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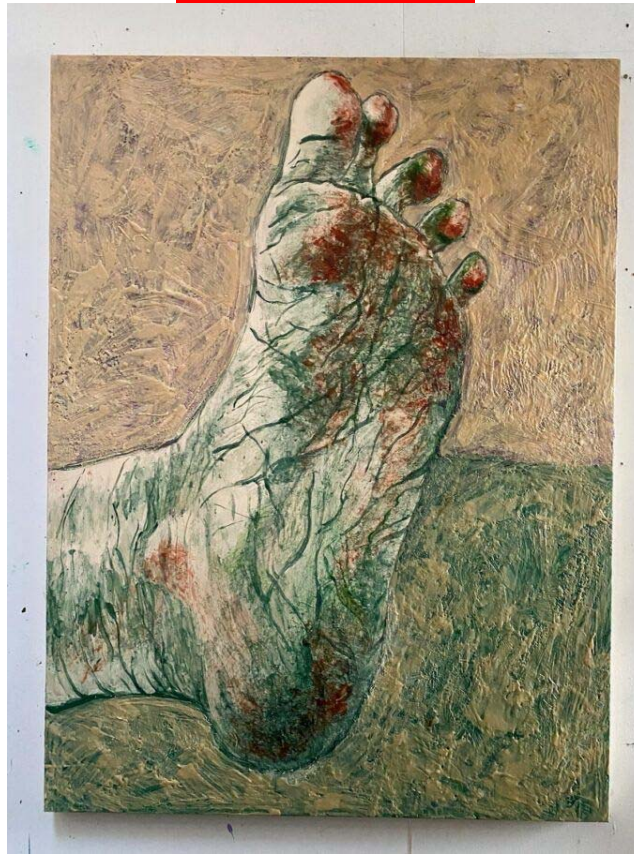
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## *The United States Versus Canada: Mine Eyes Don't See Any Glory*



“The Grapes of Wrath” by Michèle White, 2025.

Having declared a national emergency on the first day of his administration, the newly sworn-in American president Donald Trump announced plans to implement tariffs on Canadian goods, countering his own reworked NAFTA/USMCA reciprocal free trade agreement from five years earlier. After weeks of insulting remarks, annexation jokes, and social-media frothing, a 25% tariff came into effect on March 5, which lasted a day before

being threatened again for April 2 in another disruptive flip flop, roiling stock markets and setting off a tit-for-tat economic war between two previously friendly nations. The “world’s longest undefended border” just got a whole lot chillier. As the saying goes, “With friends like these, who needs enemies?”

Citing an imbalance in trade, the United States added fentanyl and illegal immigrants to the mix to justify the national emergency ... from Canada. Good fences make good neighbo(u)rs, but the strategy doesn’t wash as with most Trumpian logic. In 2024, the US had a global trade deficit of over \$1 trillion, \$60 billion with Canada. Excluding subsidized petroleum products, which helps keep American gas prices low, the exchange in goods is almost equal, while the US runs a surplus in services. The amount of drugs and illegals entering the United States from Canada is also minimal. Are these the acts of a rational player or a smokescreen for more uncertainty and a new kind of trampling on the rights and dreams of others?

Whatever the motivation, the economic ramifications of impeded trade between two highly integrated economies are potentially devastating, costing millions of jobs in both countries, especially in the carmaking industry where hundreds of different parts can transit the border many times before a finished vehicle rolls off the factory floor. The cultural, social, and political ramifications are incalculable with many Canadians venting their anger by cancelling trips to the States, booing the American national anthem at sporting events, and enacting “Buy Canadian” or “Anything but American” campaigns. The maker of Jack Daniel’s noted that removing American liquor from Canadian stores is “worse than a tariff.” Echoing the feelings of many anxious compatriots, a former Canadian ambassador to the US stated that relations “may never be the same.”

As a Canadian, I admit to harbouring some anti-American sentiment that comes from growing up next to a giant. Former prime minister Pierre Trudeau famously declared that living next to the United States is “like sleeping with an elephant.” A popular saying is “When the US sneezes, Canada catches a cold.” But this is different. Our best friend older brother wants to own us, or at least says he does. Some call it a negotiating tactic. Oh yeah, “your mother wears army boots.” WTF? Is this the level of American diplomacy?

I also admit having grown up admiring the US, both learned and experienced in Canada and abroad. I regularly watched American TV shows – there were 3 Buffalo stations in the Toronto area – puzzling over the subtle differences in our worlds. Hockey teams I played on billeted each other as we played home-and-away games versus teams from Detroit. Many of my heroes are American (the list is very long). But when an American president stakes claim to Canada as his own and openly taunts the prime minister as the governor of the 51st state,

it's no longer geopolitical gamesmanship. American elephantism/exceptionalism has run wild. The US is now as dangerous to Canadians as in the days of cross-border raids during the War of Independence, the 1814 burning of the White House, or "54-40 or fight."

Canadians get it, probably more than many Americans think. You feel you've been pushed around after you helped save the world for democracy in World War II. The country that spent trillions of dollars to beat the Soviet Union to the moon quite literally created the modern world with the transistor, integrated circuit, personal computer, and the Internet. We have you to thank for the car, IBM, and Elvis Presley (but not the telephone, universal health care, or Joni Mitchell). And now we are all ungrateful.

Sorry to suggest how you might feel, but do you really believe Canada threatens your existence with fentanyl and underpaid workers or that international agreements can't be renegotiated? Go ahead, pull the other one Johnny Appleseed. More likely, the chaos is by design to undermine governance and put even more power in fewer hands. Of course, the facts don't matter in Trump's supercritical black hole of imploding nonsense.

Perhaps gangster tactics are needed to forge a successful real estate business in New York City. Self-promotion, barstool bullying, and buying one's own ghostwritten books en masse to ensure entry on the *New York Times* book list may be the cost of success in such rarefied skyscraper air, but bullying people is not the mark of anything great. Leader? Statesman? No responsible governmental steward plays games with the lives and livelihoods of hard-working citizens and families. I think Trump has watched too many Times Square reruns of *The Godfather*. Government is not a business and everything is personal.

Is it fealty you want? Oh Donald. You are so fine. Must everyone kiss the hand? Please tell us your world is more than game-playing, whatever the consequences to others, in the name of a fairytale Golden Age. The conflict-seekers taking advantage of the conflict-averse. The rich stamping on the poor. Prehistoric, medieval, the American Way? Don't you know Lucy will never hold the ball for good old Charlie Brown?

Is it our minerals – the gold, copper, nickel, and uranium? You could have asked politely and we would have sold more to you at a reasonable price (now surcharged by 25%). Is it 2% GDP spending on NATO, an organization you actively undermine? Do you want to arm the world in what economist and former Greek finance minister Yanis Varoufakis calls "military Keynesianism" so that others will buy more American weapons, adding to an already bloated death industry and undercutting social spending and diversity?

Do you want Canadians to apologize for "American Woman," even though New Yorker Lenny Kravitz also covered that classic '70s Guess Who hit. In this case, "woman" is a

metaphor for the coloured lights that hypnotize. Sorry for the Toronto Blue Jays winning the World Series for the first time on foreign soil in 1992, but Babe Ruth hit his first professional home run in Toronto and Jackie Robinson played his first professional game for the Montreal Royals. Besides, you've won the last 30 Stanley Cups. Three decades of Detroit, Tampa Bay, Pittsburgh, Chicago, and other amazing American cities lifting the greatest sporting prize ever – even Anaheim's Disney-owned Ducks – albeit with mostly Canadian players.

Sorry that Superman was co-created by a Canadian. Sorry Margaret Atwood wrote about a Christian patriarchal takeover in the Republic of Gilead, a.k.a. a future USA gone mad. I know Canadians are famously courteous and nice and apologize too much (sorry), but we're not sorry for any of that. It's called life. We all know the madness isn't going to stop, but why didn't you tell us you wanted to break up? You are like a crazed boyfriend from an Alanis Morissette song. Oh yeah, Americans don't do irony.

We are sorry for the Great Northeast Blackout of 1965 that knocked out power to most of the eastern seaboard after a transmission line near Niagara Falls tripped. That got fixed and the shared international CANUSE grid is stronger for it. We didn't cause the largest ever US blackout, however, that crashed the grid for two days in northern Ohio in 2003. Canada was initially blamed, but it was a fallen American tree and software bug. Essentially, reduced public works such as insufficient tree pruning because of too much deregulation. If you don't pay for services, everything goes to pot (shades of DOGE to come). We're not sorry for the Texas freeze of 2021. That was Ted Cruz. No it wasn't, sorry, I lie – see what happens when facts don't matter?

But don't worry friends, I doubt Ontario premier Doug Ford will turn off the juice to New York, Michigan, or Minnesota. That's illegal in winter and dumb. Premier Ford is a conservative, but politics and economic takeovers make strange bedfellows. I am proud that Canadians also encourage friendly civic mindedness by asking everyone to shovel their snow within 24 hours of a snowfall as seen in cutesy government-funded ads: "Be nice, clear your ice." If you are over 65, the city workers do it for free. Big city homes do come with locks, although some doors are probably still left open as our Michigan neighbour Michael Moore famously noted in *Bowling for Columbine*. Many Canadians have never seen a gun in their life other than in a police holster.

What is it you really want, Donald? Our lifestyle? We are sorry the US doesn't live up to world standards when it comes to health, education, and diversity. Or civility. Calling women names is neither presidential nor patriotic to a nation of supposed god-fearing citizens. Your

misogyny is beneath even a schoolboy taunt. Nor are community-minded citizens “commies,” “libtards,” and “losers.”

Why are Americans so angry? *Breitbart* is littered with vile. Ditto the Murdoch-owned *New York Post*? Clearly one has to watch out for the armed bands of evil squirrels, beavers, and moose amassing on the Canadian border. Dudley Do-Right and Nell Fenwick are readying the furry forces. It may be a constitutionally protected war of words (or paid Russian bots), but who actually thinks this? Is it our stoicism (a.k.a. “socialism” to Americans) nurtured in the depths of yet another endless winter?

Like many Americans, Canadians grew up during the biggest jump in technology since the Industrial Revolution in an age of transistors, space travel, and satellites. Like others, we were left to navigate a vastly different world than that of our parents, both scary and revealing, from relaxed social mores and crazy Cold War posturing to an explosion of artistic expression in a growing technological tyranny. How did we drift so far apart, brother? We are not a coloured square on a Risk board to conquer. It’s not our place to tell other countries what to do, but can you please curb your arrogance?

Sadly, we have to get used to the vindictive game playing, exaggerated outrage, and unpredictable behaviour as Bizarro Trump exports the chaos in his own country abroad. The motive behind his rambling, unsympathetic, and know-it-all posturing may be to undermine governance and increase billionaire wealth even more. Sowing dissent at home is not enough; the US is now encouraging division elsewhere to turn life into permanent crisis, anxiety, and poverty for the wealthy to exploit the fearful. So long fellowship, respect, and diversity; hello more 1% wealth and fewer taxes for the rich. First he took Manhattan, then he tried to take the World. But as Leonard Cohen warned us “there is no beauty to their weapons.”

We can debate the hierarchy of social responsibility: garbage pickup, sanitation, infrastructure, emergencies, policing, tax collecting (sales tax/income tax) and the efficiencies within any public system. But why doesn’t Donald Trump fix his own US health system, education scores, and potholes first? Canada can be an example of how to provide a publicly funded universal health care that both aids and protects workers (thank you Tommy Douglas, number one in a 2004 “Greatest Canadian” newspaper poll). Did you know a tenant can’t be evicted from a Canadian home in winter? Equal pay and a 40-hour work week are the law. The minimum federal wage is \$17.30/hour indexed to inflation. As Dylan sang “the money you make can’t buy back your soul.” Or “The first one now will later be last.” That’s from the Bible.

For all his divisiveness at home Trump is uniting the world ... against the United States. The governing Liberals were expected to lose the next election, but are now rising in the polls as former banker Mark Carney takes over from the outgoing three-term prime minister Justin Trudeau. In his acceptance speech on March 9, Carney stated, “We didn’t ask for this fight, but Canadians are always ready when someone else drops the gloves.”

Others are signalling with their “elbows up” in a nod to Mister Hockey, Gordie Howe, who played 25 seasons for the Detroit Red Wings and whose poorly remunerated prowess was instrumental in establishing a hockey labour union. Across Europe, far-right parties are being asked to reconcile their fealty to Trump and his anti-European rhetoric. America First is becoming America Alone as the world unites in opposition against such gauche tribalism.

Degrading or even dismantling an integrated economy won’t happen overnight. The resistance is beginning as citizens rise against the common enemy seeking to rip up long-standing agreements. Deep down, we all know more unites than divides us. Trump’s cruelty has been laid bare from Ukraine to Gaza and from Panama to Greenland. If the politics were any good, there would be no need to bully. Business uncertainty may be the most important last check as investors shun the United States amid a looming Trumpcession. The painted ponies go up and down. No one wants to keep on rockin’ in an un-free American world.

Cruelty will never be a virtue. Trump has tapped into the vengeful apocalyptic Christian war machine, imaging himself at the head of the troops, their blood-wine feet hovering over whoever dares call out the lies, venality, and misogyny. The answered chorus is not to declare “Glory glory Hallelujah” but to call out the wrath as a failed ideal, a misinformed and misguided act of a dying republic. When the abuser claims abuse and the bully cries victim, we know the vintage has spoiled. Conflict is a con, sold by those afraid to understand the meaning of communion and the depth of community.

Trump isn’t responsible for all the nastiness blowing from the south, but he is the mouthpiece, permanently campaigning on a trail of pain while spending other people’s money. For now, the boycotts will grow against Colgate, Coke, Gillette, ..., and the United States. We will protest, stand up, and be heard. Because we don’t live in Donald Trump’s angry world. The Toronto singer Jim Cuddy lamented about how “We used to be the best of friends,” but as Montreal Canadiens star goalie Ken Dryden and former member of parliament notes, “Canadians will need to be defiantly Canadian.” I am Canadian. Sorry friends, life is not a game and Donald Trump is nobody’s king.

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*Michèle White is a Toronto artist and professor emeritus at the Ontario College of Art and Design University (OCAD U). “The Grapes of Wrath” is part of an ongoing series entitled “Written on the Body.” Her newest work can be viewed on [squarespace](#) and [Instagram](#).*

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