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### **Tracing Cultural Syncretism in Fred Wah's *Diamond Grill* and Sky Lee's *Disappearing Moon Café***

Considerable critical attention has turned towards the cross – breeding of cultures and hybridity in much of recent post – colonial analysis. Although attempts have been made to confine the use as a contemporary phenomenon, the long term historical interactivity of cultural transaction as a constant feature of diasporic experience cannot be ignored. In fact, hybridity goes all the way down as the founding experience of the earliest cultural contacts and encounters. Aijaz Ahmed also points out that: “the cross – fertilisation of cultures has been endemic to all movements of people...and all such movements in history have involved the travel, contact, transmutation, hybridisation of ideas, values, and behavioural norms” (“The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality,” *Race and Class*, 36,3:1 – 20).

The present paper analyses Fred Wah's *Diamond Grill* and Sky Lee's *Disappearing Moon Café* with a view to develop the idea of thinking about 'hyphenated' cultural fictions in the terms of 'syncretism' which has more value as a sociogeneric category than the concept of 'hybridity.' In a sense, the term hybridity tends to refer to an individual situation whereas syncretism acknowledges wider, ongoing, and historical processes of a more social and collective nature. It also suggests appropriation, making over, and customising in an eclectic and creative way.

Wah's *Diamond Grill* (1996) explores Chinese – Canadian history, racialised politics, and the third space of a neither/nor, both/and identity. The book is rooted initially in the Diamond Grill Chinese restaurant owned by Wah's father, and the restaurant remains throughout as a site in which, the writer speculates on a range of issues relating to his immediate family and beyond them to the complex, contradictory and often brutal history and politics of diasporic communities since the beginnings of migration to Canada in the nineteenth century.

In Lee's *Disappearing Moon Café* (1990) the epicentric narrative figure is Ka Ying Woo who pieces together the tangled and the hidden history of the Wongs which starts in 1892 when Wong Gwei left China for British Columbia. The novel is based primarily in Vancouver's Chinatown. It is an interpretive and transformative narrative, giving voices to a legacy of the repressed and the silenced.