*Final words*

As I am writing this conclusion in the middle of the Covid 19 pandemic, I am forced to consider the coming communities I see in cities and towns across Canada and beyond. Of course, this dissertation is of minimal importance, considering the suffering we hear of daily in the media and experience intimately as friends and loved ones become ill. However, my isolation in the current lockdown has added some urgency to my passion for this project. The connections I make between the communities emerging in these urban spaces and those presented in the novels I discuss above are many. In a virtual Canada, people in cities from one coast to another are not only gathering as Chinese Canadians, Indo-Canadians, French-Canadians, working Canadians, gay Canadians, retired Canadians, or any other nationally affiliated group; like the communities imagined by Sarduy, Obejas, Pérez, and Díaz, they are also connecting across socio-political boundaries in creative performances of *communitas*.

This spring we daily witness communities coming together on and offline to offer each other support. Somehow they are managing the ‘social distancing’ necessary for preventing the spread of the virus while collectively offering thanks to health care workers. Like communities in Gabarone, Havana, and Fukuoka, residents of Montreal regularly offer their voices in song or whoops to praise those who risk their own health and that of their families in highly contagious environments. These people treat their patients without basic protective gear such as masks, which are so scarce only doctors have access to them. In fact, surgeons cannot approach patients before consulting with nurses, such is the concern that we will lose their expertise if they contract the virus. The same demonstrations of support can be heard nightly in Vancouver, where at 7 pm a dissonant clang of pots, cheers, clapping, and whistles celebrates compassion and a united cause. Accompanying this cacophony, a flutter of limbs defies the physical limitations of isolation, and equally baroque wafts of home-cooked meals spill from open windows and doors. Rather than social distancing, I see here a social ‘closening.’ Yes, this is a time for new terms. The horizontal connections growing across balconies bring people closer together, even as they maintain their physical distance. This social quickening is not tied to a common, representable identity. The balconied are not shouting about identity; they are celebrating a unity founded on compassion for others. In the future, we may refer to 2018 as year 1 PC, or ‘Pre-Covid 19,’ the year before great suffering and loss. We may also think of 2020 as a beginning. Perhaps 2020 will be the year of ‘The Quickening,’ when communities around the world emerged as spontaneous expressions of compassion, a mangrove poetics.