late 1950s. Different elements in the work emerged in this way. These ranged from Page's understated sense of the absurd in her comments on human and animal behaviour, to her incisive analysis of elements of colour and form in the natural and built environments she encountered in Brazil. The experience of reading Page in this manner also attests to the particular set of competencies editors develop with regard to the texts they work with: from precise knowledge of the words on the page and their outflowing through the text, to broader interpretive issues that arise from this awareness of the writer's verbal and thematic pattern-making.

On a more pragmatic level, the painstaking process of fact-checking did reveal some minor internal inconsistencies in so-called "accidentals" of the original text, for example in the hyphenation of words. Here, the advantage of working with both a print and digital or web-based edition of *Brazilian Journal* became apparent. The kind of detailed scholarly apparatus that would list such instances is appropriate to a critical edition of a text, but is of less interest to a general reading audience and could easily overwhelm a print edition. One of my goals as editor was to create an edition of *Brazilian Journal* that would be both accessible and appealing to such an audi-

ence, whether readers were interested in Page specifically, in travel writing, or in modernist contact with Brazil. Essential research on the glossary for the edition was magnificently conducted and led by Christopher Doody, with input from Brazilian scholar Dr. Tufy Cairus and assistant Maira Dombrowski Neme. This research produced much more material than could reasonably be included in the print edition and likely more detail than the average reader could absorb. Such materials will be included instead in the digital edition of *Brazilian Journal*. Producing the print version therefore involved a radical cutting down of this scholarly apparatus, following principles elaborated with another of the project's collaborators, graduate student Tom Jenkins. Accordingly, we included only those entries without which we felt the reader might have trouble understanding a particular reference, word, or passage in the text. Entries in the glossary that provided further context for a detail in the text, but that would not alter the reader's understanding of that detail, were moved to the digital edition of *Brazilian Journal*.⁴

Brazilian Journal is a key work in multiple fields: in the literary genre of Canadian travel writing and autobiography or life-writing, as well as in terms of the history of Canadian women writers. It is also a record of a major Canadian poet's contact with other cultures and with non-European modernism, exemplified in Page's interactions with Brazilian artists and intellectuals and through her self-conscious efforts to explore Brazilian art, history, and culture. In the context of Canadian history, the journal documents Canadian diplomatic activities in Brazil in the late 1950s; it offers insight into Canadian perceptions of other cultures and official efforts to promote Canadian culture as well as political and business interests. Because of the sheer density of references to the people and places Page encountered in her role as a diplomat's partner, as well as her meticulous documenting of things Brazilian, from its culture to its flora and fauna, I felt it important to include an index to the edition, to provide readers with at least a rudimentary map to references in the text. Here, too, the particular insights of the indexer, Joan Eadie, became apparent in making visible new threads and patterns in the work. Information pulses or swells in lists under the various categories chosen by indexer and editors. Page's eye for natural detail is clear, for instance, in the hundreds of references she makes to Brazilian flora or fauna. Her frequent observations about Brazilian women constitute an interesting category of observation. References to museums, the visual arts, and modernist artists and writers are prolific, clearly representing other interests of Page. The expansion or contraction of information in this manner, evident in the full index, replicates various

organizational principles that will be easier to orchestrate and navigate in the digital edition. Again, the space limitations of the print edition required substantially paring down of this material; however, we will draw on this research in structuring the digital *Brazilian Journal*.

As part of the research for the print edition and the critical introduction, we digitized and paired together the 1987 copy text and the unpublished manuscript held at Library and Archives Canada (LAC). This composite text became an important point of reference for editorial decisions, especially given the fluid situation we encountered regarding the manuscripts related to *Brazilian Journal*. LAC already held a substantial part of Page's literary papers in 2009. P.K. Page, who was still living at the time, deposited additional papers at LAC, including her original journal, in mid 2009. As the print edition moved to the proof stage, Sandra Djwa discovered multiple copies of corrected publisher's proofs of *Brazilian Journal* among Page's personal papers that she herself had prevented Page from discarding. These copies attest to the series of changes made by Page and Irwin in response to the input of the Lester & Orpen Dennys editor, Gorrell. When these proofs with their handwritten corrections and emendations are transcribed by Zailig Pollock and Christopher Doody for the digital edition of *Brazilian Journal*, this material will allow the systematic tracing and extrapolation of the complex series of editing choices Page made as she refined what became the final draft of the 1987 text.

The process of preparing a print edition demands reflection on the book as object: considering its materiality and physical form and acknowledging that these in themselves constitute acts of interpretation. While the scholarly aim of the Collected Works project is to establish the literary corpus of a major Canadian modernist writer, the goal of the print edition of *Brazilian Journal* is to also re-introduce Page to a reading public that is still not familiar with the work of this important Canadian writer. One challenge then became how to present the book as artifact in order to best represent the artistic sensibility of the writer and the aesthetic qualities of the writing. The original edition of *Brazilian Journal*—with its subdued brown cover and grey-tone coloured inks—likely reflects 1980s technological limitations in terms of colour reproduction and production costs. The visual impact of this edition, which included coloured plates of Page's work and some black and white illustrations, did not convey the vibrancy and sensuality of Page's prose or her fascination with Brazilian landscapes, people, and cultures. Further, although Page became interested in producing abstract art during her time in Brazil, the original edition did not include her nonfigurative work. The majority of the images selected

focused on domestic interiors or urban built environments. It was important to me that we include images in this new edition that better represent the range of Page's activities and aesthetic interests in Brazil and that function in visual terms to shatter the earlier edition's representation of Page as implicitly confined to a world of domestic interiors. Tim Inkster's inspired selection of electric colours for elements in the book cover and frontispiece served to convey some of the visual brilliance and excitement in Page's writing on Brazil. Such aesthetic choices were part of what won this edition the gold medal for Autobiography/Memoir in 2011 in *ForeWord Reviews'* Book of the Year competition for independent book publishers. The more extensive range of illustrations in the new edition, the majority of which were not part of the original publication, also serve to introduce readers to Page as a visual artist.

The edition serves to make a major work by a Canadian artist available again. It is also intended to encourage the reading and study of Page, and therefore the tone and emphasis of the introduction became significant. Given that Page's work is still relatively unfamiliar to Canadian audiences, it was important that the introduction convey the vibrancy and interest of Page's writing: hence the decision to begin with Page's "Domestic Poem for a Summer Afternoon" (1977). This is an autobiographical poem set in Canada that depicts the persistence of the past in the present and of Brazil as a touchstone experience:

It is hot. Siesta still.
 Not hot enough for Brazil but I think of Brazil
 And the small yellow bird that flew in and perched
 On the toe of Arthur's crossed-over foot,
 Puffed out its feathers, settled down for the night;
 And the hummingbird, ruby-throated, a glowing coal
 With the noise of a jet
 That landed cool and light on the crown of his head.
 (ll. 13-20)

This much later poem emphasizes the particular aesthetic configuration that Brazil's natural beauty evoked for Page, both in subsequent creative work and in her memory. I chose to round out the introduction with the final stanzas from the poem "Travellers' Palm" (1969), which Page selected as the epigraph to *Brazilian Journal*:

And in that tasting,
 Taster, water, air,

In temperature identical
Were so
Intricately merged
A fabulous foreign bird
Flew silent from a void

Lodged in my boughs.
(11. 23-30)

The choice solves an editorial problem, in that the 1987 edition does not attribute the poem to Page, nor does it appear with its title. The poem appropriately underscores how sensory experiences that are associated with travel and with specific spaces might begin to inhabit the imagination of the speaker, as the “fabulous foreign bird” flies “silent from a void” and comes to “lodge” within her psyche.

The introduction also needed to highlight aspects of the text that have received limited critical attention, both as a means of introducing these issues to the reader and suggesting avenues for further study. Page’s memoir is shaped by her awakening as a visual artist, and it is this dimension of the narrative, together with her difficulties writing poetry at this time, that has received the most attention by critics.⁵ Equally important, however, is the status of this text as a narrative of mid-life. *Brazilian Journal* opens as Page enters her forties and was thus at a point associated by her culture with “middle-age.” Although gender issues have been discussed in *Brazilian Journal*, largely in the context of Page’s role as Ambassador’s wife (Heaps), more attention needs to be applied to the work as a narrative of a particular life stage, one that is abruptly brought into focus for Page when she undergoes unexpected major surgery and can no longer have children. Whatever the reasons for the hiatus in her writing of poetry—the disruption of the move to Brazil, the stresses of managing a complicated household in another language, or the finality of possibilities for bearing children because of her hysterectomy—these layers of bodily experience exist as important elements in *Brazilian Journal* and within its silences.

As Page prepared her journal for publication, she had come to see Brazil as marking a significant turning point in her career, something that was not apparent to her at the time she was writing the journal. As she processed the experience in later life, what became particularly important to her in retrospect was her rediscovery and celebration of the aesthetic and the “baroque”: something which, in the modernist milieu in which she first matured as an artist, she had been led to mistrust. In “After Rain” (1955), for instance, one of the last poems that she wrote before Brazil, the speaker

dismisses her intense response to a natural scene as “female whimsy,” and asks to remain “unseduced by each / bright glimpse of beauty striking like a bell, / so that the whole may toll... clear” (1.6; ll. 43-47). In revising her journals for publication, Page tends to emphasize her powerful, sense-based responses to Brazil while downplaying, to some degree, the introspective and darker side of her experiences, both personal and social.

An example of a passage from the original journal, written on 7 February 1959, when read in conjunction with the published version of this section, reveals the way in which those darker emotions tend to be downplayed in the published *Journal* in contrast to the private journal. Page writes:

I would like to paint every day—six hours at least! I've never known such a madness. *I think however I'm a studio painter, not a landscapist. I get too literally confronted by nature. Have just been re-reading great hunks of journal with a view to correcting it and am horrified to read how badly I write. Disorganized, badly expressed and leaving out so much. The more I paint the less I write, the less I want to write and the more I race through it with little feeling for the means of expression.* (passage omitted from the former is indicated in italics)

In this instance, what is published in *Brazilian Journal* is a throwaway line about Page's obsession with painting. What is concealed in the manuscript journal is in effect the emotional subtext to these words, which elaborates on a state of emotional blankness. When the two texts are spliced together and read in this way, a doubling of the voice in time occurs. This involves expression, repression, and reticence: the voice Page permits her readers to hear in *Brazilian Journal* and the echoes from the past that haunt but are frequently suppressed in the later public text.

The practice of editing *Brazilian Journal*, including examining the original journal together with the later public version, involved me as a witness to a fascinating play of present and past experience in the mind of the writer. In juxtaposing the unpublished journals with the published text, one hears in effect the voice of the older Page, writing in the 1980s, existing sometimes in tension with, sometimes embellishing, the voice of a past self. In editorial as well as critical terms, I am interested in the overlay of these texts and in the Page who emerges in the gaps, continuities, and ruptures between the two works. I am particularly interested in recovering the layer of bodily sense-based experience that is present in the published journal but in shadow form. One may also consider Page's poetry as mediating or inhabiting the fissure we see in the journal between the public and pri-

vate, between the world of openly acknowledged emotion and that of a more layered ambivalence, even trauma.

Travelling Inward: Editing P.K. Page's *Mexican Journal*

P.K. Page's Mexican journal, consisting of 378 typed and handwritten manuscript pages covering the period of March 1960 to January 1964,⁶ is the most personal and passionate of her life-writing, containing raw observations and thoughts not available in more polished and edited forms. When referring to her Mexican journal, Page often paired it with her Brazilian journal, viewing the two as contrasting companions, Brazil representing "day" and Mexico "night" ("Questions" 37). The Mexican journal plays the role of shadow to Brazil's light, presumably in imagery and tone, but also in its unpublished and thus unknown state, which has only served to darken the mysterious shadows hinted at by Page's references to a Brazilian-Mexican dichotomy and her apparent inability or unwillingness to publish the Mexican material during her lifetime. Brazil is very much a story offered to the public, albeit parsed and constructed, whereas Mexico is a story withheld.

Through the various comments made by Page in essays and interviews, the Mexican journal has been set up as more than a study in contrasts or a chronological continuation and completion of what took place in Brazil. In its pre-publication form, as part of the author's papers and more recently as a manuscript deposited by Page in LAC, it has become Brazil's *doppelgänger*. The "old gods" ("Questions" 37) of Mexico are the underside of the splendour of Brazil's imagery, while the spiritual searching of Page in Mexico marks the turn from extroverted sensuous responses to external stimuli to painfully intense and introverted self-examinations. But it is important to remember that this is Page's deliberately constructed narrative of Brazil and Mexico, as she established it over the years. As the editor of the published *Mexican Journal*, I had to decide to what extent I should shape and select material in order to fulfill these authorial versions of the *doppelgänger*; more importantly, I had to consider how much I had been influenced by Page's self-assessments, which I read before I had access to the actual journal manuscript. I wanted to publish the Mexican story in a way that maintained and conveyed its intense intimacy, a quality strongly associated with this particular period of Page's life. It was also important to retain the rawness and spontaneity of the typed and handwritten entries, which were in danger of becoming formalized and polished as they made their way from loose manuscript pages to pages bound in a book.

More generally, I was faced with the same questions that have challenged editors of Canadian women's life-writing in recent years. In her essay, "Working With the Marian Engel Archive," Christl Verduyn notes that "research into private papers may allow us to better understand art and its creation, or a particular individual's art and life and the sociohistorical context in which they unfolded," but Verduyn concludes by noting the "material's ability to 'stand on its own,' as fruitful and rewarding reading in itself" (100). This issue of mining life-writing for insight into the 'real' literature or art as opposed to treating the life-writing *as* 'real' literature and art is one that must be dealt with by any editor of artists' journals. The practice of highlighting and footnoting journal material to provide so-called insight into other or more important work interrupts, subordinates, and marginalizes life-writing, in a sense violating the private to serve the public.

Being limited to publishing only selections of a journal is another way in which life-narratives are interrupted. Like Mary Rubio in her editing of L.M. Montgomery's journals with Elizabeth Waterston, I faced the unenviable task of selecting parts of the private document for publication, knowing that such selection violently compromises the integrity of the original document. How to select parts while maintaining the fullness of the life lived? Practical considerations for Rubio and Waterston included asking questions about how to excise material, as recalled by Rubio: "Should we tamper with Montgomery's own entries (which had their own internal integrity?), or should we delete only complete entries (which had a kind of rhythm between them because she tried to alternate moods and introduce comic relief)?" (56-57). Decisions about editing practices for Montgomery's journals—whether to provide narrative bridges, include certain types of information in footnotes, indicate amounts of deleted text, remove repetitive passages narrating depression and dejection (Rubio 57)—apply to the editing of Page's Mexican journal as well. There are no easy answers, and with respect to "exploring writers' personal papers," Verduyn warns that the "questions are many, vary enormously from archive to archive and often cannot be anticipated" (100).

Just as archives vary, so do publishing conditions. Specific to this project and process is the knowledge that the entire manuscript, along with extensive explanatory notes, images, contexts, and connections will eventually be available in digital form on the web. Although the printed book and digital text can be read and studied independently, from the moment the digital document is mounted, there is no question that the print and digital *Mexican Journals* will be read together or, at the very least, that the

reader of the printed page will consult the Digital Page. Such consultations mean that the print *Mexican Journal* will necessarily change or shift in its meanings and contexts when placed beside the digitized expansion of itself. This leaves me considering the pre- and post-digital printed book as almost distinct documents, even though the book will remain stable as printed text, unable to transform itself in response to the digital publication, but being transformed by and because of it. The printed volume of *Mexican Journal* will exist as a discrete publication for some time before it can be contextualized and extended by a range of digitized supplementary material. It must therefore stand alone, but also invite the enlargements and relationships that will eventually be available.

As was the case in the publishing of the *Brazilian Journal*, many explanatory notes and editorial details produced by the research for the print edition of the *Mexican Journal* were moved over to the Digital Page.⁷ The inclusion of certain material was eliminated early in the editing process. I did not consider, for example, pieces written by Page's husband, Irwin, Canadian ambassador to Mexico, which could provide useful contrasts to Page's version of events. Extensive references to or quotations of Page's dream journal, an invaluable companion piece, which narrates in full, or in as full a form as possible, dreams referred to in the Mexican journal were not included. References to the extensive collection of Sufi material deposited in LAC after Page's death, on the advice of her literary executor, Zailig Pollock, were not included even though it was in Mexico that Page was introduced to Sufism and began her early reading of Sufi documents. Feeling alternately constrained and relieved by these decisions, it was only recently that I began to see these choices, which obligated me to concentrate on the Mexican journal itself, as a way to foreground Page's actual journal, thus addressing my overriding concern to promote the status of life-writing as primary rather than secondary literature.

The egalitarian mounting of all Page's work in its complete and separate forms on the web will avoid the subordination of life-writing to other genres. The popularity of *Brazilian Journal*, along with Page's sustained interest in diverse forms of life-writing, exemplified in the publication of *Hand Luggage* (2006) and *Cullen: Poems* (2009), promotes the genre by giving it prominence. Put beside *Brazilian Journal*, *Cullen: Poems*, *Hand Luggage* and the unpublished Australian and Canadian journals, the Mexican journal is the inside, the heart, of the autobiographical body—or what Page might have preferred to describe as the shadow of the body. Is this partly because it is unpublished, and will its publication polish and com-

plete the raw and the rough in ways that blandly flatten the intensity and spontaneity of the emotional search that is at the centre of this writing? My hopes and intentions are that the raw and the rough are maintained through my editorial decision to edit lightly, leaving intact as much of Page's original voice and emotion as possible. The material form of the journal, however—as it makes its transition from loose pages of typescript and handwritten entries, including a few sketches, to the bound pages of a book—distances the reader from glimpses into and speculation about the process of composition. Page's writing process is discernible to some degree in the errors, corrections, handwriting, and marks on the manuscript. While these details won't be accessible in print, the Digital Page will recuperate the genesis of her text and provide the physical features of the manuscript page.

I turn now to what I saw as the major challenge facing me, which was selecting and deleting material from the manuscript for publication as the printed *Mexican Journal*. There is no question that in selecting I was shaping, and in shaping I was taking on the role of “editor as storyteller” (Pollock 55), telling Page's story not only in a way that made sense to me, but in a way that pleased me. I could convince myself that I was trying to tell the story in a way that would satisfy and please Page, but I had no way of confirming this. What I did do was take as a guide Page's predilection for paired narratives, initially in a kind of whimsical fashion, but eventually in a more serious way as I began to detect what actually existed in the manuscript rather than what I had simply hoped would be there.

Two narratives of intimate female mentorship emerge in the Mexican journal. The first is the artistic mentorship of surrealist artist, Leonora Carrington, and the second is the spiritual mentorship of British Subud member, Stella Kent. These female friendships of Page's mid-life become the substance of the journal, displacing the search in the early pages for the masculine gods of D.H. Lawrence's Mexico and Page's own search for her role as Canadian ambassador's wife providing direction inside the embassy, establishing herself within the inner circle of expatriates, and interacting with the larger Mexican society. Page negotiates her way through the diplomatic roles of her official self and the historical and cultural faces of public Mexico into the depths of her personal, artistic, and spiritual life. Mexico is the setting or catalyst that demands such negotiation and invites the introspection into the private self. Led into surrealism by Carrington and into the Subud movement and Sufism by Kent, Page increasingly performs the role of someone in need of mentorship. Although the masters of art and religion are men, particularly George Gur-

djieff and Idries Shah in the spiritual arena, those who serve to introduce Page to new possibilities in art and religion, and who remain with her as mediators, are women. The fullness of Carrington in the journal is so vibrant that she threatens to eclipse the autobiographical Page, until it becomes apparent that her vitality emerges because of Page, for whom she is often performing in a mutually dependent relationship.

There is another paired narrative in the Mexican journals and this is the one that fascinates me the most. On the inside cover of the second volume Page has written “Notes on crested paper are personal, whether typed or written.” This note is dated September 1962. The crest is the Canadian Embassy crest. It would make more sense for the official embassy paper to contain the public story, but instead, in a kind of perverse trickery, the public mark indicates the private narrative. What to do with this note and how to differentiate between the two narratives? Looking through the manuscript, one of my research assistants, Elena Merrill, noticed one sheet of paper on which Page had pasted a cut-out embassy crest. Either beginning with a public story that became private or simply making a mistake about paper selection, Page corrected her error, leaving no opportunity for the confusion of the intimate and the open. Rather than cutting and pasting pictures or remnants of fabric in the manner of a scrapbook, Page’s cutting and pasting, in an organized and perhaps obsessive way, marks what was obviously for her the crucial divide between public and private. Elena suggested the separation of the pages so that private and public stories could be placed side by side, forming two journals. In the digital journal, such a visual pairing will be possible. At one point during the editing process, I separated the pages in order to read the two narratives independently, and then put them back together where the interplay between the private and public reproduces the everyday tension and the mid-life searching of Page’s official, creative, and spiritual activities as ambassador’s wife, visual artist, and Subud member. In the published *Mexican Journal* I indicate the personal entries as “personal” in parenthetical notations after the date. These entries increase as the second volume of Page’s manuscript progresses and they become the more engaging of the two narratives. I retain both public and personal entries to demonstrate the tension between the two, but include more private than public material.

The printed journal reflects the necessary intervention of the editorial role I somewhat reluctantly played in shaping the narrative and published life of Page’s Mexican years. The digital journal, however, will allow every reader, if so inclined, to play this role. Such active participation may also encourage readers of the digital *Mexican Journal* to access Page’s

fonds at LAC in order to make the personal contact with the actual pages deliberately deposited by P.K. Page. The narrative of Page's years in Mexico in all its forms—manuscript, print, and eventually digital—offers a tremendously compelling narrative, both for what is said and what is not said. Although some material has been necessarily left out in the transition from the manuscript to the published volume, omissions and silences already exist in the manuscript itself. The most startling gap in the manuscript of the Mexican journal is Page's silence about the increasing amount of time she devoted to the study of Sufi material during her final months in Mexico. As an instance of women's life-writing, the gaps in the Mexican journal speak as forcefully as the words, whether those words are handwritten on the manuscript page, printed on the leaves of a book, or digitized on a screen.

Concluding with Gaps

One of the many similar and intersecting patterns to emerge in these two autobiographical works are the discrepancies, silences, or omissions with which our respective editing stories have concluded. Gaps insist on asserting themselves despite the volume and depth of Page's self-examination and observations. Page's silence about issues related to the female body in *Brazilian Journal* is not surprising, given the historical period, and her reticence about revealing information related to her emotional life is also understandable. The silence about the time and attention devoted to the reading of Sufi material during her final months in Mexico is another major gap. Various editorial and critical interpretations are possible here, but our approach of seeing the journals as records of significant moments of experience in identifiable stages of life suggests that this study of Sufi material had not yet reached the moment of significance and clarity that would allow Page to highlight it as a 'moment' in Mexico. Introduced to her from outside Mexico and generally associated with an international body rather than a local community, the Sufi material is a transition that draws Page away from Mexico and back to Canada.

Always prominent in our editorial and critical approaches is the knowledge that the journals, even in their earliest textual forms, are deliberate constructs that reflect the spirit of the place and life-stage being depicted. In Page's mind, Mexico marks the black night of her experimental spiritual searching. The excitement derived from the discovery of Sufism in her final months in Mexico does not accurately reflect the dark emotions she associates with her sojourn in that country and thus is not part of the story.

Page's silence throughout her life about her involvement in Sufism originated in this initial gap in the manuscript of the Mexican journal and was subsequently driven by the privacy in which she conducted her spiritual life at home in Canada. Upon her return from Mexico, she began once again to write poetry, leaving behind the genre of the journal which might have encouraged discussions of Sufism.

The silence about Sufism in the manuscript of the Mexican journal is similar to Page's own omissions of a substantial amount of personal material in the published *Brazilian Journal*. In the case of the Brazilian material, the varied emotional subtext, such as the detached numbness towards writing resulting from the obsession with painting, exists in the original manuscript but is muted in the published one. In the case of her Mexican experience, the very intimate relationship with Sufism does not even make it into the manuscript, but is recorded separately in a series of private notes meant for Page only. The specific information about the nature of Page's surgery in Brazil and its impact on her also constitutes a gap, in this case voiced in the unpublished journal⁸ and "in a code[d] manner" in the published journal as Sandra Djwa characterizes it in her 2012 biography of Page, *Journey With No Maps* (169). Page's long-term relationship with F.R. Scott, revealed publicly after Page's death by Djwa in *Journey*, also stands as a concealed trauma and rupture in *Brazilian Journal*. In a moment alluded to in the autobiographical *Hand Luggage* (48) and mentioned without an identifying name in the unpublished journals, Page brushes against Scott at a railway station just prior to leaving for Brazil, but Scott, visually impaired in one eye, does not see her (Djwa 161). These silences—about the definitive loss of the ability to have children, represented by the finality of the surgery; about the shock of seeing Scott when leaving for Brazil; and about the excitement of discovering Sufism—permit the reading of what is absent as well as what is present.

Such resonant voids are authentic parts of life and memory and confirm that all cannot and need not be retained and expressed in the story of a life. But these spaces also beckon, as we discovered through our editorial research. They invite further participation by the reader, who may feel inspired to turn to Page's poetry, visual art, essays, and spiritual beliefs in order to know her better through what has been left unsaid. The print editions of *Brazilian Journal* and *Mexican Journal* assemble both the critical apparatus and the body of research that begins the process of revealing such spaces and inviting their further interpretation. In so doing, they help map future work on the life and writing of this major Canadian artist. The Digital Page will offer links and material that by highlighting connections

and relationships will significantly extend and deepen for readers these potential narratives in the gaps.

In a long life lived deeply and passionately, Page has produced life-writing marked by particular complexity and perhaps ultimately, mystery. In reading *Brazilian Journal* and *Mexican Journal* as a whole and in considering their intersections, we gain an unusually rich view of the private, artistic, and public life of P.K. Page—a life that expands and resonates beyond its own time and place. The process of editing the Brazilian and Mexican journals elicits some of the patterns and contradictions arising during mid-life stages in Page’s personal and artistic development. In publishing critical print editions of *Brazilian Journal* and *Mexican Journal*, we follow Page’s lead by highlighting significant moments, interconnections, and silences that reflect the light and shadow of Brazil and Mexico and the intense mid-life years spent by P.K. Page in the sensuous sun of Brazil and the dark night of Mexico.

Notes

- 1 We use the terms Brazilian journal and Mexican journal to refer to the unpublished material in manuscript form held at the LAC, and *Brazilian Journal* and *Mexican Journal* to indicate published volumes.
- 2 The digitization process is already underway in the case of *Brazilian Journal*.
- 3 It is important to note that Page wrote the 1987 edition in response to Michael Ondaatje’s suggestion that she do so, as recorded in the paragraph of thanks in the preliminary pages of the text.
- 4 We were fortunate to have the generous assistance of Dr. Neil Besner of the University of Winnipeg in checking Page’s Portuguese in the text. Graduate student Alicia Fahey also assisted in work on the index. Amanda Miller was invaluable in undertaking research during the preliminary stages of this project, as was Emily Ballantyne. I would like to thank Editing Modernism in Canada (EMiC) for funding for student research assistants from the M.A. Public Texts program at Trent University’s Frost Centre for Canadian Studies provided funding for preliminary research.
- 5 See for instance Brian Trehearne’s *The Montreal Forties: Modernist Poetry in Transition* and Cynthia Messenger, “‘But How Do You Write a Chagall?’: Ekphrasis and the Brazilian Poetry of P.K. Page and Elizabeth Bishop.”
- 6 This manuscript was transcribed by Sandra Djwa and Jean Mallinson into an electronic file of 416 pages.
- 7 Graduate students in Trent University’s M.A. program in English (Public Texts), with much appreciated funding from Editing Modernism in Canada (EMiC), contributed as research assistants: Elena Merrill and Natalie Forest in explanatory notes; Christopher Doody and Tom Jenkins in transcribing manuscripts; Evelyn Deshane in producing the index. The Thomas Symons Trust Fund at Trent University provided support for preliminary research. Gabrielle Steffler, a student in Dalhousie University’s Masters of Library and Information Studies program, assisted with proofreading.
- 8 Page refers to her “operation” in the published *Journal*; details of a visit to a “gynecol-

ogist” and about “an ovarian cyst” that must be removed are omitted (27 Dec. 1957, unpublished journal). Page presents other details in the private journal.

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