

# **LABOUR AND LITERATURE IN THE ‘WEST BEYOND THE WEST’**

by

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## Abstract

The literature of British Columbia and the study of labour therein have been largely ignored in academic criticism. I address this deficiency by foregrounding labour in the prose literature of British Columbia as well as the significance of British Columbia literature itself. My introductory literature review demarcates the field, situates the authors and texts I take up, and points to the general importance of such a study. Chapter two begins by analyzing the male-dominant labour narrative in Bertrand Sinclair's *The Inverted Pyramid* and Roderick Haig-Brown's *On the Highest Hill* and *Timber*—each focused on the theme of logging. Rather than an overarching argument, the section on Sinclair addresses many concepts, including Pierre Bourdieu's theory of fields, a connection between environmental conservationism and loggers, and a cooperative economic model that opposes capitalism. Likewise, in Haig-Brown I focus on his treatment of danger in the logging industry, the oft-forgotten history of Canada's national parks, the way that language connects people to nature, and the presence of homosocial and homosexual relationships in logging. My project shifts in chapter three from logging to orcharding and from novels to three works of creative non-fiction by Harold Rhenisch: *Out of the Interior: The Lost Country*, *Tom Thomson's Shack*, and *The Wolves at Evelyn: Journeys through a Dark Century*. Operating out of a site of tension and contradiction, Rhenisch resists what he sees as the dominant discourses in the Interior of British Columbia. In my fourth chapter I return to novels but move from a study of manual labour to white collar labour. Here the phrase "white collar" becomes an analytical lens to view labour stratification, exploitation, authorship, sexism, and agency in Douglas Coupland's *JPod*, Robert Harlow's *Scann*, and Jen Sookfong Lee's *the end of east*. In chapter five, I conclude by using Daphne Marlatt's novel *Ana Historic* as a way to reflect on the positions of chapters two through four. Marlatt's criticism of male dominant conceptions of history and patriarchal systems of power illuminates the texts I have taken up and reveals possibilities for further analysis, debate, and discussion.

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## 1. Introduction

Archaeologists are always longing for the complete story, but they have to work with fragments and holes . . . . But history is full of holes. At least 40 per cent of it is holes. In the old days the holes would have been seen as lapses, as gaps, as something that needed filling up, to make continuity. Now when we read history we read the holes as part of history. I don't know says a historian, and we don't mark him down 60 per cent any more. Historians are something like archaeologists now. They spend more of their time reading.

—George Bowering, *Bowering's B.C.: A Swashbuckling History*, 1996, 24.

At first, it might seem unusual to begin a dissertation about literature with a quotation about history and archaeology. Yet, history forms an important part of my work on representations of labour in the literature of British Columbia, and Michel Foucault's concept of archaeology is part of my theoretical framework. In these ways, Bowering's words are entirely appropriate. More important, though, are Bowering's words about fragments, holes, and the attempt to grapple with "the whole." He explains how Canadian writer Robert Kroetsch came along and "said that now novelists are a lot like archaeologists [and that] . . . writers nowadays are more like archaeologists because they admit they are working with fragments, with holes between the fragments" (23-24). The



tension between “longing for the complete story” and the necessity of working in terms of “fragments” and “holes” is a pressure implicit in writing a dissertation. There is always a tension between the attempt to showcase a mastery of a particular field and the impossibility of doing so. Like the earlier archaeologists, novelists, and historians, I long to write the complete story, while being forced to work both with particular fragments (the books in question) and to write in fragments surrounded by holes—being unable to tell the “whole” story.

My particular fragment begins with the dominant, perhaps hegemonic, male-dominated, racially-biased labour narrative of British Columbia—a narrative that despite its often blatant sexism and racism, maintains a strong presence in twenty-first century British Columbia. It is a narrative predicated on the colonial ideology and settler economy of British Columbia. I begin in chapter two with a study of novels that represent logging. In particular, I examine *The Inverted Pyramid* (1924) by Bertrand Sinclair as well as *Timber* (1942) and *On the Highest Hill* (1949) by Roderick Haig-Brown. In chapter three I shift to the creative non-fiction of Harold Rhenisch to study *Out of the Interior: The Lost Country* (1993), *Tom Thomson’s Shack* (2000), and *The Wolves at Evelyn: Journeys Through a Dark Century* (2006). I move away from the dominant narrative slightly in chapter four in my exploration of Douglas Coupland’s *JPod* (2006), Robert Harlow’s *Scann* (1972), and Jen Sookfong Lee’s *the end of east* (2008). In the conclusion, chapter five, I begin to critique aspects of the dominant narrative by using Daphne Marlatt’s *Ana Historic* (1988) as a critical lens through which to “re-view” the texts already discussed. Faced with narratives that seem to reproduce or insufficiently challenge the dominant labour structure, I have tried to indicate or work in concert with

feminist and postcolonial approaches when possible, though postcolonial and feminist concepts do not form the core of my study. By offering a rigorous, historical approach, I show how the dominant narrative functions, and I highlight the positive criticisms these authors offer from within this narrative. I do this in order to lay a foundation for further work and criticism that explicitly engages with feminist, postcolonial, and critical race theory based challenges to the dominant labour narrative.

### **“Digging Up” The Literature of British Columbia**

It is worth restating that while certain aspects of my longing to tell the whole story of British Columbia literature remain in this study, this is, emphatically, not the project at hand. If such a project of literary history in British Columbia is possible, then it is the project of Alan Twigg who begins *First Invaders* with Jonathan Swift’s Gulliver who, in 1703, sails “to a land of giants called Brobdingnag,” an area “north of New Albion” that is “roughly approximate to the locale of British Columbia” (18). Yet Twigg’s map starts even earlier with the possibility that the Chinese monk Hui Shen visited a land he called “Fusang, Fu-Sang or Fou Sang” that “was often included on European maps during the 18th century in areas that have roughly approximated the location of Vancouver Island” (22). Twigg’s three-volume *Literary Origins of British Columbia*, including *First Invaders*, *Aboriginality* and *Thompson’s Highway*, is remarkable for its depth and attention to detail. Something of a chronicle in nature, Twigg’s project of charting every mention of *British Columbia* is not the type of literature review I have embarked on here. However, the attempts of those writers who have sought in some way to theorize British

Columbia literature, to elaborate what it means as a coherent body of literature and identify predominant characteristics, are relevant to this project and worth bearing in mind. In some cases, writers have only located particular authors as “British Columbian”; yet such an identification of who might be included or excluded is a necessary step in generating a theory that explains British Columbia literature. In creating an *account* of British Columbia literature by recognizing and exploring its patterns, themes, authors, boundaries, and limitations, as well as by providing reasons for its unique existence, I see many of these authors engaged in the act of theorization. Where these attempts intersect with the subject of labour they delimit my research area by demonstrating what has already been done and by opening up new lines of inquiry.

For a thematic or interpretive theorization of British Columbia literature, the starting point seems to be the essay “Present Literary Activity in British Columbia” written by R.W. Douglas in 1919. Douglas focuses on bolstering the reputation of British Columbia writers and writing, although most of the authors he mentions have been forgotten or dropped from the record. Typical of his short article is the “claim that no other province has produced more or better prose or poetry than the Far West, and I also believe that it is likely to maintain the lead which it has gained” (46). The idea that develops through these remarks is the divide between British Columbia and the rest of Canada. The reference to the “Far West,” even at this early date, indicates the popular conception of the Canadian west as ending with Alberta and the prairie provinces. British Columbia needs a title or imagined construction as a place, identity, or “west” that is *beyond* the west of Alberta—a theme which gains prominence throughout the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Edward A. McCourt introduces *The Canadian West in Fiction* (1949)

with the qualification that “[i]t may be objected to that the title, *The Canadian West in Fiction*, is inaccurate since the most westerly province of all is not included in the discussion” (vi). Despite his focus on Frederick Niven, a writer often claimed for British Columbia, McCourt goes on to say in his introduction that “British Columbia is a world apart from the prairies: regional unity begins in Kenora and ends in the foothills. To the native of the prairies Alberta is the far West; British Columbia the near East” (vi). In short, McCourt fails to account for British Columbia in his study of western-Canadian literature because he cannot imaginatively or critically consider it the westernmost province of Canada. If there is a pattern to early literary examinations of British Columbia, it is this production and reproduction of the idea of British Columbia’s separation and isolation from the Canadian nation.

Critical studies of British Columbia literature remain scarce until the 1970s. The one notable exception is the publication of Reginald Eyre Watters’ 1958 collection *British Columbia: A Centennial Anthology*. Beginning with fur trader James Strange’s 1786 declaration that “Any Seaman discovering an Island *unknown before*, shall receive a Gratuity of Two Months Pay” (5), the Watters anthology ranges from *Vancouver Province* newspaper articles, to excerpts from Simon Fraser’s journals, to the poetry of Earle Birney, and the stories of Emily Carr and Ethel Wilson. While the anthology does little to theorize British Columbia literature, it is a landmark celebration of writing in the province and an important counterpoint to the neglect—whether real or perceived—that British Columbia experiences in literary studies such as McCourt’s.

It is tempting to think of Northrop Frye in any context concerning theory and Canadian literature. Yet, in the much lauded *The Bush Garden* (1971), Frye virtually ignores British Columbia, apart from a brief mention in his preface. Here, Frye wonders

what can there be in common between an imagination nurtured on the prairies, where it is a centre of consciousness diffusing itself over a vast flat expanse stretching to the remote horizon, and one nurtured in British Columbia, where it is in the midst of gigantic trees and mountains leaping into the sky around it, and obliterating the horizon everywhere. (xxii)

Frye doesn't quite answer his own question but instead focuses on the difference between identity and unity. His deterministic remarks about the way in which environment conditions identity, that "anyone who has been conditioned by one in his early years can hardly become conditioned by the other in the same way" (xxii), are troubling to say the least. Frye seems to locate a creative or central imagination in the prairies and a destructive, isolated imagination in British Columbia. By suggesting that these imaginations are insurmountably determined by regional geography, Frye undercuts the creative ability of writers on one hand while steadfastly reproducing the separation between British Columbia and the rest of Canada on the other.

As with the work of Frye, it would seem possible to find some discussion of British Columbia literature in the collections of Eli Mandel. However, British Columbia is virtually absent from both *Contexts of Canadian Criticism* (1971) and *Passion for Identity* (1987). Included in the former is Henry Kreisel's "The Prairie A State of Mind," but no counterpart or equivalent for British Columbia is present. The one exception is Martin Robin's historical essay "British Columbia: The Company Province" (1978) in *Passion for Identity*. Though *Passion for Identity* is historically oriented, pieces such as "On Being an Alberta Writer" by Robert Kroetch and "Changing Images of the West" by R. Douglas Francis do appear under the heading "The West" and contain literary content

about the prairie provinces. The startling point about these examinations of Canadian literature is that by 1987, as I will demonstrate subsequently, there were numerous articles about British Columbia literature in circulation that could have been included in these volumes.<sup>2</sup>

It isn't until 1972, with the publication of W.H. New's *Articulating West*, that British Columbia begins to receive serious attention. While not limited to British Columbia, New's book dedicates a chapter to Frederick John Niven and two chapters to Ethel Wilson. New identifies particular themes and dominant images in the work of Wilson and Niven, among the other authors, rather than theorizing a literature per se. Nevertheless, his work begins to map the territory of British Columbia literature by claiming particular writers for British Columbia. Similar to *Articulating West* is *Patterns of Isolation* by John Moss (1974). Like New, Moss does not attempt to theorize British Columbia literature. He does, however, treat the idea of regionalism through a study of Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook* (1959) and Ethel Wilson's *Swamp Angel* (1954). The isolation thesis Moss presents is explained through the idea of spiritual exile in the work of Malcolm Lowry and in terms of geophysical reality with regard to other British Columbia writers. As Moss explains, the

geophysical reality in relation to the patterns of isolation evokes a profound response in the Canadian imagination. A great many writers of the Maritimes, the Prairies, and British Columbia have shaped their visions out of the common experience of an immense northern landscape, its aggressive climate, and the sparse distribution of its populace. (109)

A recapitulation of the entirety of Moss' argument is not necessary here, but it is interesting to note that he, and to a lesser extent New, marks a movement toward an identification of larger patterns.

Early gestures and movements aside, 1978 signifies the beginning of criticism specific to a conception of a British Columbia literature. The event is the publication of a special edition of the *Malahat Review* called *The West Coast Renaissance*, edited by Robin Skelton and Charles Lillard. In “Comment,” Skelton writes about an “awakening period” that lasted “until 1945 when Emily Carr died” (5). This period includes early writers such as Marius Barbeau, Franz Boas, and John Swanton who, according to Skelton, “brought to light the extraordinary richness of the mythology of the Haida, Kwakiutl, Salish, Tsimshian, and other tribes of the coast . . .” (5). Skelton goes on to describe the “renaissance,” which he sees as occurring in the 1960s, as primarily tied to poetry. Similar, and in the same issue, is Lillard’s “Daylight in the Swamp: A Guide to the West Coast Renaissance” where he ties the literature of British Columbia to poetry and the critical or theoretical movements within poetry. Like Skelton, Lillard begins by discussing what he refers to as “indigenous mythology and folklore.” He is emphatic that while “our literary history begins in 1858 with the proclamation of James Douglas’ *Proclamation* . . . [t]his date is accurate only so far as our written literature is concerned” (319). While their discussion of First Nations literature and orature is a positive development in the examination of British Columbia literature, it is also problematic. Their phrasing seems to suggest a sense of continuity and evolution rather than marking the complicated process of colonization and the asymmetrical relations of power this process involved. While I don’t see Skelton or Lillard as deliberately making this point, it is clear that First Nations literature cannot be simplistically located as a foundation for European settler literature. Nevertheless, in the attempt to deliberately define a regional

body of literature, this issue marks an important moment in British Columbia literary studies.

Possibly chastised by readers for ignoring prose writing, Skelton and Lillard produced a second special issue of the *Malahat Review* in 1979 titled *The West Coast Renaissance II*. In the “Comment” section, again written by Skelton, he explains how they have tried to “provide a cross section of the work of writers of fiction,” but that because many authors either “had no work available or were working upon novels” (5) much work was not included. Notably absent for Skelton and Lillard are “Robert Harlow, Alan Fry, Jane Rule, Audrey Thomas, John Peter, David Godfrey, W.D. Valgardson, and John Mills” (5). I include this list of excluded writers because it demonstrates how accurate Skelton and Lillard were in predicting the success of these authors. Harlow, Fry, Rule and Thomas, especially, are significant writers in British Columbia.

The key article in this issue is Lillard’s “The Past Rising From Our Midst.” Here, for the first time, a writer tries to map the field of prose writing in British Columbia to establish a literary tradition. This article serves as the foundation for later writers such as Allan Pritchard, George Bowering, and Laurie Ricou, as well as for the labour tradition that I take up in my dissertation. Lillard introduces readers to Bertrand Sinclair, Frederick Niven, Hubert Evans, Howard O’Hagan and Morely Roberts, among others, and attempts to connect them in a chain of first-hand knowledge of one another. One of Lillard’s most interesting points occurs when he explains how “it was a strange world these men lived in. All of them were important to some extent outside the country, yet none of them were well-known locally, so far as can be told” (17). It is an astute comment, and one that is at the heart of my motivation to include some of these authors in my study. With regard to



patterns in literature, Lillard briefly mentions the mystery-detective genre in British Columbia, but pinpoints “a concern with the local landscape and the people living within the area” (21) as the primary tradition—one which runs through such authors as Morely Roberts in *The Prey of the Strongest* (1906) to Ethel Wilson in *Hetty Dorval* (1947) and the work of Jack Hodgins in the late 1970s. Together, the two special issues of the *Malahat Review* mark a crucial moment in British Columbia literary studies. They represent the first attempts to declare the existence of a regional literature in the province, to define this body of literature, and to theorize it. Furthermore, the publication of these two journal issues generated a continued interest in the subject through a volley of articles that appeared throughout the 1980s.

George Woodcock’s “Beyond the Divide: Notes on Recent Poetry in British Columbia” was published in his *The World of Canadian Writing: Critiques and Recollections* (1980). While Woodcock focused on poetry, his title was significant in that it formalized the boundary of the Continental Divide (or Great Divide of the Rocky Mountains) between much of British Columbia and Alberta. Woodcock used the geographical divide to signify a divide in the imagination and literature between British Columbia and Canada along similar lines as those of R.W. Douglas and Northrop Frye. It was, therefore, no surprise that in 1982, Allan Pritchard published “West of the Great Divide: A View of the Literature of British Columbia.” While Pritchard doesn’t cite Woodcock, the similarity of their titles is important, however coincidental. Both titles produce, reproduce, and conceptualize the idea of British Columbia as a place distinct and separate from Canada; a feeling or idea that may respond to the lack of inclusion in national literary studies and theorizations, or be simply indicative of a complex historical,

social, and political set of circumstances. Diverging somewhat from the *Malahat Review* issues, Pritchard attempts a more directly thematic approach to British Columbia literature. His argument can be summed up by what he says about Margaret Atwood's survival thesis which states that "the central symbol for Canada—and this is based on numerous instances of its occurrence in both English and French literature—is undoubtedly Survival, *la Survivance*" (32). Pritchard explains that "it serves admirably as a means of defining the regional characteristics of the literature of British Columbia—if one merely reverses its central propositions" (96). He goes on to state that writers in British Columbia "more often" show "relations between man and nature as harmonious than as hostile," that the immigrant experience is one of "fulfillment and growth" rather than "imprisonment or defeat," and finally, that "integration" is represented far more often than "alienation" (97). If a primary pattern or theme is identifiable, then Pritchard suggests that this theme is "the legend of Eden or the earthly paradise," whether this representation be romantic or ironic (97). Using British Columbia writers, the bulk of Pritchard's essay is a refutation of Atwood's thesis. Alongside his criticism, Pritchard develops the idea of Eden as a unifying theme while also identifying themes such as "the making of a home," "conservation," and "possession," as central to this regional literature.

Many of Pritchard's claims are problematic. By 1982 British Columbia society had witnessed the disenfranchisement of First Nations, Japanese Canadians, Chinese Canadians, and immigrants from India. The dispossession and colonization of First Nations peoples were ongoing. The Komagata Maru incident, the Chinese Exclusion Act, as well as the internment of Japanese Canadians, were only a few of the racially

motivated and racist actions of twentieth-century British Columbia. Issues concerning First Nations peoples are represented in Pauline Johnson's *Legends of Vancouver* (1911) and the treatment of Japanese Canadian during World War Two is represented in Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* (1981)—two readily available and well-known examples of a more complex literary representation of British Columbia. While Pritchard's conclusions are essentially correct, this is because they are based on very selective representations of British Columbia literature. No doubt, many First Nations peoples, as well as non-white minority populations, would find claims of Eden and a fulfilling immigrant experience to be grossly inaccurate.

Despite his failure to critically locate British Columbia as a colonial or settler society, Pritchard is important for my study because of his identification of the theme of labour in books such as Eric Collier's *Three Against the Wilderness* (1959), Martin Allerdale Grainger's *Woodsmen of the West* (1908) and the work of Roderick Haig-Brown. Like Skelton and Lillard, Pritchard is interested in elaborating the field of British Columbia literature and is successful in doing so. His work toward a unifying symbol and tradition makes his article an essential component of the study of British Columbia literature.

There is no evidence, to my knowledge, that George Bowering read Pritchard's article, but the similarity of their work is remarkable. In 1984, Bowering published "Home Away: A Thematic Study of Some British Columbia Novels." Like Pritchard, Bowering begins with Atwood. With regard to assigning a unifying symbol to a country's literature, Bowering remarks,

[l]eaving aside argument that these assignments might be acts of fiction themselves—that *Survival*, for instance, seems as important to Australian

literature as to Canadian—I would like to take up the amusement for a while and say something about my choice for the unifying and informing symbol for the culture (dare we say country?) of British Columbia. The symbol is Home, or, more specifically, the attempt to find or make a home. (9)

As with other authors, Bowering gestures toward the distinctive nature of writing in British Columbia by daring to suggest that it is a country unto itself rather than a province. By doing so, he is implicitly suggesting that Atwood's national symbol of survival does not work in British Columbia—a place divided from the nation. While he is suggesting that the idea of a unifying symbol is itself a fiction or an impossibility, he nevertheless claims the idea of home, like Pritchard, to be a recurring (possibly unifying and informing) symbol for British Columbia. The majority of Bowering's article takes up various premises of Atwood's survival thesis and offers the idea of home as a counterpoint. Bowering ranges through work by Grainger, Hubert Evans, Matt Cohen, Howard O'Hagan, Jack Hodgins, Malcolm Lowry, Sheila Watson, Ethel Wilson, Margaret Laurence, and Jane Rule—names that are beginning to take hold in the field, in part, through the efforts of critics such as Skelton, Lillard, New, Pritchard, and Bowering.

Also appearing in 1984 is Allan Pritchard's second article on the subject, "West of the Great Divide: Man and Nature in the Literature of British Columbia." Here Pritchard takes up the themes of his previous article in more detail. Where various themes were identified in his first article, they are fully developed here. Hence, he argues, that the themes of paradise, paradise lost, and possession are "matched by equally prominent themes of dispossession and of spoiling the land" (36). Pritchard's work is important to my dissertation, once again, because of his representation of labour. Labour, according to Pritchard, often signals a threat to paradise—especially when it is mechanized. As he explains, "the signal of the threat is often the sound of machinery, the noise of an

approaching aircraft, the roar of bulldozers or chainsaws” (37). As I explain in chapter two, it is also Pritchard who, through examples from the work of Lowry, Haig-Brown, and Hodgins, first identifies the logger as a central figure in the literature of British Columbia. Pritchard’s interpretation of this figure or theme differs from my own. One of the primary differences between Pritchard’s examination of logging and my own is that he does not mark logging and the activities of loggers as implicated in the ongoing process of colonization. Furthermore, he does not locate the logging narrative as dominated by white society when this is historically the case. Nevertheless, it is his identification of both labour and the logger as central to British Columbia that opens up a line of inquiry leading to my work.

Two articles of importance appear in 1985: W.H. New’s “A Piece of the Continent, A Part of the Main: Some Comments on B.C. Literature” and Laurie Ricou’s “Dumb Talk: Echoes of the Indigenous Voice in the Literature of British Columbia.” New’s article diverges from the work of Pritchard and Bowering by suggesting that it is unclear what British Columbia literature is. New explains by stating that

history, subregion, and waves of visitors and settlers confound all but the most banal generalizations about province-wide cultural homogeneity—leaving me not with a coherent body of provincial works to discuss (however one understands this term), but with a set of problematic perspectives. (3)

Possibly, it is the idea of homogeneity that is problematic here. Indeed, by replacing “coherent” with “problematic perspective” New is alluding to some heterogeneous conception of a regional literature and culture. Rather than a unified symbol or metaphor for British Columbia literature, New writes about a plurality of possible identities and perspectives. Alternatively, New borrows from John Donne to suggest that to be “a piece of the continent is to assert a connection with other territories and other attitudes in North

America; to be a part of the main is to separate oneself from them: to *be an island*” (4). Hence, what characterizes the literature of British Columbia is a “tension between continental and isolating impulses” (4-5). New’s work, while attempting to move away from any unifying metaphor, makes gestures toward a unified characterization of British Columbia literature all the same. To return to the opening epigraph for this chapter, I suggest that there is a tension in his work between a longing for the complete story—to theorize British Columbia writing—and the clear recognition that fragments are all that is possible.

New only briefly takes up the theme of labour. In examining the wordplay between “prophet” and “profit” New remarks that profit is “easily applicable” in the context of a growing economy. What “we’re dealing with,” he says, is the “exploitation of the wilderness and the economic hierarchy that develops as it happens” (20). One of the books that he cites in his discussion is Irene Baird’s *Waste Heritage* (1939)—a classic labour novel of British Columbia that addresses the Depression of the 1930s. While New does gesture toward some form of unity in British Columbia literature, albeit one composed of tension, his article marks an important shift away from the tendency to analyze in terms of myth, symbol, and theme alone. Instead, New identifies structures such as the binary opposition between continent and main, the contrast between Canada’s East and West, the “person and the symbol of Emily Carr” (10), and “the contrast between the prophet’s promise of absolute order and the trickster’s offer of a temporary balance” (28). By identifying these contrasts or binaries New draws on structuralist thought to an extent, but quickly moves into deconstruction to collapse these binaries, and post-structuralism to decenter them, in his examination of these structures. The

primary interest for New, I believe, is the way in which British Columbia literature—through his identified structures—can mediate place without an insistence on an authorized center.

Ricou's "Dumb Talk" differs markedly from the work of New. Aside from brief comments in the work of Skelton, Lillard, and New, Ricou's article is a first attempt to see Indigenous voices as characteristic of British Columbia literature written by European settlers. He begins with an excerpt from Emily Carr's *Klee Wyck* where Carr is having "dumb talk" with a First Nations character. Ricou suggests that Carr is speaking a form of sign language. It is this idea of "dumb talk"—of "crossing linguistic and cultural boundaries" (35) and of a "language of image and symbol" (35)—that is most prominent in British Columbia writing. Furthermore, "Indian art and mythology is the most obvious feature of the culture of British Columbia" (34). It is in tracing "echoes of the indigenous voice" which are "of course but interpretations, implicit and explicit, of Indian languages and the Indian perception" (36) that Ricou makes these generalizations. Ricou does little to mark the violence of colonization in his study of First Nations representations in the settler literature of British Columbia and, aside from the mention of Pauline Johnson, he doesn't focus on any First Nations writers. Furthermore, by tracing his "echoes" through the work of Carr, Evans, Watson, Hodgins, and Daphne Marlatt, Ricou comes to few solid conclusions—he even states that this is not his intent. Instead, he deliberately opens up new lines of thought and inquiry in the hope that his article might be read "as a vision of a program rather than as a statement of conclusions" (47). Moreover, with regard to the late twentieth century discussion of the literature of British Columbia, Ricou's is the

only work that attempts to characterize this literature through the presence of First Nations writing and culture.

The work of John Harris in his introduction to the 1986 issue of *Essays on Canadian Writing* is possibly more famous for the brilliant line, “B.C. is on the Yahoo fringe of the Canadian tradition,” than for the substance of the article. Harris’ introduction is more of a manifesto or polemic than a critical article. He begins by questioning the idea of literary merit and whether such a concept is viable or even possible. With regard to literature in British Columbia, Harris attacks the universities, which are “too beleaguered” and “have responded to the onslaught of originality by closing themselves up, by applying with psychotic formality the rigours of their discipline” (4). Harris condemns such journals as *Canadian Literature* for believing that “traditional academic criticism can be profitably applied to its subject, and will admit no deviation” (4). While Harris writes an exciting article to read, any points he attempts to make are lost in his polemical voice. He seems to advocate a role for creative criticism or some form of literary criticism that combines both academic and creative writing, but he does not specify what this might mean or how it might work.

A more promising article is “The Wild Woman: Notes on West Coast Writing” (1987) by George Woodcock. Ironically, Woodcock is one of Harris’ “exception[s] in criticism” (4), and Woodcock’s article is published in the academic journal *BC Studies*. Woodcock identifies “one of the crucial themes of West Coast writing” to be the “Wild Woman” (3). Specifically, the wild woman who Woodcock is referring to is the figure known as Tsonoqua or D’Sonoqua—a figure prominent in the mythology of many First Nations in British Columbia and represented in both writings and paintings by Emily



Carr. In some ways, Woodcock's article is reminiscent of Atwood's survival thesis. He describes representations of vast forest, isolation, silence, panic, and fear as well as Ethel Wilson's "stories of death through natural forces" (6). Woodcock's words also invoke Frye's sentiment that he had "long been impressed in Canadian Poetry by a tone of deep terror in regard to nature" (227). Yet, the most interesting moment of Woodcock's article is his identification of a pattern-based movement in British Columbia literature. He explains that "what seems to be happening recently" is

a moving beyond recognition and reconciliation to the acceptance of what once seemed threatening in the environment as now familiar, and beyond that to the contempt that comes from familiarity, to the urban man's implicit rejection of all that complex of alienation and identification which represented the various stages of pioneer man's relationship with wild nature. (11)

This brief moment in Woodcock, represents, to my mind, a particularly evocative attempt to chart British Columbia literature as a whole.

In the 1990s attempts to theorize British Columbia literature begin to dwindle and the sense of excitement and urgency present in many of the articles of the 1980s seems to dissipate. Increasingly, the project of a theory of British Columbia literature is one that is viewed as impossible, or unpopular, as the importance of defining a regional literature is eclipsed by other theoretical concerns and interests. As Laura Moss and Cynthia Sugars explain, Canadian literary criticism in the late 1980s and early 1990s

pointed in two, sometimes overlapping, directions: deconstructive readings of textual play and allusion (whether it be Marxist, psychoanalytic, deconstructive, or feminist), and interpretations overtly concerned with issues of social awareness, history, and ethics (critical race theory, post-colonialism, feminism, gender studies). Both of these groups demonstrated a break from the thematic criticism of the 1970s . . . in that they rejected the quest for coherence that motivated the thematic approach in favour of models that aimed to read for 'contradiction.' (527)

Aspects of this shift away from thematic approaches to models of contradiction are already apparent in the articles by New and Ricou. Given this shift in Canadian criticism, it is no surprise that Pritchard's third article, "The Shapes of History in British Columbia Writing" (1992), explicitly deals with history rather than landscape in the literature of British Columbia. To this end, Pritchard suggests that in addition to the geographical boundary that separates British Columbia from the rest of Canada, there are the northern and southern boundaries. He explains that "a strong sense early developed in British Columbia that those [boundaries] which separated it from the American northwest marked a division between two social orders" (48). Part of Pritchard's article explores how British Columbia literature follows a "western Canadian rather than American pattern, one marked by a British concern for the rule of law and by the modification of individualism and the frontier ethic by a concern for community" (54). Surveying much of what he calls the "documentary literature" (54) of British Columbia, Pritchard identifies historical circumstances, such as the fact that "most of the writers made their approach not overland but from the Pacific" (55), to distinguish British Columbia literature through its specific history. When Pritchard moves on to fiction writers such as Wilson, Hodgins, Bowering, and O'Hagan, he connects each of them to some history-related pattern: Wilson to "Vancouver's early social history" (59), O'Hagan's *Tay John* to "a great mythic vision of the essence of western history" (60), and Hodgins to "contemporary life in the Vancouver Island setting" (61). This brief and partial sketch of Pritchard's work highlights how interest in theorizing British Columbia literature continued in the 1990s, but, with New and Ricou as precedents, it began to shift in accordance with contemporary critical developments. The search for unifying symbols or

patterns recedes and is replaced by identifying fragments and trends. Patterns and traditions are still identified, but the incomplete nature of these patterns and traditions is no longer seen as the result of a lack of study or theorization. Instead, this “incompleteness,” or perhaps “contradiction,” is accepted as the prevailing paradigm of literary studies. More than a trend, the move away from unifying symbols and themes is a recognition of the ways in which “grand narratives,” “literary canons,” or unifying theorizations often function to oppress or suppress stories, patterns and ideas that fall outside of this unity. This moment is crucial in my project because it marks the decision not to attempt a literary history or meta-narrative of British Columbia literature, but to theorize one particular, incomplete, possibly contradictory, pattern or fragment—the labour narrative—within which are other patterns, contradictions and fragments.

Most of the articles and work on British Columbia literature from the 1970s to 1992 are taken up in Ricou’s “The Writing of British Columbia Writing” published in the 1993/4 issue of *BC Studies*. Primarily a survey, Ricou’s article makes only passing generalizations in his article. One worth mentioning is when he reports that “In 1979, Patrick O’Flaherty published his *The Rock Observed: Studies in the Literature of Newfoundland*, a satisfyingly comprehensive historical definition of the unique culture of Newfoundland” (116). Ricou cites this book to say “I hope to be proven wrong, but I suspect no such book will ever be published about British Columbia” (116). He then wryly remarks that “Ontario, incidentally, has not bothered about describing its own regional literatures, since all the attempts to define Canadian culture are assumed to be also definitions of Ontario” (116). The key point here is that Ricou identifies the growing movement away from any unified, definitional, thematic theorization of a given literature.

Furthermore, his remark about Ontario, however “tongue-in-cheek,” reflects the persistent idea of a divide between British Columbia and the rest of Canada. As a bibliographic source, Ricou’s article is indispensable.

In 1997 and 1998 W.H. New produced two books: *Land Sliding: Imagining Space, Presence, and Power in Canadian Writing* and *Borderlands*. Neither of these works is a regional study. Both are national in scope. In New’s words, *Land Sliding* “looks at a range of works, from conventional to unconventional . . . [in order to] deal with the complex interplay between place, power and the English Language,” to examine “the force of metaphor within a social context,” to deal “with the relation between literary language and the construction of social value,” and finally to “invite the reader to look again at Canada’s changing cultural character, and to see it afresh, by rereading the land” (20). The common denominator here, of course, is the idea of land and the changing ways in which it has been tied to literature, social value, and culture in Canada. Of interest for my dissertation is New’s identification of a pattern, based on E.J. Pratt’s “Towards the Last Spike,” where British Columbia is “cast” as “the farthest margin, as a lady and a Pacific lass” (104). New is quick to point out that “while the lady of British Columbia may be wily . . . she is never *in Pratt’s portrait* a real threat to the Men (with a capital ‘M’) who build the railway and the nation” (106). The trope of the lady of British Columbia is important because of New’s qualification that she is never a threat to the working men in the province. As he remarks a few lines later, “Canadian Male: to dream, survey, measure, build, and so to rule” (106). Insofar as British Columbia is concerned, then, New’s observation is important for foregrounding the androcentric dominant labour narrative of the province—perhaps both because of and despite its constructed female

gender. New's other discussions in *Land Sliding* centre on various and shifting conceptions of landscape, city, country, and place in writers such as Wilson, Hodgins, Birney and Carr—the latter in regard to her painting as well.

Like *Land Sliding*, *Borderlands* is not a regional study or an attempt to theorize the literature of British Columbia as a whole. Instead it is a study of borders and the relationships of power that are involved in any construction of borders and boundaries. The appearance of these collections is perhaps a symptom of the continuing recognition or belief that such a project is ultimately untenable. Indeed, New complains that the work of Hodgins “is read widely in Europe and Australia, but often marginalized in Canada as ‘regional’” (20), a statement that indicates the critical movement away from regional studies or ideas of a purely regional literature. Nevertheless, in his analysis of Hodgins, New explains how he is “repeatedly concerned with difference, with the Gulf that literally, geographically, separates his Vancouver Island characters from the British Columbia mainland [but] at the same time . . . emphasizes the ambiguity of the condition that they inhabit” (20). New's words echo Pritchard's 1992 explication of Hodgins. Both identify Hodgins not only as a writer of the British Columbia region, but specifically of Vancouver Island, a region within the region.

Taken together, the writings of the 1990s mark a shift away from deliberate attempts to theorize the literature of British Columbia. Yet, unlike the national writings of the first half of the twentieth century—or at least until 1972 with *Articulating West*—the writings of the 1990s include British Columbia writing in larger ideas of west and of place. Interestingly, New's two works from the 1990s are remarkably similar to his own and John Moss' from the early 1970s. There is something of a movement from using

British Columbia authors and writing as part of a larger thesis, to article-based engagements with British Columbia literature, back to using British Columbia writing in larger projects. The central difference to my mind is that the work of the 1990s is self-conscious in making this shift. I see in New and Ricou continued attempts to identify and explore patterns in British Columbia literature, even though these patterns may inform other projects. These moments are ones where the idea of British Columbia literature is being solidified. Not in a large, comprehensive volume with unifying and essentialist claims, but *in the fragments*. This is the underlying motivation or methodology for my dissertation. I do not *define* the literature of British Columbia per se, but do make deliberate attempts to *theorize* it by identifying and contributing to the continuing evolution of a general understanding of British Columbia writing as represented through a heterogeneous aggregation or accretion of themes, patterns, ideas, constructions and fragments.

One text that played a significant role in the development of my thought with regard to labour, literature and the logging narrative in British Columbia is Ricou's *The Arbutus/Madrone Files: Reading The Pacific Northwest* (2002). As the title suggests, Ricou's work deals with the larger Pacific Northwest region rather than explicitly with British Columbia in isolation. This indicates another shift from studies which examine region through political boundaries, such as provinces, to what Ricou calls the "Arbutus/Madrone region, a region sharing a biogeoclimatic zone, and flora and fauna, and icons of place, yet bisected by an international boundary . . ." (1). Ricou's region follows the coast of the British Columbia mainland, the east coast of Vancouver Island, and the coastline of Washington, Oregon, and California. What these places have in

common is the Arbutus or Madrone evergreen tree—“One species, one shared regional marker, with two names: one Canadian and one American” (1).

Ricou is central to my dissertation because he is the only author, to date, who sets out to deal explicitly with labour and how labour is connected to place. Divided into “files” rather than chapters, Ricou’s book contains “Salmon File,” predictably, about the importance of the salmon. As Ricou remarks, “the salmon story—the story of attachment and quest—happens more times than one file, or book, can contain” (101). Concerning British Columbia authors, Ricou notes that “[o]ne of the Northwest’s two greatest salmon novels is Bertrand W. Sinclair’s entrepreneurial romance *Poor Man’s Rock* (1920)” (101). By making this statement, Ricou not only locates Sinclair’s importance with regard to the salmon narrative, but situates him as a primary figure in British Columbia labour writing. He makes this clear by explaining that “[i]n his concern about prices and the methods of fishing, and the monopolies and breaking of monopolies, Sinclair writes the region whose limits derive from a particular economy” (103). Here, the “limits,” the real, imagined, and constructed boundaries of place, whether historical, geographical, or narrative, are set out in relation to a given economy, and this idea is central to my study. Other authors Ricou examines are Hubert Evans, who in *Mist on the River* (1954) “works into his novel a good deal of documentary material on the process of canning and the contrasting Native methods of preserving the salmon” (105), and Roderick Haig-Brown’s *Return to the River* (1942). Despite the strong presence of the salmon narrative in British Columbia—and this must include Marlatt’s long-poem *Steveston* (1974)—no chapter on salmon fiction appears in my dissertation. The primary reason for this is that I wanted to maintain a sharper focus on an industry in isolation rather than range over ocean fishing,

canning, and river fishing, all under the umbrella of “salmon.” Also, limiting myself to a single chapter on an extraction industry made room for a greater number of possibilities in approaching labour for other chapters. The “fishing chapter” is one which remains to be written.

As I explain in chapter two, there is a critical mass of work that deals explicitly with logging. In the *Arbutus/Madrone Files*, Ricou’s “Woodswords File” is devoted to the language of logging. Ricou’s focus here is primarily on poetry—no surprise given the file’s focus on language. He ranges through the work of poets such as Peter Trower, Robert E. “Bob” Swanton, critics such as Howard White, and novelists such as Martin Allerdale Grainger and Ken Kesey. While Ricou’s file does not offer a detailed explication of logging prose narratives other than Grainger’s *Woodsmen of the West*, it is the appearance of logging in his book that inspired me, in part, to write a chapter on the subject here.

In 2005, W.H. New published “Writing Here.” The article is eclectic and fragmented. At times, it is simply a chronicle, what he refers to as a catalogue, of writers common to the field of British Columbia literature. He begins with a personal anecdote, which spills outward to frame a postmodern discussion of British Columbia writing revolving around the question of what “here” means. In some sense, this article is a return to the questions and ideas of “A Piece of the Continent, A Part of the Main.” An important moment occurs when New declares “I have shifted ground, moving from a record of what has been *happening* ‘here’ to a contemplation of the way in which the strategies of *reading* a set of literary works constructs an implicitly politicized *version* of ‘here,’ whether to acknowledge or dismiss, affirm or ignore, perceive as ‘other’ or claim



in recognition” (18). In other words, the idea of British Columbia is produced through the readings and reading strategies of a given set of works. I see in New’s words both the deconstructionist move of subverting a binary of “center” and “other,” as well as the post-structuralist impulse to identify and decenter the subject of British Columbia literature. He makes the crucial point that a set of literary works, a canon or a theorization of regional literature, is implicitly politicized and thus results in particular consequences. I think what New identifies is essential to understanding the continued reluctance of trying to generate *the* theory of British Columbia literature and why such theorization must happen within projects that do not overtly attempt to do so.

As interest in theorizing British Columbia literature declined in the 1990s and into the twenty-first century, there was an opposite movement in anthologizing work that dealt explicitly with British Columbia. This occurred primarily through the dedication of small presses such as Anvil, New Star, Ronsdale and Polestar. The appearance of these anthologies is possibly indicative of the assumption that a coherent body of British Columbia has been established or that such a project will not occur. Hence, as with the articles of 1990-2005, no explicit attempt is made in these anthologies to theorize British Columbia literature, and often the study of British Columbia occurs within a larger geographical region.<sup>3</sup> In 2008, Christine Lowther and Anita Sinner’s *Writing the West Coast: In Love with Place* appeared, as did Douglas Todd’s *Cascadia: The Elusive Utopia: Exploring the Spirit of the Pacific Northwest*. *Cascadia* falls in line with Ricou’s *Arbutus/Madrone* files by working with the regions and cultures of British Columbia, Washington and Oregon. Interestingly, the book examines this area through something that might be called a secular spirituality—a tacit agreements that “Cascadians . . . like to

say ‘I’m spiritual but not religious’” (Todd 4). Paulo Lemos Horta identifies a tradition of magic realism in “‘The Divine Brushing Against the Natural’: Pacific Northwest Magic Realism,” a tradition he finds in the work of Hodgins, Bill Gaston, and Gail Anderson-Dargatz (in regard to British Columbia). The only intersection with labour occurs in Mark Wexler’s “Conjectures on Workplace Spirituality in Cascadia” in which he sees how “the striving and aspirations of both religion and spirituality, particularly when not enveloped in escapist (or seclusionist) doctrine, must marry the sacred with the instrumental, or work and the workplace with the spiritual” (215). Other collections include that by Gagnon et al., *The Last Best West: An Exploration of Myth, Identity, and Quality of Life in Western Canada* (2009) and Trevor Carolan’s *Making Waves: Reading B.C. and Pacific Northwest Literature* (2010).

None of the attempted theorizations of the literature of British Columbia, the studies which include British Columbia, or the anthologies of British Columbia writing include a comprehensive discussion of labour narratives. Such an absence points to the need for such a study, but these writers must be credited for opening this line of inquiry. Together, by charting a field, by identifying themes, patterns, and relationships, and by identifying possible areas for further research, they serve as an indispensable foundation and resource for my dissertation.

## **Aggregates and Chapters**

In many ways, writing a dissertation is analogous to tasks in the construction industry. Archeologists, novelists, and writers, like builders, begin by digging up the earth,

whether this takes place with grass and soil or in an archive. Writers, like builders, talk of frames, foundations, connections, supports, structures and cohesion. In construction, an aggregate is a mass formed of different materials; more specifically, it means “gravel, sand, slag or the like added to a binding agent to form concrete” (“aggregate”).

Analogously, the idea of an aggregate or an assemblage most clearly approximates my use of theory. On one hand, the theories I use—ranging from those of Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault, to theories of tourism, marketing, and masculinity—are utterly disparate. Yet, together, like so much gravel and sand, they do form a cohesive and resilient whole. They are held together through language, history, place, and most importantly, labour—perhaps the primary “binding agent,” or organizing concept of my dissertation.

Why study labour? One answer is that the existence of British Columbia as a province is directly connected to labour. As a colonial and settler economy and province, British Columbia was created precisely through the processes of labour that facilitated the movement of goods to the British Empire and later to other parts of Canada. John Sutton Lutz suggests that *makúk*, “[f]irst and foremost” meaning “let’s trade,” might “well have been the first word exchanged by Aboriginal and European peoples on North America’s Northwest Coast” (ix). In other words, products of labour were exchanged and the occupation of trader was in play during first contact between Europeans and First Nations in British Columbia; work is the activity and relationship through which the province was viewed, colonized and established. Furthermore, one condition of British Columbia’s entry into confederation was the promise of the Canadian Pacific Railway—an endeavor predicated on the labour of those Chinese, First Nations, European, and other

workers who built it, again to move goods—the products of labour—from one place to another. In many ways, work and labour are inseparable from any conception of British Columbia.

Another answer to the question—why study labour?—comes from the writer who helps inform my understanding of the importance of labour in literature, Tom Wayman. In *Inside Job: Essays on the New Work Writing*, Tom Wayman states that “with regard to the issue of regionalism in Canadian literature [ . . . ] it follows that a literature originating in the working lives of those engaged in the dominant industries of a geographic region probably best captures the essence of that specific place” (70). Like Wayman, I see the labour activities of our lives, the activities that arguably occupy the most time and space in our daily lives, as central to understanding a place and those who live there. Nevertheless, labour narratives, often popular narratives that fall outside categories of “Literature” or “high literature,” are frequently excluded from critical literary discourse. Instead, Wayman suggests,

Critics will refer to an author’s familiarity with Greek or other ancient myths . . . as an illustration of that author’s literary skill. Yet a case can be made that an understanding of such mythology has nothing to do with literary accomplishment. Rather, offering praise for the appearance of these myths in a literary work, at a time when knowledge of such myth has virtually disappeared from public awareness, simply maintains an elitist attitude toward education and imaginative writing. (16)

In more colloquial terms, Howard White, in his “How We Imagine Ourselves,” recounts that while growing up in a logging camp on the British Columbia coast, he developed a “reputation around camp for the way I could skip across a slimy boomstick, but when I looked in the Grade 1 reader my correspondence course provided, the boys and girls there walked on sidewalks; all mention of boomsticks was carefully avoided” (11). White’s response to this feeling of alienation was to “incubate” a “theory of

literature which held that mastery of expression could occur as readily in an upcoast bunkhouse as in an ivory tower in some great city in some past age” (12). What I take from White is that labour narratives are crucial in understanding or trying to make sense of our everyday lives. While I do not go so far as to disregard literary accomplishment simply because a particular work incorporates myth, and I do not adhere to an essentialist theory of regional literature, it is my conviction that British Columbia literature has strong connections to labour and that the study of popular labour narratives of British Columbia has been, to date, marginalized. In conjunction with the fact that no comprehensive study of labour narratives in British Columbia currently exists, it is the critical positions of writers like Wayman and White that inform my work. My dissertation not only offers critical analysis and assessment of particular works and authors, but also resists constructed markers of literary value that exclude the theme of labour.

What do I mean by “labour?” Defining labour narratives by appealing to terms such as “resource,” “extraction,” and “white-collar” implies a limited understanding of labour tied to particular industries and systems of wage-labour and yet these subjects are central in my study. How then do I understand “labour” and differentiate it from “work”? In most respects, I see very little difference between the two, and I use these terms interchangeably. *Labour*, as early as the 11<sup>th</sup> century, was used to mean “hard work” and defined in the 12<sup>th</sup> century as “burden or task.” The Latin etymon *labor* in the 14<sup>th</sup> century was used to indicate “work, toil, industry, task, result or product of work, struggle, hardship, physical pain, distress, pain of childbirth” (“labour” OED). For centuries, then, *work* has been used to define *labour*. As early as the 9<sup>th</sup> century “work”

was defined as any “[a]ction involving effort or exertion directed to a definite end, esp. as a means of gaining one's livelihood; labour, toil; (one's) regular occupation or employment” (“work” OED). Interestingly, *labour* here is used to define *work*. In these early usages, the two terms seem interchangeable.

John Sutton Lutz reminds us that “before the Reformation, work was tied to need, profit was unclean, and merchants were outcasts—un-Christian because of their selfishness” (7). In contrast,

beginning with the Protestants in sixteenth-century Europe . . . peoples' worth has been valued according to their conformity with what Max Weber called the 'Protestant work ethic' [and that] . . . a person's value as a human being was related to his or her willingness to work long hours, to sacrifice leisure, and to pursue wealth beyond her/his basic material needs.  
(7)

The problem for Lutz, among others, is that “Aboriginal cultures, which, culturally and economically valued ‘leisure time’ did not measure up to this European ‘work ethic’” (7).

Lutz further explains that “to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europeans, labour was the source of all value and provided the right to ownership” (6). This conception of labour derived from the philosophy of John Locke, who states “‘Whatsoever, then, he removes out of a state of that nature hath provided and left it in, he hath mixed his labour with . . . [he] thereby makes it his property’” (qtd. in Lutz 6). There is a direct link here between labour, ownership, and property—a relationship whereby labour in colonial British Columbia is connected directly to property ownership and thus colonization. In other words, the Lockean conception of labour is linked to the dispossession and displacement of Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia through the exercise of labour and the resulting ideas of property and land ownership. The problem, of course, is that for European settlers, the “fishing, hunting, gathering, building, and even farming that

Aboriginal Peoples did was not labour—at least not in a way that met the definition of classical economics” (6-7). If these definitions of labour did align, the pretext for dispossession would, in part, collapse.

It is not only Aboriginal Peoples who are excluded from such conceptions of labour. Many types of intellectual labour, such as teaching and writing, also fall outside of this definition—and also outside of wage-labour. Domestic and reproductive labours too, seem to be marginalized. Hence, while I retain the basic conception of labour as wage-labour and occupation, I also retain the original understanding of labour as “work, toil, industry, task, result or product of work, struggle, hardship, physical pain, distress, pain of childbirth” (“labour” OED). This more open definition allows me to consider the industrial or resource sector wage-labourer, unpaid domestic labour, and authorship—all as forms of labour and work.

Central to my understanding of labour is the concept of it as a social relationship. That is, in many ways, this project has little to say about the subject and activity of labour or work in isolation. Rather, in conjunction with labour as toil, struggle, task, and product of work, is my understanding of it as related to a series of shifting, heterogeneous, often contingent, social relationships between individuals, groups, and cultures. In some instances this definition of labour invokes the Marxist conceptions of labour, labour power and abstract labour where it is “only through the exchange of commodities that the private labour which produced them is rendered social” (“abstract labour” 1). At other times, I simply refer to social activities that occur in the labour environment. In chapter two, where I discuss representations of logging, not much is learned about the activity of logging itself. Instead, and more importantly in my mind, my texts explore the

relationships that the work of logging brings into play. Similarly, in chapter three it is not the activities of pruning and growing fruit bearing trees that writers examine, but how the labour of agriculture is involved in larger discourses or ideas of place-identity, nationalism, and tourism. Both chapter four and five function the same way. As a result, themes or motifs of employee/employer relationships, employee/employee relationships, male bonding, work conditions, discourses of masculinity, female oppression, domestic labour, and emerging environmentalism operate in the foreground of the texts I study. Work and labour are inseparable from larger social, cultural, historical, economic, political, and personal discourses, interactions and relationships, and it is these discourses that produce the “groundwork” of my study.

Another central element in my theoretical aggregate is the field of masculinity studies. Masculinity plays the most important role in chapter two, yet it also underpins the vision of agriculture I see Rhenisch as advocating in chapter three—in particular, one which involves the subordination of women. While I do not explicitly take up the conception of masculinity in chapter four, it is evident that ideas of masculinity inform the family dynamic in Jen Sookfong Lee’s *the end of east*, the relationships of Amory Scann in Robert Harlow’s *Scann*, and character interactions in Douglas Coupland’s *JPod*. It is also clear that certain forms of masculinity and its connection with history inform Marlatt’s novel *Ana Historic*. In using *Ana Historic* to analyze the work of chapters two through four then, the constructed nature of masculinity again becomes significant.

Some of the foremost and oft-cited work in masculinity studies includes that by Michael Kimmel, Harry Brod, and R.W. Connell, with one of the most anthologized



works being “Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity” by Tim Carrigan, Bob Connell, and John Lee.<sup>4</sup> Important in Carrigan et al. is the idea that

The gay movement’s theoretical work, by comparison with the ‘sex-role’ literature and ‘men’s movement’ writings, had a much clearer understanding of the reality of men’s power over women, and it had direct implications for any consideration of the hierarchy of power among men. (109)

What

emerges from this line of argument is the very important concept of hegemonic masculinity, not as ‘the male role,’ but as a particular variety of masculinity to which others—among them young and effeminate as well as homosexual men—are subordinated. It is particular groups of men, not men in general, who are oppressed within patriarchal sexual relations, and whose situations are related in different ways to the overall logic of subordination of women to men. (110)

The work of Carrigan et al. in defining hegemonic masculinity is central to my understanding of it. Both passages clarify the ideas of hierarchical and multiple masculinities, and identify particular groups that can be subordinated to others—ideas implicit in my discussions of the subject throughout my dissertation. In her introduction to *Masculinity Studies and Feminist Theory: New Directions*, Judith Kegan Gardiner explains that one consensus (among others) of “feminist-inflected masculinity studies” is that “masculinity is not monolithic, not one static thing, but the confluence of multiple processes and relationships with variable results for differing individuals, groups, institutions, and societies” (11). She qualifies this statement by pointing out that “dominant or hegemonic forms of masculinity work constantly to maintain an appearance of permanence, stability, and naturalness” (11). Gardiner’s remarks about “multiple processes and relationships” point to the consensus that, as a gender, masculinity is constructed.

Rather than outline and excavate a comprehensive theory of masculinity studies beginning with the sex-gender systems of Gayle Rubin—which are later taken up by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and connect to writers like Kimmel, Connell, and Carrigan et al.—I have instead drawn on writers such as Gordon Hak, Steven Maynard, and Christopher E. Forth in my work (in chapter two in particular). It is they who employ theorists such as Connell and Kimmel to apply the theory of masculinity studies *in practice*. In the case of Hak and Maynard, this means to logging camps and in the case of Forth, this means to the west—areas indispensable to this dissertation.<sup>5</sup> The understanding of masculinity, its constructedness, and its hegemonic forms, articulated by writers like Carrigan et al, Gardiner, Hak, Maynard, and Forth, operate in the background of chapters two through five even when I do not explicitly engage with the theory.

Chapter two, immediately following the introduction, can be separated into two sections. The first examines Bertrand Sinclair's *The Inverted Pyramid*. As I will explain in the chapter, Bourdieu's theory of fields operates as a basic framing device. In accordance with Bourdieu, the first step is to understand and map out the field-structure of the novel. Like Bourdieu, I see the analysis of this structure as the beginning of understanding. While the concept of the *Bildungsroman* supports my use of Bourdieu's theory, its role is secondary. Also important in chapter two is Bourdieu's conception of habitus, loosely defined as "the acquirements, the embodied, assimilated properties, such as elegance, ease of manner, beauty and so forth, and capital as such, that is, the inherited assets which define the possibilities inherent in the field" (150). The overarching argument here is that Rod Norquay, Sinclair's protagonist, disavows his habitus. Moving from an analysis of structure to meaning derived from this structure, it becomes clear that

Sinclair uses Rod as a fulcrum to depart from an exacting naturalist mode of realism (depicting the world in as “natural” a manner as possible) to develop critiques of the capitalist objectification of the body as well as particular constructions of hegemonic masculinity. Further, Sinclair represents, perhaps prefigures, a moment of environmental conservationism and imagines an economic model of cooperation, ethics, and responsibility that counters the basic premises of capitalism.

In the second section of chapter two I examine *On the Highest Hill* and *Timber* by Roderick Haig-Brown. Here, I rely on close analysis in conjunction with historical information to read Haig-Brown’s novels as detailing particular aspects of the logging industry and history that have traditionally been ignored. Two such moments I examine are representations of injury and death in the forest economy of British Columbia, and the narrative of the work-camp men who built many of Canada’s national parks and infrastructure from 1915 to 1946. My chapter then draws on ecocriticism and the work of Lawrence Buell in *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (1995), to read the novels of Haig-Brown as environmental texts that present labour as a means through which environmental knowledge is transmitted. Following the work of Buell, I suggest that the realism of Haig-Brown is a political approach to language that attempts to evoke the so-called natural world and thereby to use language as a catalyst for a deeper knowledge of and relationship to this world. Because Haig-Brown’s two novels represent, in detail, the resource extraction industry of logging, it becomes evident that he is attempting to deconstruct the binary between environmentalist and resource industry labourer. Finally, I read Haig-Brown as revising ideas about the construction of a hetero-normative

conception of gender in the male-dominated logging world through the close relationship of Johnny and Alec. In doing so he opens up the possibility of their homosexual relationship and thereby critiques the normative construction of gender that dominates life in the logging camp.

In chapter three I shift from Sinclair and Haig-Brown's novels to an analysis of three creative non-fiction texts by Harold Rhenisch: *Out of the Interior: The Lost Country*, *Tom Thomson's Shack*, and *The Wolves at Evelyn: Journeys Through a Dark Century*. For my study of Rhenisch, I use Foucault's discourse-centered concepts of archive and archaeology in conjunction with the autobiography theory of Paul Eakin. The impetus behind my transition to discourse as a framework for this chapter is that it is particular forms of discourse that Rhenisch deliberately deploys in attempting to map out or formalize a rural, agricultural (primarily orcharding) identity for the Interior British Columbia region. Furthermore, the work of Foucault in bringing together discrepant discourses about a particular object, in using complementary and contradictory discourses to constitute an archive, allows me to move beyond a study of the novel to include such discourses as advertising, tourism, autobiography, fiction, and non-fiction. In other words, my use of Foucault allows me to bring together a wide range of discourses to challenge and disrupt rigid ideas about "literature."

The contradiction between discourses of colonialism, tourism, and settlement on one hand and local experiences on the other is where the work of Rhenisch is located. His one-time home in the Interior of British Columbia is characterized by the tension between European settlement and the colonization of land already occupied by First Nations. Problematically, Rhenisch seems to present the agricultural society of the Interior as an

original (or first) society, while also being quite clear about the fact that this society is involved in land occupation through colonialism. In short, the work of Rhenisch occupies a multi-leveled site of tension and contradiction through which he presents his arguments.

Keeping his contradictions in mind, I read Rhenisch as opposing the marginalization of rural, agricultural Interior identities by the allegorical national discourses of people such as Peter Gzowski and Margaret Atwood. I follow this reading by juxtaposing tourism discourse with the personal, relational discourse of Rhenisch. I maintain that the personal discourse of Rhenisch contests the official, impersonal or generic tourism discourse by foregrounding the life-stories of those who live in the region. Finally, I understand Rhenisch as creating a place-based identity which, though flawed in many ways, is rooted in an insider world connected to experiences of self and family, as well as to a shared set of experiences and histories.

In chapter four I begin with *white collar labour* as a phrase used to describe non-manual occupations in a stratified labour force. In part, I move from resource-driven narratives of logging and agriculture to so-called *white collar labour* in order to resist the stereotypical perception of the British Columbia economy as entirely resource dependant. To this end, I examine *JPod* by Douglas Coupland, *Scann* by Robert Harlow, and *the end of east* by Jen Sookfong Lee. In *JPod*, I briefly return to the field structure of Bourdieu to deal with conditions of dominance and subordination in the video-game technology industry that Coupland represents. Specifically, I explore the ways in which Coupland's characters resist the oppressive conditions in the workplace which leave them with no sense of agency or self. One of the issues that emerges here is the question of whether or not, or to what extent, the characters are able to achieve a useful or actual

degree of agency. Is their agency simply symptomatic of the capitalist system they are trying to resist?

*Scann* is also deeply concerned with agency and authorship. In part, I use an autobiographical reading of the text to interpret Amory Scann as powerless, or at least self-perceived as powerless, in his editorial position at the *Linden Chronicle*. As a result, he drives himself forward as an author of fiction—a position he identifies with freedom and mobility. My analysis of *Scann* also reveals a connection between Scann's so-called white collar occupations of editor and author with the patriarchal subjugation of the women in his life. In many ways, Scann's desire for control and authorship over *story*, over his narrative, is played out in his attempts to *author* the women around him and can be read as a metaphor for a patriarchal understanding of history.

I close chapter four with an analysis of *the end of east*. This novel makes it clear that the label *white collar labour* fails to deal adequately with the subtleties and complexities of the role that race, gender, and class play in a stratified labour force. In other words, while families such as the Chan family in Lee's novel enjoy a degree of privilege by owning a barber shop, and later going into the accounting business, this privilege must always contend with oppressive, racialized labour structures. The implicit critique Lee's novel makes of *white collar* operates in the background of this section. My primary argument involves the role that labour plays in the family and in familial relationships. In particular, I suggest that labour practices can be directed toward freedom, intimacy between fathers and sons, and power and control within a family. Alternatively, the burdens of unpaid domestic labour and child-rearing women can result in pressures that lead to instability, psychological trauma, and breakdown.

I conclude by positioning Daphne Marlatt's *Ana Historic* as a form of literary criticism through which the texts of chapters two through four can be reevaluated and critiqued. In some ways, the linear structures and history of books like *The Inverted Pyramid*, *Out of the Interior*, and *Scann*, make the fragmented, postmodern narrative of *Ana Historic* both possible and necessary. In other words, Marlatt is "writing back" to the male-dominant labour narrative. In regard to chapters two and three, I use *Ana Historic* to explore how the novels in question are implicated in patriarchal conceptions of history and how these conceptions are linked to histories where the stories of women are absent—a situation Marlatt is explicitly critiquing. The more the texts I study move away from representations of resource extraction labour, (as they do in chapter four), the less *Ana Historic* has to say about them. Nevertheless, Marlatt offers a productive approach to Amory Scann's desire to write a male-dominated historical novel as well as to his overt sexism. In contrast, *the end of east* is both the least relevant and the most relevant with regard to *Ana Historic*. As a narrative primarily about the lives of women in the Chan family, the novel is explicitly engaged in telling the stories of women—a project Marlatt's protagonist, Annie, is also involved in. Like Marlatt, Lee is committed to filling in the "holes" and putting together the "fragments" of a history.

## **Paths Not Travelled**

I began this introduction by quoting from Bowering's *B.C.: A Swashbuckling History* because his words allowed me to introduce the subject of fragments and holes in any narrative, whether in a historical text, a novel, or a doctoral dissertation. As with other

writers, my biggest regret in writing my dissertation is the fact that many fragments, sometimes important ones, have been left out. There are, for example, many authors who have written in and about British Columbia, who are notably absent from my dissertation. Among these are George Bowering, Ethel Wilson, Jack Hodgins, Margaret Laurence, Malcolm Lowry, and Irene Baird. If such a thing as a national census on British Columbia authors existed, likely these names would top the list. It is possible that these names would be the only names on such a list. Certainly, they do, at times, represent labour. Bowering's *Shoot!* explores the inability of the mixed race McLean sons to obtain work against a backdrop of farming, ranching, and racism. Wilson's *Swamp Angel* prefigures the tourist economy through Maggie's work at an interior fishing lodge, which represents her liberation from unpaid domestic labour. Hodgins represents the clearing of land to begin a community in *Broken Ground*, and Margaret Laurence demonstrates the impact that a husband's vocation can have on his isolated and over-burdened wife. Industry or demonic conceptions of labour-machinery sometimes operate in the background of Lowry's work, and Irene Baird wrote the classic labour novel, *Waste Heritage*, of 1930s Depression-era Vancouver. With the exception of Baird, none of these authors has gone to great pains to detail a particular industry or aspect of work. The primary reason I did not include these authors is precisely because of their expected appearance on my imaginary census. By focusing on an analysis of lesser-known British Columbia authors, I am committing myself to broadening the understanding and knowledge of these authors and of British Columbia prose literature.

I have also limited myself to prose writing. Poetry in British Columbia often deals with the subject of labour. There are poems about logging, fishing, mill-work, cannery



work and so forth. One of the most exciting and canonical works in British Columbia poetry, if not Canadian poetry, is Daphne Marlatt's long poem *Steveston*, complemented by the photography of Robert Minden. Yet, long poems aside, it is the prose literature of British Columbia that offers both a sustained, detailed study of labour and a sufficient body of work for analysis; consequently, it currently represents the most productive subject for study. Yet, my analysis of prose literature does open up line of inquiry into the intersection of labour, poetry, and prose—in other words, a “chapter” I still wish to explore.

There are also many other chapters that still need to be written. As I consider the reasons for not writing a chapter about fishing, for example, they now seem to be reasons *for* writing such a chapter. Initially, I avoided this subject because there was not enough written about it in prose. What has been written is fragmented into cannery work, river fishing, and ocean fishing. Where I once saw this formation as precluding a thorough examination of a given industry, I now see more possibility, interest, and value in analyzing how these three themes work together and against one another. What does one aspect of the industry have to say about another? How do representations of the surrounding population and society differ from or complement each other?

Like fishing, ranching is a notable absence and a chapter that I still wish to write. Such a chapter would certainly have expanded the geographical reach of my study to the Cariboo and Chilcotin ranch land. Apart from brief mentions or background settings, the detailed workings of ranch life is a theme seldom dealt with in novel form. As I read through the literature of the province, two things occurred. One is that the distinction I had been making between fiction and non-fiction began to collapse, particularly as I

worked through the creative non-fiction of Harold Rhenisch and Daphne Marlatt's novel *Ana Historic*. The second thing is that I began to read ranching memoirs. Two in particular stand out: Bob White's *Bannock and Beans: A Cowboy's Account of the Bedaux Expedition* (2009) and Richmond P. Hobson Jr.'s *Grass Beyond the Mountains* (1951). The former is unparalleled for its portrayal of the gritty reality of the work involved in the life of a cowboy. The latter is unequalled in its depiction of establishing a cattle ranch on the "last great cattle front" (35)—a statement that functions in the text as a complement to imagery of "discovery" in Hobson's journey into the "blank space" (49) at the centre of the map. A British Columbia *Heart of Darkness* of sorts, *Grass Beyond the Mountains* is an excellent study of both ranch-style land settlement and how this settlement operates within a colonial ideology and set of practices. The genre of the ranch memoir is, like fishing, a subject worth further pursuit and study, and one I hope to return to.

Even less represented than fishing and ranching is mining. There is the virtually unknown book called *The Leases of Death* published under the name M.B. Gaunt, a pseudonym for Richard (Dick) Edward Horsfield, but it is more of a murder mystery than a book about mining. Likely, and similar to ranching, mining appears most prominently in journals and memoirs such as Irene Howard's *Gold Dust on My Shirt* (2008).

Aside from a lack of primary material, the most significant objection to writing a chapter each on fishing, ranching, and mining, is that the dissertation would become one about resource-based narratives only. A more wide-ranging picture of labour is, I believe, most productive and historically accurate. By beginning with logging, moving on to agriculture, and finally to white collar labour, I examine a cross-section of possible

labour narratives in British Columbia and focus on those areas with the requisite critical mass of material. By structuring my dissertation in this way, I am able to open up the definition of labour to include activities such as writing and domestic labour on one hand as well as critique the dominant, patriarchal, racialized labour narrative—and thereby lay the foundation for a comparative analysis of dominant with marginalized but emerging narratives—on the other.

Significantly, a more flexible definition of labour allows for other possible labour narratives, for identifying alternate—possibly hybrid—methods of organizing a study of labour representations in British Columbia, and for envisioning other chapters to write. One such chapter might address representations of women's labour in British Columbia. Such a chapter would move beyond the largely segmented, industry style thesis here, not only to focus on the role of farm women, but to follow feminist thought on recovering the emotional, domestic, and care-giving or reproductive labour narratives of women. Possible texts might include Muriel Wylie Blanchet's *The Curve of Time*, and the work of Sheila Watson, Gail Anderson-Dargatz, Audrey Thomas and Jeannette Armstrong. Another possible direction for further study would be to look at narratives that represent the labour of clearing the land or the labour of building a small community. Here the writing of Eric Collier, Robert Harlow, and Jack Hodgins would be compelling. More broadly defined, a study of labour might include the political labours of black Canadians as represented by Bill Gallaher in *A Man Called Moses: The Curious Life of Wellington Delaney Moses* and the work of Wade Compton.

The most important omission from this dissertation is not fishing, mining, or domestic labour, however, but representations of First Nations labourers. Again, this is in

part due to a lack of material. Other than Henry Pennier's '*Call Me Hank*': *A Stó:lō Man's Reflections on Logging, Living, and Growing Old*, there simply isn't much writing on the subject—though the female protagonist of Jeannette Armstrong's *Whispering in Shadows* ranges through many jobs in the course of the narrative, and the background of Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach* could be viewed through the lens of labour. Texts such as George Bowering's *Shoot!* and Emily Carr's *Klee Wyck* also represent First Nations peoples, but aside from brief mentions in *Shoot!*, neither text focuses on labour.

In the opening of Morley Roberts' *The Prey of the Strongest*, the reader is introduced to words that may be unfamiliar. His description of the work being done in the province includes the words "*pannikin*," "*tilikum*," and "*cultus*" (vi-vii)—examples of Chinook "jargon" or *wawa*, a trade and labour language that functioned primarily between Aboriginal Peoples and immigrants.<sup>6</sup> His use of *wawa* implies something of a partnership or ongoing relationship with Aboriginal People. In fact, the novel centers around life and work at George Quin's mill (*Stick Moola*) where labourers of many backgrounds work together. As the narrator explains, the mill "used the lives and muscles of high-toned High Binders from Kowloon and the back parts of Canton, and hidalgos from Spain with knives about them . . . to say nothing of the Letts, Lapps and Finns and our tilikums the Indians from the Coast" (Roberts 40).<sup>7</sup> Racial stereotypes and prejudices freely circulate in this novel, and it is clear that White people are free to exert power over Aboriginal Peoples under and outside of the law. The presence of Aboriginal mill labourers (not to mention Chinese workers) in the work of Roberts is nevertheless unique. Such a representation is unique because this presence virtually disappears in later logging narratives. In fact, the use of *wawa* seems to disappear or is not represented in a form

recognizable as *wawa* until the publication of Lee Henderson's *The Man Game* (2009). The central logging narratives I analyze in chapter two, Bertrand Sinclair's *The Inverted Pyramid* as well as Roderick Haig-Brown's *Timber* and *On the Highest Hill*, make little if any attempt to portray Aboriginal Peoples. While not an issue I take up directly in the body of my study, the question that haunts my examination of the dominant labour narrative is: What happens to First Nations workers in the logging industry?

First Nations were, and continue to be, employed in the forestry industry—and in virtually every form of work in British Columbia. Rolf Knight, in *Indians at Work: An Informal History of Native Labour in British Columbia 1858-1930* (1978; 1996), writes about the misconceived view “that with the passing of the buffalo, or the sea otter, and with the coming of the steam engine, native Indian peoples were shuffled off into some form of reserve dependence” (5). Instead, “[i]ndependent Indian loggers were delivering logs to early coastal sawmills by 1856” (15), and by “1910 members of at least 50 bands in BC were engaged in logging and sawmilling” (15). The much later work of John Sutton Lutz agrees with that by Knight. Lutz writes that, “in the 1860s and 1870s, Aboriginal People made up a significant part of the logging crews, constituted most of the sawmill labour, and numerically dominated the longshoremen and longshorewomen who loaded the timber onto the ships” (185). It is no surprise that Roberts' *The Prey of the Strongest*, in 1906, represents this demographic. Yet, Lutz notes that “John Pritchard, who studied the economy of the Haisla, found that their logging practices peaked by 1924, although they were also logging during the Second World War and the immediate postwar period” (215). While information is scarce, and census data often unreliable, both the decennial census and Harry Hawthorn's 1954 “survey of aboriginal occupations”

suggest “a relative increase in the importance of the forest industry between 1931 and 1961” (215). Furthermore, Lutz explains that Amy O’Neill’s interview of Stó:lō loggers, “found that, in the last half of the twentieth century, logging was a key source of livelihood for Aboriginal People in the Fraser Valley and a source of pride and identity for many Stó:lō men” (215). Despite the paucity of material and the unreliability of census data, it is absolutely clear that First Nations were involved in the logging industry throughout the time period represented by the novels of Sinclair and Haig-Brown studied here.

In *White Civility: The Literary Project of English Canada* (2006), Daniel Coleman begins by recounting Himani Bannerji’s short story “The Other Family.” In the story, a young South Asian girl draws a picture of her family where her mother has blond hair and blue eyes, and her family all have white skin. Queried about her drawing, the girl answers that she drew it from a book. The point Coleman makes is that the anecdote “identifies books and the imaginative worlds they present as important means by which the pedagogy of White normativity is purveyed, and second, it demonstrates how the privilege of the norm operates paradoxically as being so obvious that it remains unexamined” (3). Hence, while I am reluctant to deal with such a contentious issue as authorial responsibility as it intersects with historical accuracy in fiction writing, it is nevertheless clear that the narratives of *The Inverted Pyramid*, *On the Highest Hill*, and *Timber*, function in a manner similar to the storybook upon which the young South Asian girl bases her drawing. Thematically, the logging novel is, at least to some degree, an imagined world “by which the pedagogy of White normativity is purveyed.”

Why this is the case is a complex and troubling question. Drawing on A.J.M. Smith's "Nationalism and Canadian Poetry," Coleman describes how,

by envisioning Canada as a crucible in which overindulged British civility could be smelted and refined, Canadian imperialists imagined that, having proven its strength of purpose through overcoming the adversities of life in the northern frontier, the Canadian character would be able to benefit from Canada's apparently unlimited supply of natural resources in such a way that it would gradually overtake England as the new centre of empire. (26)

If, in the "smelter" of the logging industry narrative, First Nations and other non-white minority peoples were represented, such inclusion would undermine the claim of British or White society to national and racial superiority. In other words, if the White British character is not unique in withstanding and surviving the "rigours of life in a stern, unaccommodating climate [which] demanded strength of body, character, and mind . . ." (Coleman 24), then the whole artificial construction falls apart. I wouldn't go so far as to label Sinclair and Haig-Brown as instrumental to this process or as deliberately involved in its construction, but rather their work certainly participates in a larger culture and discourse that are patterned on such a construction. As representations of a given culture at a given time, these books fit this cultural pattern of omitting First Nations figures from the historical narrative.

This cultural pattern is partly why Sinclair represents First Nations populations as entities from the past—as people who have been conquered by families such as the Norquays and can only be narrated in this context. Such a narrative, as purveyor and pedagogy of white normativity, "allowed settlers to fantasize that the disappearance of Aboriginal peoples was an inevitability" (Coleman 29). In another context, Coleman explains this idea through the concept of racialized time which "equated whiteness with modernity and the administration of industrial development and non-whiteness with pre-

modern backwardness and manual labour (30). Significantly, “the simple sequence of racialized time meant that it was impossible to weave First Nations culture into the progressive narrative of Canadian development” (30). In both Sinclair and Haig-Brown, the narratives are represented in terms of progress and industrial development as the characters pass through various stages of the logging industry over time. In this sense, their narratives reflect Coleman’s concept of racialized time. Again, their books are part of a cultural pattern that cannot admit dynamic, central First Nations characters without undermining the blatantly mythological or artificial construction of a progressive, White, labour narrative.

As is the case with logging, First Nations populations are actively engaged in agriculture. Knight explains that “Indian farming in viable areas in BC initially evolved independently of both mission and government direction and in a number of regions developed into sophisticated mixed farming” (11). Furthermore, “[b]y the late 1890s Indian farms in some locales were comparable to white-owned farms in those regions, with a full complement of barns, houses, tools, and livestock” (11-12). Lutz declares that “[d]espite the characterization of BC Aboriginal People as non-agricultural, at the beginning of the century and between 1910 and 1926 this sector supplied more income to BC Indians than any other” (210). Indeed, “it remained, even in 1961, the third largest source of income after fishing and forestry” (210).

In his representation of the orchard and agriculture industry of the Interior, Harold Rhenisch makes it clear that the land occupied by European immigrants such as himself is land that was colonized, and that it is land that belonged—or is still in ownership disputes—to various First Nations. One of his characterizations of the Interior is that of



the First Nations trickster, Coyote. Nevertheless, Rhenisch does not go to great lengths to represent First Nations farms, orchards, wineries, or agricultural activities. Rather, he is focused on his own German heritage and how it plays out in the Interior. Yet, the agrarian discourse he puts forward in creating a place-identity for the Interior, and as a counter-discourse to that of tourism, is problematic. In some ways, the discourse of Rhenisch makes claims toward being indigenous, and his work cannot be read as innocent of marginalizing First Nations concerns. Coleman is again productive in explaining this point:

the settler must construct, by a double process of speedy indigenization and accelerated self-civilization, his priority and superiority to latecomers; that is, by representing himself as already indigenous, the settler claims priority over newer immigrants and, by representing himself as already civilized, he claims superiority to Aboriginals and other non-Whites. (16)

In Sinclair, Haig-Brown, and Rhenisch, this position is legitimized. Concerning logging, it is the historical narrative of building a nation, of being the first generation of labourers in a new-found country, that makes a claim toward being indigenous. In Rhenisch, it is the idea of being the first agricultural society. In both cases, the discourse of indigeneity locates the loggers and farmers as superior to new immigrants (and thus “more authentic”), as well as to First Nations and other non-Whites, who are either historically located, dying out, or incapable of enduring harsh labour conditions—conclusions that seem as absurd now as they were then.

Implicit in the idea of Canada, and thus British Columbia, as a smelter in which people could be hardened is the construction of a hegemonic-masculinity predicated on surviving the challenging conditions, on being the rough, hardened, male character and body. In some ways, discourses of racial superiority are interconnected with constructions of masculinity that subordinated racially constructed masculinities. In other

words, if First Nations men are constructed as being unable to endure the conditions meant to smelt British men, then First Nations masculinity necessarily precluded the qualities British men supposedly held that made them superior. Ironically, when viewed through the lens of capitalism, the supposed hyper-masculinity of men in the logging industry worked much to their own detriment. Not possessing any inherent hyperbolic “masculine” quality, these men, while enjoying the privilege of work and higher wages than non-Whites, were also forced to work in dangerous conditions. Furthermore, as studies such as Megan J. Davies’ “Old Age in British Columbia: The Case of the ‘Lonesome Prospector’” show, men in resource industries were likely to be marked by “poverty and ill health rather than freedom and independence” (42).

Like studies of those narratives that focus on mining, ranching, fishing, land development, domestic labour, and First Nations labour practices, the connection between race, capitalism, and masculinity in resource narratives of British Columbia remains yet another fragment to be written. Such a study might depend on moving beyond prose literature and creative non-fiction to include oral literature, journal writing, and memoir. Ideally, my work here represents an opening up of British Columbia literary studies rather than a shutting down. Rather than a definitive account of labour narratives of British Columbia, I hope this dissertation serves as a catalyst for further articles, chapters, and fragments to come.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Hence my title, borrowed from Jean Barman's history of British Columbia *The West Beyond the West*.

<sup>2</sup> Of course, it is possible that this lack may be a problem of copyright or permissions.

<sup>3</sup> Also important here are anthologies of B.C. literature. Volumes such as David Stouck and Myler Wilkinson's *West by Northwest: British Columbia Short Stories* (1998) and *Genius of Place: Writing About British Columbia* (2000) have become classics in the field. Nowhere else is there such a range of writing about the province. *Where West by North West* deals with First Nations myths and legends as well as short stories, *Genius of Place* is primarily non-fiction and moves from journal excerpts of early explorers to accounts of the protest at Clayoquot Sound. More recent anthologies, such as Daniel Francis' *Imagining British Columbia: Land Memory and Place* (2008) continue the tradition.

<sup>4</sup> Originally published in *Theory and Society* 5.14 (1985), and subsequently in Harry Brod's *The Making of Masculinities: The New Men's Studies* (1987). The text I use is from *The Masculinity Studies Reader* (2002), by Rachel Adams and David Savran.

<sup>5</sup> Nancy Quam-Wickham's "Rereading Man's Conquest of Nature: Skill, Myths, and the Historical Construction of Masculinity in Western Extractive Industries" offers a productive introduction to the subject, yet I have favored writers such as Hak and Maynard for their focus on logging and found them more directly applicable to the arguments I make here.

<sup>6</sup> "Pannikin": small metal pan or cup; "tillicum": according to Parkin's *WetCoast Words*, "Chinook jargon for 'relatives, people, or friend'" ("tillicum" 142); Lang, in *Making Wawa*, translates tilicum as "man or people" but also includes Alexander Ross' "tilloch-cum" to mean Indians" ("tilikum" 157). Ross' work is one of the two "first surviving systematic lists of Chinookan" dating from the early nineteenth century (Lang 56). Parkin defines "cultus" as "the word for 'worthless, bad, defective, impolite, stinking, and dirty'"

among “two dozen other Chinook meanings” ( “cultus” 42). Lang defines “cultus” as “common, nothing” and cites Ross’ meaning as “idle talk” ( “cultus” 152).

<sup>7</sup> Highbinder can mean ruffian or assassin; hidalgo a Spanish gentlemen; Letts, people from Latvia; Lapps, people from Lapland; and Finns, people from Finland (Oxford English Dictionary).

## 2. Literary Representations of the Logging Industry: The Novels of Bertrand Sinclair and Roderick Haig-Brown

In British Columbia writing the logger combines antitheses that make Marvell's ambiguities seem mild: he is at once the hero and villain. He is the hero, whether viewed in Marxist or other economic terms as the worker whose hard, skilled, and dangerous labour has long been the foundation of the coastal economy, or seen from the more romantic perspective of well established folk traditions; but he is also the destroyer of nature and the producer of devastation on a scale that reduces Marvell's mower to insignificance.

- Allan Pritchard, "West of the Great Divide: Man and Nature in the Literature of British Columbia," 1984, 44.

One of the earliest novels set and written in British Columbia is Martin Allerdale Grainger's *Woodsmen of the West*, published in 1908. Significantly, the publication and critical reception of this novel mark the beginning of fictionalizing one of the most represented and academically ignored themes present in the novels that have been written about British Columbia: that of the logging industry. Most recognized among this little-known group of texts are Morely Roberts' *The Prey of the Strongest* (1906), George Godwin's *The Eternal Forest* (as early as 1914; 1929), Bus Griffiths' *Now Your Logging* (1978), Peter Trower's *Grogan's Cafe* (1993), *Dead Man's Ticket* (1996), and *The Judas*

*Hills* (2000), and to a lesser extent Jack Hodgins' *Broken Ground* (1998). Also important are Brian Fawcett's autobiographical *Virtual Clearcut or, The Way Things are in My Hometown* (2003) and John Vaillant's non-fictional *The Golden Spruce* (2005). In some ways, the two authors I have omitted from this list are the most central. Bertrand Sinclair wrote *Big Timber: A Story of the Northwest* (1916), *The Hidden Places* (1922) and *The Inverted Pyramid* (1924), while Roderick Haig-Brown wrote *Timber* (1942) and *On The Highest Hill* (1949). Taken together, these books demonstrate a growing mass of logging narratives in British Columbia writing. Indeed, it is a representation that has flourished in British Columbia. One possible reason for this is the centrality of forests and logging to the province. According to Roderick Haig-Brown in *The Living Land*, "In 1900 the sawmills produced just over a quarter of a billion board feet. By 1910 the annual cut passed a billion feet; by 1920, two billion; by 1928, three billion." In other words, "[l]umber had replaced fur, gold and base metals as the mainstay of the province" (16). Economically, politically, and environmentally, the forests of British Columbia are a ubiquitous presence, a touchstone of both public and academic discourse. As such, it is both logical and productive for writers to explore the forest economy and culture. Chronologically, both in date of publication and in historical scope, the novels written by Haig-Brown follow from that of Sinclair. Further, where Sinclair writes from the top-down perspective of the upper-class Norquay family, Haig-Brown writes from the point of view of the blue-collar labourer. Thus these novels form counterparts to one another, and I have maintained their chronological order in structuring this chapter.

With regard to patterns in British Columbia literature, critics like James Doyle list Bertrand Sinclair as one of the "three notable Canadian writers [who] emerged in the

[Ralph] Connor-Kipling-London tradition to expound fictional critiques of modern capitalism” in “the first two decades of the twentieth century” (39). Consequently, the publication of *The Inverted Pyramid* in 1924 can be seen as a precursor to the currents of socialism and Marxism that have been traced through Canadian writers such as Dorothy Livesay, Irene Baird, and Frederick Philip Grove.<sup>1</sup>

Charles Lillard, in “The Past Rising From our Midst,” ties Sinclair to a tradition of landscape writing in British Columbia from Hubert Evans to Dick (Richard) Horsfield (M.B. Gaunt), to Frederick Niven and Morely Roberts. Speculatively, Sinclair may even be the direct, person-to-person connection between the Roberts/Niven relationship and the Evans/Horsfield relationship. According to Lillard, Evans and Horsfield knew Sinclair, and Sinclair “likely . . . had know Niven” (14). Hence, Lillard states that “From Roberts it [tradition] can be traced through Sinclair, Niven, Horsfield, and to O’Hagan’s *Tay John*” (20), and, as a landscape tradition, it can then be followed through Evans to Ethel Wilson, Sheila Watson, and Robert Harlow. Furthermore, it seems strange to think that Sinclair, who lived from 1881 to 1972, and Roderick Haig-Brown, who lived from 1908 to 1976, did not know one another, or at the very least know of each other’s work considering their overlapping careers.

First-hand knowledge of other writers neither constitutes a tradition in and of itself, nor is it necessary. Certainly both Sinclair and Haig-Brown had a separate yet common interest in both the logging and the fishing industries. Anthony Robertson, in *Above Tide*, describes Haig-Brown’s early interest in fishing and how he adopted “the discipline of the sportsman’s ethic” (7) from his mentor, Major Greenville. In *A River Never Sleeps*, Haig-Brown relates how he had to “know everything—the identity of the

birds by their flight, the line that rabbits would take in bolting from a certain place, [and] any shift of wind” (qtd. in Robertson 7-8). It is likely that this same ethic caused Haig-Brown to find “the society of loggers and logging camps so attractive” (Robertson 10). Indeed, Robertson remarks that on Vancouver Island “nature was all around him [Haig-Brown] on a scale and in a nearly unspoiled grandeur unlike even the wildest parts of England” (10). Haig-Brown arrived in the Nimpkish River and Campbell River areas of British Columbia around 1926, a time when these places were still considered to be a wild frontier. Yet, during his lifetime, the extraction of timber, fish, and minerals “devastated much of the region, destroying enormous tracts of softwood timber, polluting the rivers and streams, and decimating the big salmon runs” (Robertson 18). The sportsman ethic of Haig-Brown, in combination with his experience of the changing British Columbia landscape, immersed him in discourses of resource extraction and conservationism alike—subjects that inform much of his work.

Like Haig-Brown, Sinclair developed a sportsman’s ethic. Betty C. Keller describes Sinclair’s ethic as an advocacy of “the strenuous life,” a belief that “vigorous physical activity was the key to mental activity” (7). Moreover, Sinclair “came to believe that it was necessary to live that life in order to write about it” (7). This ethic was honed in the cattle country of the United States where Sinclair worked such jobs as cowpuncher in Montana. He arrived at Vancouver in 1911, and like Haig-Brown, encountered a colonial frontier landscape. From 1912-1913, Sinclair began to learn about logging from his observations of logging camps around Harrison Lake, “the largest body of fresh water in southwestern B.C.” (Keller 73). Another similarity between the two authors is their interest in hunting and fishing. During his breaks from logging observation, Sinclair spent



his time fishing “for huge Dolly Varden trout” in the streams of Harrison Valley and “hunting deer in the nearby mountains” (Keller 73). In 1917, he bought a 37-foot boat called the *Hoo Hoo* which he used to troll for salmon or as a base from which to explore the coast of British Columbia and Vancouver Island. In other words, like Haig-Brown, Sinclair was immersed in the discourses of the sportsman as well as those of resource extraction. Considering they were faced with the same shifting landscape and immersed in similar discourses, it is no surprise these experiences formed the basis of much of their writing.

Sinclair and Haig-Brown can also be thematically linked to American novels that incorporate logging, such as Ken Kesey’s *Sometimes a Great Notion* and more recently John Irving’s *Last Night in Twisted River*. As narratives of resource extraction, representations of logging can be traced back to such books as Émile Zola’s *Germinal*—about a coal miner’s strike in 1860s France. Following both the American and French contexts, Sinclair and Haig-Brown can be argued to belong to the traditions of naturalism and social realism. Though Sinclair received little formal education, he read voraciously. Among the writers Sinclair admired are Upton Sinclair, author of the social realist novel *The Jungle*; William Sidney Porter, whose stories often focused on everyday people and occupations in New York City; and Stewart Edward White whose fiction often dealt with outdoor life and occupations such as lumbering. In contrast to Sinclair, Haig-Brown was educated at Charterhouse School, “one of the great Victorian schools” of England, but did not pursue his formal education any further.

Both writers have much in common with Zola’s practice of naturalism, a concept associated with Zola’s twenty-novel series *Les Rougon-Macquart*—which includes

*Germinal*. The *Oxford Companion to English Literature* describes naturalism as “characterized by a refusal to idealize experience and by the persuasion that human life is strictly subject to natural laws” (688). Furthermore, naturalists believe that “the everyday life of the middle and lower classes of their own day provided subjects worthy of serious literary treatment” (688). These remarks agree with Zola’s statement in “The Novel” that “[t]he novelist . . . invents a plan, a drama; only it is a scrap of a drama, the first story he comes across and which daily life furnishes him with always” (72). Zola further elaborates by suggesting that “in the arrangement of the work this invention is only of very slight importance. The facts are there only as the logical results of the characters. The great thing is to set up living creatures . . . in the most natural manner possible (72-3). Indeed, Zola’s insistence on naturalness and the everyday is such that “all efforts of the writer tend to hide the imaginary under the real” (73). The insistence of Sinclair and Haig-Brown on the everyday, and on having their characters play out their drama in the “most natural manner possible,” by which I mean that which most closely approximates or represents “real” life, locates them in the naturalist tradition. Haig-Brown, especially, draws on his almost scientific knowledge of plants and animals. Yet, the deterministic naturalism of Zola, fused as it is with the scientific work and method of Claude Bernard,<sup>2</sup> is only an imperfect match with the narratives of Sinclair and Haig-Brown. Unlike Zola, neither Sinclair nor Haig-Brown invest their narratives with an entirely deterministic perspective, and they do not consistently follow his overly scientific approach. In addition to having much in common with naturalism, then, both authors can be connected to social realism, a term “used loosely to describe a realistic, objective, yet socially aware and detailed method of presentation” (qtd in “socialist realism” 917). Regarding

Sinclair's and Haig-Brown's work, this translates into narratives that often pay close attention to the details of everyday life, but also ones that depart from a naturalist sense of realism to grapple with social issues—in many cases this involves a departure from representing Zola's sense of "the real" in favour of imagined circumstances and projected outcomes.

With regard to the existing criticism of Sinclair, Richard Lane remarks that "this most marginal of British Columbian writers is also somehow the most central, writing about industries and idealisms that have constructed the modern-day place called British Columbia" (6). Likewise, Allan Pritchard remarks that "[t]he transition to the major writers [in BC] is most easily made by way of Roderick Haig-Brown, who has good claims to be regarded as the first to sustain a long and distinguished career as a writer in British Columbia" ("A View of" 102). In 1979, Gordon Philip Turner stated that "Roderick Haig-Brown's *On the Highest Hill* is surely the most underrated novel in Canadian fiction," yet since its publication "no important critical analysis of this novel, either for its merits or its relation to the larger concerns of Canadian literature, has been made" (116). *Timber*, Anthony Robertson argues, "is a remarkable historical record, a detailed and loving description of the mostly unfamiliar world of logging and the men who do it. It raises complex questions—all of them still with us. As a chronicle of a way of life it is unique" (63). The common denominator is that little attention has been paid to either author, especially in regard to their logging narratives. My work continues along the path set forth by critics such as Pritchard, Lane, Turner, and Robertson, and foregrounds the relevance and interest these novels, these writers, and these narratives continue to hold within the larger body of Canadian literature.

## Bertrand Sinclair

‘It’s a condemned book, my good friend, because it doesn’t go like that: and joining his long, elegant yet robust hands, he made a pyramid.’

- “declaration to Henry Céard about *Sentimental Education*” ( in Bourdieu 210)

In 2004 Roger Pearson asks a series of questions about Émile Zola’s *Germinal*:

So where does Zola stand on the issue of people and politics? Is *Germinal* a blueprint for revolution or reform? Or neither? Is it perhaps a reactionary demonstration of the impossibility of change? Should we read it as a largely impersonal, documentary which happens to end with the vaguely optimistic prospect that the seeds of a better future lie buried in the mud and muddle of today? Or does it offer the more considered and authentic vision of a Darwinian evolution in which nature nurtured becomes a second nature? (xvii)

While Pearson’s incisive and penetrating series of questions explicitly address Zola’s narrative of a miners’ strike set in Northern France during the 1860s, his questions lie at the heart of my work on Bertrand Sinclair’s *The Inverted Pyramid* and provide a starting point for my analysis. To these questions I would add: Does *The Inverted Pyramid* espouse environmental protectionism or conservationism? Or neither? To what extent is it a chronicle of entrepreneurial industrial capitalism in the British Columbia forest industry? Together, these questions point to Sinclair’s use of naturalism and social realism as a mode of writing, his stance on the struggle between labour and capital, his

criticism of capitalism as a viable economic model, and his concern about the struggle between resource extraction and environmental sustainability.

To return to Pearson's question, "[s]hould we read it as a largely impersonal, documentary which happens to end with the vaguely optimistic prospect that the seeds of a better future lie buried in the mud and muddle of today?" I would cautiously answer, "yes." While I do not see *The Inverted Pyramid* as "largely impersonal," I do argue that it is precisely in its naturalist, documentary style that value can be found. As Herb Wyile states in *Speculative Fictions: Contemporary Canadian Novelists and the Writing of History*, "the historical novel in its classical or traditional formulation" operates under the imperative that it is a "perfectly suitable vehicle for conveying a sense of the lived experience of past eras" (8). Indeed, Wyile invokes the words of Avrom Fleishman who states that "the historical novel is pre-eminently suited to telling how individual lives were shaped at specific moments of history, and how this shaping reveals the character of those historical periods" (9). Wyile is quick to note that, in line with contemporary historical novels, "[h]istorians have increasingly concerned themselves not just with the recovery of the neglected history of women, of working people, and of marginalized ethnic groups, but also with reshaping the very terms in which history is written" and that "[p]erhaps more important than the recognition that history has been narrowly defined has been the increasing recognition of history as a kind of constructed consensus about the past rather than a narrative about a "given" historical reality (7). In Sinclair's *The Inverted Pyramid*, both conceptions of historiography are present. The novel provides a literary history, "a sense of the lived experience," of the forest industry and capitalism between 1909 and 1920. Published in 1924, it is also an antecedent to contemporary

fiction in its focus on the neglected history of “working people”—in particular, loggers. While Sinclair can be interpreted as a precursor to contemporary historical fiction, it should be noted that despite the heavy irony of phrases such as “first people” (16) and “first families” (19), which allude to the history of colonization, repression, and displacement that serve as the foundation of the Norquay family’s status, wealth, and ownership of land, First Nations peoples and individuals, and, in fact all non-white populations, are largely absent from the narrative. Richard Lane, in *Literature & Loss: Bertrand William Sinclair’s British Columbia* argues that “in making an ethical case for the accurate historical record of the economic and cultural expansion of the Pacific North West, Sinclair invites a postcolonial reading of his texts which examines such a claim to historical veracity” (80). An interesting text to read in this light is Henry Pennier’s ‘*Call Me Hank*’: *A Stól:ō Man’s Reflections on Logging, Living, and Growing Old*, or the work of John Lutz in “After the Fur Trade: The Aboriginal Labouring Class of British Columbia 1849-1890.”

In analyzing *The Inverted Pyramid*, Pierre Bourdieu’s focus on structure and form in the realist novel *Sentimental Education* by Flaubert offers an excellent entry point. Indeed, just as Bourdieu’s model allows him to “reveal the structure of *Sentimental Education*” and enables his reader “to understand the novel’s logic as both story and history” (147), so too does this model reveal the narrative and historical structure of *The Inverted Pyramid*. Thus, my first task will be to outline Bourdieu’s ideas to delineate the logic and structure of story and history in *The Inverted Pyramid*: what Bourdieu refers to as the field of power. This section will be partly argumentative in the sense that it

proposes a particular social structure embedded in the novel, but also descriptive in exposing the literary history informing the novel.

Arising out of what I identify as the polarized field structure of *The Inverted Pyramid* is the oscillating position of Rod Norquay, the “hero” of the novel. In my second section I contend that Rod Norquay is a figure who initially resists choosing between one or another pole in Bourdieu’s field of power. Here I use the nature of the *Bildungsroman* to support the work of Bourdieu in revealing Rod’s disavowal of the trajectory set forth by his position in the field of power and his habitus—a concept I will elaborate in the following section. It is through this disavowal, in the form of Rod’s opposition to Grove Norquay, that Sinclair’s economic vision in the novel begins to emerge.

Third, I shall build upon the analysis established in preceding sections to explore Sinclair’s departure from a naturalist mode of realism and dominant discourses to a social realist mode. In particular, I suggest that through Rod’s alignment with working class characters Sinclair departs from the naturalist mode to resist the capitalist disposition toward the objectification of the body, to resist or oppose the rhetoric of loggers and other workers as “a breed apart,” and to locate a moment where conservationism coexists with resource extraction and thus foregrounds the environmentalism of the time. Finally, I argue that taken together, these “departures,” through the character of Rod Norquay, represent an economic model based on a knowledge of industry, an ethics of responsibility, and contingent political alliances between ruling and working classes—a model that supplants capitalism, which holds profit as its *raison d’être*.

Sinclair's novel ranges in both its time period (between 1909 and 1920) and its content. The novel opens with Rod Norquay—at eighteen, the youngest of the Norquay family—in a canoe with Mary Thorn, daughter of Oliver Thorn, navigating the waters off Little Dent Island. It is approximately 1909, and the families of the Norquays and the Thorns are set up immediately as foils. The primary narrative thrust revolves around Rod Norquay as he “comes of age” and eventually takes control of the family timber industry upon the death of his father, Roderick Norquay Senior. Sinclair goes to great pains to maintain historical accuracy in describing the workings of the timber industry from the point of view of the owners (the Norquay family), from that of the workers as represented by Jim Handy and labour-agitator Andy Hall, and from that of Rod Norquay Jr. after his apprenticeship in the woods. As Rod obtains an understanding of the industry, so too does the reader. In addition to Norquay Senior and Junior, the family is composed of Phil and Grove Norquay, Rod's two older brothers. Grove, the eldest, is pitted against Rod in the narrative and pursues capital and investment by establishing the Norquay Trust. Phil takes the middle path and initially heads the timber business until his death in the First World War. As a result of the death of Phil and the failure of Grove and his Norquay Trust, Rod must take over the timber business to save the family name.

Everything the Norquays have in terms of possessions, class-position, recognition, and wealth, the Thorns do not; instead, their focus is on the relationships between people and living honestly through their labour. It is Mary Thorn who eventually weds Rod. Moving through the economic cycles of bust and boom, and through the First World War, the novel eventually closes around 1920. While the final pages of the novel are open to



interpretation, it is clear that only the family of Rod, Mary and their son survives into the next generation.

Before proceeding to the claims and arguments I will make, I would first like to offer a brief outline of Bourdieu's concept of *field*—the concept which figures most prominently in my analysis. One of the most cogent definitions of Bourdieu's concept of *field* is that formulated by Randal Johnson in his introduction to *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. Johnson suggests that “according to Bourdieu's theoretical model, any social formation is structured by way of a hierarchically organized series of fields,” and that “each field is relatively autonomous but structurally homologous with the others. Its structure, at any given moment, is determined by the relations between the positions agents occupy in the field” (6). In essence, Bourdieu is describing a structure similar to that of *matryoshka* or Russian nesting dolls—an interchangeable series of homologous fields within fields that each contain a negative and positive pole.<sup>3</sup> Johnson further explains that “in any given field, agents occupying the diverse available positions . . . engage in competition for control of the interests or resources which are specific to the field in question” (6), and further that it is “up to the analyst to establish through research what the specific interests of the field are and what strategies of accumulation (which may or may not be based on conscious calculation) are employed by the agents involved” (8).<sup>4</sup>

### **The Field of Power in *The Inverted Pyramid***

In his examination of the structure and logic of *Sentimental Education*, Bourdieu states that “[w]hen Flaubert describes the structure of the field of power, he gives us the key

necessary for the comprehension of the novel which reveals this structure” and that Flaubert thus “presents us with a generative model” in which “the first element of this model is a representation of the structure of the ruling class, or as I put it, of the field of power” (147). Likewise, the social space in *The Inverted Pyramid* is organized around two poles represented on one side by the Norquay family, which consists primarily of sons Phil, Grove, and Roderick Norquay as well as Norquay Senior. On this side are material wealth, profit, reputation, politics, power, and influence. The other pole is represented by the Thorn family, which consists primarily of Oliver Thorn and his daughter Mary, as well as workers such as so-called agitator Andy Hall. On this side are values of personal security, leisure, physical labour, comfort, art and knowledge. To delineate the forces of the field of power Sinclair’s narrative follows the paths of four characters. The primary focus is on Rod Norquay, a figure in constant tension and oscillation between both poles, with a secondary focus on the characters of Mary Thorn as well as Grove and Phil Norquay.

The construction of the social space within the field of power is derived from my structural analysis of the roles and associations of each character in combination with physical description. The Norquays are defined by the arrival of Phil and Grove Norquay in a “white power cruiser, all agleam in the afternoon sun, her housework varnished oak, bright flashes reflected off polished brass and copper . . . her bow wave spreading like an ostrich plume” (6). The Norquay family is ostentatiously wealthy, and they associate with like-minded families such as the Walls, whose daughter Laska Wall “cut quite a figure in Vancouver society” (11)—a direct reference to the importance of reputation and influence at this pole. Indeed, “to dine at Hawk’s Nest was the equivalent of dining in the

home of any cultivated person in New York, Paris, London,—” (29). Here we have the importance of material possessions, reputation and high fashion firmly established as aligned with the Norquay family.

In contrast to the power cruiser and “high society” of the Norquays is the “gaudy cedar dugout canoe,” piloted by Mary Thorn and Rod Norquay, that is “got up in the Siwash style of high-curving bow and stern, both ends grotesquely carved and brilliantly coloured” (1). The phrasing here adopts a colonial point of view where the canoe is described as “second-class” precisely because it is identified with First Nations culture through the derogatory term “Siwash”—originally used in Chinook jargon to indicate “a native Indian of the northwest” and later used derogatorily to mean a “shiftless [or] lazy person” or something “done in Indian fashion” (“Siwash,” 125-26). In combination with the canoe is the scene “across the channel [where] . . . Oliver Thorn’s weather-beaten house” marks “a drab spot on the forest’s edge” (10), and the “caulk-punctured board steps of Oliver Thorn’s house” (87) symbolize the importance of physical labour. The Thorn family, and the pole it represents, is, in status, desire and description, everything that the Norquay pole is not. As Bourdieu remarks, “these two poles are completely incompatible, as is fire with water. What is good at one pole is bad at the other, and vice versa” (148).

In terms of what Johnson refers to as the “resources” or “specific interests of the field,” we can, in the case of Sinclair, interpret the concrete meaning of resources to indicate control over the physical resource of timber, and all that such control entails. Set on the south coast of British Columbia on Little Dent and Big Dent Island, approximately thirty miles northeast of the Vancouver Island community of Campbell River, *The*

*Inverted Pyramid* (1924) spans the period from 1909 to 1920. Gordon Hak in *Turning Trees into Dollars: The British Columbia Coastal Lumber Industry, 1858-1913* describes this location as “the coastal region.”<sup>5</sup> Hak further states that “this zone between the mountains and the ocean contains Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland, and its climate, topography, and soil created the great temperate rainforests, with their massive cedar and fir trees, the backbone of the coastal forest industry” (6).<sup>6</sup> The link between the Norquay timber dynasty and geographical location is immediately evident, as is the fact that control over the resources of land and timber is a hallmark of the field of power in the novel.

Hak’s history of the lumber industry outlines an industrial development through which “the industrial capitalist emerged, replacing the small artisanal producer or the merchant-trader as the key business figure” (30). Rod Norquay, in his recollection of Roderick Sylvester Norquay’s voyage to British Columbia<sup>7</sup> with Captain George Vancouver in 1792, recounts that “the first venture was a very profitable one” and that on the second “he brought a couple of dozen extra men, artisans of different trades, and set up a trading post here” (17). Rod further recalls the movement from fur-trading under the “Northwest Fur Company,” to the gold rush of 1859, and finally to the time that the Norquay family “got title” to their land and “Grandfather began to operate in timber” (19). Sinclair thus establishes a direct line from resource-rich geographical location, to artisanal producer and merchant-trader, to the figure of the industrial entrepreneurial capitalist. It is this direct line that invokes British Columbia as a colonial outpost or settler economy, and it is the activities of resource extraction that are directly involved in the process of colonization. In short, we begin to see in Sinclair a particular history of a

settler economy and industrial entrepreneurial capitalism as it played out in British Columbia, and the specific resources at play in the field of power.

With respect to the timber industry, Hak asserts that

in the establishment and operation of the production system, profit and loss were concerns at all stages. Labour power, machinery, timber, and credit were purchased at the lowest possible cost, and finished commodities were sold at the best price possible. It was not enough to be able to physically produce lumber; it had to be produced in a way that allowed for profit. Production systems that transformed the most timber into profitable market commodities, and did so in the fastest manner, were the most successful. (5)

The Norquays, therefore, faced with an impending strike at the Valdez camp due to low wages and poor camp conditions, do not heed Grove's suggestion to "pay off the works and have a new crew sent up" (153). He would rather be rid of so-called agitators than negotiate. Yet, replacing the crew would be an unprofitable maneuver considering both their skill and the time lost in replacing the old crew as well as training the new one. In fact, Rod maintains that if the crew at the Valdez camp "were paid on the basis of production, they'd get bigger wages than they're asking" because "for six months straight [they] put out twenty per cent more timber per man than Hardwicke Island" (159). In other words, the Valdez crew is producing twenty per cent more than other crews, and this makes them quite valuable. These remarks establish that, as in Hak's analysis, profit is also the fundamental precept of entrepreneurial capitalism as represented in the novel. Furthermore, with regard to the field of power, the strategy of accumulation pursued by the Norquay family is focused on control over the timber industry, and thus the accumulation of capital. Yet, under the umbrella of resources, Hak's analysis, in combination with the conversation of the Norquays, reveals labour power, labour conditions, and the wages of the workers to be a further site of competition. I suggest that

the field of class relations, which I locate within the field of power, thus comes into play. In the field of class relations, the workers occupy the negative pole, being dominated by the ruling class and located at the negative pole of the field of power.

As a case in point, the Valdez camp strikers demand “fifty cents a day raise for every outside worker on the job, from whistle-punks to hook tenders,” as well as for the Norquays to “put in at least half a dozen baths, tubs, or showers . . . [t]hat’s all” (155). To deny individuals the ability to be clean is to impose control over the body through a cost-benefit analysis of the needs of a logging camp. The denial of bodily control is both dehumanizing and a denial of the humanity of the workers. While the demand to bathe may seem fictional, conditions arising from cost-benefit analyzes are historically accurate. In *No Power Greater: A Century of Labour in British Columbia*, Paul A. Phillips, cites the 7 June 1918 edition of the *B.C. Federationist* to report that the “deplorable” conditions in logging camps were “an important factor in radicalizing the lumber workers” (77). The report further describes how “the workers complained of having no bath or drying rooms, of ‘muzzle-loading’ bunks that had to be entered from the ends, of over-crowding, of ‘pigs, lice and other vermin swarming all over the place . . . .’” (77). Donald MacKay, in *Empire of Wood: The MacMillan Bloedel Story*, citing the same report, explains that the “‘muzzle-loading’ bunks wherein a man had to crawl into his bunk from the end, [were] an arrangement which allowed more bunks to be crowded into little space” (196). While it is unclear that these arrangements were precisely the ones at the Valdez camp, Phil Norquay’s remark: “[w]hy should we supply casual labor with baths when there is a running stream through the camp and the sea is at the door” (156), makes it clear that bathing facilities were unavailable. This initial denial

of basic bodily needs makes it clear that in the field of class relations the dominant or ruling class is asserting control over the dominated, working class by seizing control of the body of the labourer; concurrently, the labourer is resisting this control through the demands of the strike committee. In the field of power, capital, profit, and labour power are the contested interests in the dispute over control of the human body and cleanliness. The Norquays resist the demands for bathing facilities and wage increases in their drive for capital accumulation, and the power, influence, and reputation this provides. The strike committee, in turn, also seeks control over their labour power and wages. In the words of Bourdieu, now knowing the stake, resource or interest which has to be held or seized, and having established a “polarized space,” the “game is set up” (150). What is made clear through the revealing of the structure set up by Sinclair, whether consciously or not, is that there is an initial line to be drawn between the Norquays and the Thorns with secondary lines dividing the workers from the Norquays.

### **Rod Norquay**

It is ultimately through Rod Norquay that “all the lines of force converge on the pole of political and economic power” (Bourdieu 148). In fact, it is through Rod’s attempt to reconcile or inhabit both worlds that the struggle between poles is most concretely realized. Rod, like Frédéric in *Sentimental Education*, breaks “the golden rule of the field of power [in] trying to bring about the marriage of opposing extremes, the *coincidentia oppositorum*, by attempting to maintain a position of untenable equilibrium between the two worlds” (153). Indeed, Bourdieu’s remarks about Frédéric seem equally applicable to Rod:

it is through Frédéric that one can demonstrate most fully all the implications of Flaubert's model. An heir who does not wish to be taken up by his inheritance and made what he is, i.e. a 'bourgeois', he wavers between reproduction strategies which are all quite incompatible with one another. By persistently refusing to follow the normal course of sociological and biological reproduction, for example, through a marriage with Louise, he ultimately jeopardizes those chances of reproduction that he does possess. At different stages his contradictory ambitions drive him toward each of the poles which dominate the social space in which he moves. (152-3)

Like Frédéric, Rod resists his inheritance. Unlike Grove—representative of the extreme, positive pole in the field of power—Rod refuses exclusive association with families such as the Walls and aligns himself with the Thorn family instead, with Mary Thorn in particular. Rod thus pursues a “reproduction strategy” incompatible with that set forth by his father.<sup>8</sup> Rod is criticized for this association by his father who, motivated by Grove, remarks “[y]ou're almost a man . . . [i]t's time your taste in feminine associations rose a little above the half-wild daughter of a dreamy-eyed incompetent. Especially when it begins to attract attention. You seem to have forgotten, the last two or three days, that we have guests here” (24). With these words, the elder Norquay asserts his patriarchal control over Rod and signifies what he believes to be Rod's rightful place in the family and social hierarchy. In short, the elder Norquay insists on Rod's trajectory along the path set before him by his *habitus*, “that is to say, the acquirements, the embodied, assimilated properties, such as elegance, ease of manner, beauty and so forth, and capital as such, that is, the inherited assets which define the possibilities inherent in the field” (150). In his introduction to *The Field of Cultural Production* Randal Johnson states that the *habitus* is “a set of dispositions which generates practices and perceptions. The *habitus* is the result of a long process of inculcation, beginning in early childhood, which becomes a ‘second sense’ or a second nature” (5). Here, Old Norquay demands Rod follow his class



trajectory, supposedly “second nature,” in bourgeois society toward the positive, dominant pole in the field of power and the field of class relations.<sup>9</sup>

Rod’s refusal of this trajectory comes in the form of the narrated monologue: “But he could not wholly conceal the small tempest that began to stir in him [ . . . ] This was not the first time Rod had manifested a variation from family type in his mode of expressing himself” (24-25). Rod’s narrated monologue (free indirect discourse), “a choice medium for revealing a fictional mind suspended in an instant present, between a remembered past and an anticipated future” (Cohn 126), reveals both the remembered past acts of his refusals of his inheritance, of his habitus so-to-speak, as well as his suspension—implying a removal from rational thought (the stormy tempest) and the dispersion of particles in a liquid—in the present moment, while using the term “began” to anticipate future instances of refusal.<sup>10</sup>

This early scene in the novel also helps to establish the novel as a *Bildungsroman*. Hence, in Rod’s refusal I locate a moment of formation, especially that of his inner self, in consideration of the narrated monologue which undercuts the ostensible, observable, albeit somewhat sarcastic, acquiescence to his father’s patriarchal authority. In short, it is through this encounter that Rod is seen to be “becoming” through the emotional effects of resistance and self-assuredness that result from the encounter with his father over his romantic connection to Mary Thorn. In the words of Bourdieu, Rod’s “contradictory ambition” causes him to refuse “the normal course of sociological and biological reproduction” (by pursuing a so-called acceptable “feminine association”), and he swings toward the negative pole of the field of power and the field of class relations. However, Rod ultimately follows his father’s orders and, like his brothers before him, is “packed

off to McGill”—located in central Canada, the familial and national symbol of power and culture—for his education and thus oscillates once again toward the positive pole.

All three brothers are given the benefit of a private education at the hands of the tutor, Mr. Spence, followed by an education at McGill; all three are firmly located on a trajectory that positions them at the positive pole of the field of power, in the continuing dominant position of the Norquay family. The result of this trajectory is Phil Norquay’s position as the head of the family timber business, and, fuelled by the “two years he spent in New York and London financial circles” (61), Grove Norquay’s single-minded pursuit of profit and power through the establishment of the Norquay Trust.<sup>11</sup> Phil describes Grove as talking “in millions,” and as associated with “five or six of the shrewdest buccaneers on the coast, —Deane, Arthur Richston, Mark Sherburne, and his father-in-law, John Wall” (61). In the Norquay Trust building,

Mr. Grove Norquay appeared to feel that he moved at last in his proper sphere. He loved the sound and echo of huge sums, of complicated transactions, of facing men over a massive desk and deciding matters that involved much money. He liked noise, action—it gave him a sense of power, or irresistibility—just as he liked being master on his own yacht.  
(70)

In these words, Grove is located at the far extreme of the positive pole in the field of power. Described with terms such as “proper sphere,” power,” irresistibility,” and “master,” Grove’s concerns consist entirely of money, power, influence and the “social page of the Vancouver *Province*” (68). He is everything that the Thorns are not and comes to serve as Rod’s polar opposite in the novel.<sup>12</sup> As Georg Lukács reminds us, quoting Hegel,

the social purpose of education under capitalism [is] as follows: ‘during his years of apprenticeship the hero is permitted to sow his wild oats; he learns to subordinate his wishes and views to the interests of the society;

he then enters that society's hierarchic scheme and finds in it a comfortable niche.' (112)

Grove, whose affairs with women "still reverberated faintly along the St. Lawrence" (53), rather than subordinating his wishes to the "interests of the society," follows the logic and structure of his habitus and his position in the field of power. He not only enters, but embraces society's "hierarchic scheme" and finds "it a comfortable niche."<sup>13</sup>

In contrast, Rod's first two years of education, far from propelling him along the trajectory set forth for him, propel him further toward the negative pole in the field of power, encompassing, as mentioned above, the world of art. Indeed, the narrator explains that "[i]n four semesters he had listened to and taken part in many a sophomoric discussion where Art and Beauty went on the dissecting table" (51). These remarks hearken back to the opening scene of the novel where, sitting on the shore of Little Dent Island, Rod wonders "why no poet had sung the song of this swirling water; why no novelist had lovingly portrayed this land as a back drop for his comic and tragic puppets?" (1-2). Rod's literary thoughts continue to occupy his mind until his second departure for school when he reflects that there is written "[n]o Iliad of the pioneers" and thinks to himself "I wonder if I could" (79).<sup>14</sup> Given this polarity of the field in terms of Rod and Grove, Rod's first adult encounter with Grove is confrontational. In Bourdieu's terms, this encounter can be read as an "*accident*, an unforeseen collision between social possibilities, each of which would normally exclude the others" (153). Explaining the Norquay Trust, Grove declares, "'I organized it. It's a pretty big show, and it's my show'" (71). Rod responds by pretending innocence in a sarcastic tirade:

'After all, it's only a money-making scheme, isn't it? You don't make anything or do anything, do you? You just handle sums of money and grab off a percentage. Eh?' Rod said innocently. He was thinking of Phil's phrase: glorified pawnbroking. (71)<sup>15</sup>

This exchange between the brothers, the negative and positive pole in the field of power, foregrounds the underlying competition over power within this field. Grove's Norquay Trust, backed by the fortune of the family, signifies a social possibility denied to Rod by the family inheritance structure that states "as a working principle for his [the senior Norquay] heirs . . . the home place and the bulk of the holdings shall pass into control of the eldest son" (20). In this reading, Rod's condemnation of the scheme is concurrently an admission of the mutual exclusivity of the social possibilities of the two brothers.

It is more likely, however, that Rod's denunciation of the Norquay Trust serves as a denunciation of the economic model it represents. In the Norquay Trust, Sinclair represents an economic model of finance and investment, a model that doesn't "make anything," a model where the resources are the monies and interests of others (savings accounts and investments), and a model which elides the manual labour that supports and underlies it. Ultimately, the collision between Rod and Grove, the gradual alignment of Rod with the process of manual labour (the negative pole), and the demise of the Norquay Trust, ensure that the economic model of finance and investment is contested and undermined. To return to the frame of the *Bildungsroman*, I suggest this moment is another one in which Rod is "'becoming' through himself as well as through that which is not himself" (Morgenstern in Martini 17). That is, Rod is "becoming"—finding his place in society as an adult—both through his growing economic knowledge and through his increasing opposition to Grove.

Aspects of the form of the *Bildungsroman* reinforce my interpretation that Sinclair is using the character of Rod to undermine the model symbolized by Grove. As Barbara Foley suggests in *Radical Representations: Politics and Form in U.S.*

*Proletarian Fiction. 1929-1941*, “readers generally come to identify with the perspectives, or at least the interests, of bildungsroman protagonists and are therefore positioned to want what has been established to be ‘good’ for these protagonists” (321), and further that “the use of free indirect discourse to render a character’s thoughts provides a crucial means of positioning the reader as an automatic accomplice to the narrator’s values” (270). Thus, Rod’s drive toward art and literature, presented in the form of free indirect discourse, positions the reader alongside Rod at the negative pole of the field of power and thus predisposes the reader to accept Rod’s criticism of the economic model signified by the Norquay Trust. Dorrit Cohn makes a similar point in her work on the narrated monologue:

But no matter how ‘impersonal’ the tone of the text that surrounds them, narrated monologues themselves tend to commit the narrator to attitudes of sympathy or irony. Precisely because they cast the language of a subjective mind into the grammar of objective narration, they amplify emotional notes, but also throw into ironic relief all false notes struck by a figural mind. A narrator can in turn exploit both possibilities . . . (117)<sup>16</sup>

Given the predominant identification of the narrator with the “figural mind” of Rod, statements such as “Grove was a brilliantly successful young man in a city where success was most completely estimated by the noise a man and his money made”(69), are cast into the ironic mode and, as representations of Rod’s subjective mind, contribute to the general condemnation of the model Grove represents. Furthermore, considering Foley’s stipulation that the narrated monologue locates the reader as an “accomplice” to the “narrator’s values,” the ironic false success of Grove, the false success of the “noise”—sound and movement without purpose or function—is a position or point of view taken up by the reader through the figural mind of Rod. In summary, Sinclair is using the

interplay between poles in the field of power, between Rod and Grove, to foreground his own emerging economic vision.

### **Shifts in Realism**

The framework set forth by Bourdieu in his analysis of Flaubert's *Sentimental Education* can be applied to *The Inverted Pyramid* to encompass Rod's decision to become a logger, enlist as a soldier in the war, marry Mary Thorn, and redress the economic havoc created by the failure of Grove and the Norquay Trust.<sup>17</sup> Now having established the presence and utility of this framework in the novel, I turn more specifically to the arguments and positions that arise from it. I contend that the interplay between the Bourdieuan framework, supported by the form of the *Bildungsroman*, and Sinclair's departures from the naturalist mode (to be explained subsequently), leads to several arguments. The first, already briefly mentioned, is Sinclair's resistance to the bodily control exerted over the resource extraction labourer by the entrepreneurial capitalist. I then take up Sinclair's stand against the logging rhetoric of "a breed apart," and his vision of a moment where conservationism coexists with the resource extraction worker to foreground contemporary environmentalism. Finally, I argue that, taken together, these "departures" represent an economic vision that contests and supplants the premise of capitalism that holds profit as its paramount principle.

In *Turning Trees into Dollars*, Gordon Hak explains that after 1900, "employers and social reformers became increasingly concerned with the lifestyle of loggers in Vancouver. Loggers were characterized as careless, gullible, and shiftless, making no provision for their futures" (144). This attitude suggests a split between general society

and loggers—a group defined by society but which is also viewed as outside of society. This view is most directly represented by Grove in the scene involving the Valdez camp workers' demand for bathing facilities. Grove's sneering assertion, "'They never bathe . . . They don't look as if they did. I never got close enough to smell 'em, but I suppose they don't mind it themselves'" (160), is particularly telling. Grove's use of the third person pronoun "they" immediately bifurcates the situation into an "us" and a "them"; in this way, Grove draws a distinct hierarchical line between the society, characteristics, and indeed humanity of the Norquays, and that of the loggers. Only through Rod's appeal to the economics of the situation is he able to convince Phil to fulfill the demands of the loggers. Privately, Rod considers "how little either of his brothers knew about the men they were discussing" and that "they didn't discuss them as men, so much as material,—a commodity . . ." (160). While "labour-power can appear upon the market as a commodity" (Marx 336), the condition for its sale by the individual is that "he . . . must be the untrammelled owner of his capacity for labour, *i.e.*, of his person" (Marx 337). In this example, the point is not that the men cannot sell their labour-power, but that they, their persons, are *reduced* to it. Moreover, they neither appear "untrammelled" nor able to deal with the owner "on the basis of equal rights" (Marx 337)—another of the conditions Marx sets out for the sale of labour-power such that both the buyer and the seller might be "equal in the eyes of the law" (337). The divide between human and "material" (resources to be used) identified by the narrated monologue here supports Grove's ideological position while also working to undermine it. Again, the narrated monologue aligns the reader with the interests of the hero. This monologue, followed by the reflection that Rod "would never be able to think of them except as men" (160), is

structured to dictate that Grove's view is automatically dismissed in favour of the reflection and knowledge seemingly put forward by the subjective mind or represented thoughts of Rod, which, in turn, gestures outward to Sinclair. In this way, Sinclair resists the objectification of the bodies of the loggers as well as the reduction and ownership of them as material (resources) and commodities. Furthermore, he subverts the social stratification and bifurcation signified by the words of Grove. In Bourdieu's terms, Rod's identification as logger and his subversion of Grove's ideology indicate that his position is growing more firmly grounded in the negative pole of the field of power. The acquiescence to the loggers' demands, and Rod's shifting position, signals a departure from the naturalist mode (attempting to be exactly accurate) of realism toward a social realist mode (his remarks are unlikely in the context of his position as owner of the means of production), and a shift of power toward the negative pole in the field of power. In other words, Grove begins to lose, and this losing, this departure from realism (typically Grove's position would prevail)—in the form of departing from a purported mimetic representation of historical events and conditions—marks a shift of power and elaborates Sinclair's growing economic vision of an alternative to profit through capitalism.

Alongside the negative image of the logger, Hak suggests, "was a much more complementary perspective" (145). Hak explains that "[l]umber trade journals, which emerged specifically to deal with British Columbia around the turn of the century, began to construct a written history of the coastal lumber industry and articulate a vision of loggers and logging" (145). As part of this vision, the trade journals "celebrated the particular jargon of loggers, a unique and colourful language, understood only by workers and those familiar with the industry, used to define things and processes in the woods,



reinforcing the notion of loggers as a breed apart” (145-6).<sup>18</sup> Sinclair provides a sense of the lived experience of the era through descriptions of “the clink of axes, the whine of steel cable in iron blocks, the shrill tooting of donkey whistles” (105) and the bunkhouses that “echo[] with everything from downright obscenity to analytical discussions of the entire social order” (109). Notably, however, the “management trade journals omitted the fact that logging was an industrial job, ignoring wage cuts, monotony, unemployment, cruel bosses, and the pain of death and injury . . .” (Hak 146). The identity of the logger was “intertwined with masculinity” and “ideals of what constituted a logger were contradictory” (147):

Were loggers special men who endured conditions that were unacceptable in other walks of life or did they deserve basic domestic amenities enjoyed by most others in society? Did real men embrace adverse conditions without whining, independently dealing with employers and moving to a different camp if conditions did not meet their standards, or did real men act collectively with their fellow workers in a protest against unacceptable situations? (147-8)

What Hak doesn’t mention, and what Sinclair alludes to, is that while the perception of loggers from both within and without may have privileged an image of loggers as hyper-masculine figures “who endured conditions that were unacceptable in other walks of life.” These conditions, from the inception of the industry, were created by what Hak refers to as the “fundamental precept of capitalism” (5)—the drive for profit. This drive results in a tendency, if not a directive, to maintain the lowest possible operating costs.

As such, the articulation of loggers as “a breed apart”—however true—ultimately serves the interests of entrepreneurial industrial capitalists, such as the Norquay family, who maintain these operating costs and unacceptable conditions.<sup>19</sup> Hence, the Norquays rely on logging boss Jim Handy, “a man with a reputation for getting out timber” (108) and who admits to firing “three or four of the mouthy” loggers during the Valdez conflict.

As high-rigger Andy Hall explains, Handy “has exactly the same idea as most employers—keep wages down and prices up—get all the work possible out of the men . . . . For the last month every time anybody has tried to talk to him about wages or camp conditions, somebody has got fired” (155). In contrast to documented history, Sinclair is not explicit regarding the specific conditions the men endure. The omission of these details is symptomatic of the pride involved in any articulation of the masculine identity of loggers—“real men” don’t dwell on these sorts of things. This symbolic omission at once indicates that the articulation of loggers as a breed apart does, in part, come from within, but that this identity, as can be seen from the Valdez camp conflict and the character of Jim Handy, ultimately serves the interest of the entrepreneurial capitalist. Concurrently, the resolution to the Valdez camp conflict as noted above, along with the men’s demands for improved camp conditions, Rod’s inability to treat the loggers as anything “except as men” (160), and his later fair treatment of the loggers subsequent to the collapse of the Norquay Trust, all combine to signify Sinclair’s resistance to the ideology that labels loggers as a breed apart. Rod’s work in the logging camps and his refusal to deal with the loggers “except as men” in itself collapses the distinction and thus the rhetoric of “a breed apart.” Considering Hak’s statement that “[b]y the first decade of the twentieth century, too, competing discourses that addressed the connection between the job culture and notions of masculinity divided workers and undermined collective activity” (149), Sinclair can be seen to depart further from naturalist mode in the narrative. Power continues to shift toward the negative pole of the field of power to the extent that the polarity between them begins to decrease as the interests and forces of the dominant pole and the negative pole begin to converge through the character of Rod.<sup>20</sup>

Sinclair's representation of environmental conservation further contributes to his developing economic vision. Importantly, the conservation movement of the first quarter of the twentieth century "was not a coming together of the ideas that circulated in the province from the 1860s through the 1890s . . . it was a shift, a different way of looking at the world, that supplanted the older critical tradition" (83). Hak's description of the earlier view is that

connections among monopoly capitalists, abuses of government regulations, wasteful logging practices, politicians, and the destruction of the forests, with little return to the people of the province, were rolled together in a dissenting vision. In this vision, evil forestry and political practices stunted economic growth . . . undermined democracy; and perverted a sense of community [ . . . ] Human beings, social and economic institutions, and the environment were all important and interconnected. (83-4)

The later movement emphasized science and technology; further, "the principles of the later conservation movement in British Columbia supported large, well-capitalized companies over smaller operations" (84).

The tension between these competing conservation movements is represented by the words of Norquay Senior upon hearing of Rod's desire to work as a logger. Norquay suggests that his son become a forester so that he can "inaugurate a campaign of necessary reforestation. Outside of two or three concerns, logging in B.C. to-day is an orgy of waste. They're skimming the cream of the forest, spilling half of it. Kicking the milkpail over now and then, refusing to feed the cow they milk" (97). Norquay's use of "They're" seems to point to an opposition between the Norquay entrepreneurial capitalist model and one which is larger in scale. I interpret his words as synonymous with the early vision of conservation that is largely a critique of wasteful, large-scale logging operations—in other words, a critique of emerging monopoly capitalism that is an active

threat to entrepreneurial capitalists like Norquay. Yet, the elder Norquay *does* advocate a forest management program of “necessary reforestation.” This statement echoes the more scientific approach to forest management that began to emerge at the turn of the century. Both visions agree on exploitation of the forest despite their conservationist agenda; the central difference between them is that one vision favors entrepreneurial capitalism and the other monopoly capitalism. Indeed, as Hak argues,

it was clear that any belief that forest policy would be guided by scientific principles expounded by trained, dispassionate experts was puffery. Markets and the interests of business prevailed . . . .Policy decisions remained with the cabinet, whose decisions were shaped by the financial interests of loggers and millmen, and the dynamics of the market. (114)

The importance of this moment in the text is that it does seem to prefigure a vocabulary that only began to emerge in the mid-twentieth century. Bruce Braun in *The Intemperate Rainforest: Nature, Culture, and Power on Canada’s West Coast* argues that “In a province built on the exploitation of natural resources, clearcuts and smokestacks represented progress . . . .Further, the forest resources of the province were considered limitless” (213), and certainly the Norquay timber dynasty represents this ideology. Rod’s first return home from school is marked by the words “it was as if the puny axes and saws of man could no more than make tiny openings in that incredible stretch of coastal forest. Pygmies attacking a giant in the vast amphitheatre of the changeless hills” (50). The diminished size of humanity in comparison to the “changeless” and thus “limitless” forest in conjunction with Norquay Senior’s forest management plan substantiates Braun’s remarks. As noted above, however, Norquay Senior does, in fact, propose a method that contemporary society might identify as sustainable yield management: “limits we logged when I was a young man . . . will bear

merchantable timber by the time your children are grown” (97). Braun suggests that compared to the economic vision of limitless exploitable forests,

foresters thought otherwise, and it was primarily among them that a new vocabulary was emerging—‘forest inventory,’ ‘sustainable yield,’ ‘mean annual increments’—that would eventually . . . be in part responsible for the new social and spatiotemporal logics of forest management that were set in place at mid-century. (Braun 213-4),

This new logic of forest management is, at least in part, evident in the work of Sinclair.

This is a strength of literature—to, at least in part, imagine or foresee eventual realities.

Sinclair foresees a conservationist discourse that would not be formalized for some time.

The strength of this presence is arguable, and despite proclamations such as Oliver

Thorn’s to Rod that “your people . . . log enough each year to bring in the necessary revenue” rather than “fill the woods with loggers” (57), the central point I take from

these examples is that they depict the production of the forest as a commodity external to larger social, ecological, and cultural contexts. In other words, while the Norquay timber practices may be better than others, the forest is still seen as an isolated entity for consumption. As such, Norquay Senior remains firmly located at the positive pole of Bourdieu’s field of power.

Braun’s readings of George Mercer Dawson’s geological writings and surveys in the 1870s and 1880s are effective for understanding the production of the forest as a commodity. Braun, for example, cites Dawson’s reports on the Queen Charlotte Islands:

While appearing to merely document the landscape, the very organization of Dawson’s survey was more than just incidental to the operation of colonial power. Its general overview, for instance, gave to readers in distant centers of administrative power a cartographic orientation, one that permitted the islands’ constitutive parts to be placed within a larger whole, and the islands, in turn to be situated within a wider national geography. At the same time, Dawson’s report divided the islands into discrete domains; plants, animals, rocks, and Indians were documented separately, as if unrelated entities. (48)

Braun relates this in slightly different terms when he states that the nation was “anatomized or divided into its component parts, whereby specific entities—minerals, trees, Indians—were apprehended entirely apart from their cultural and ecological surrounds and displaced and resituated within other systems of signification” (50).<sup>21</sup> While Braun’s emphasis is on the impact Dawson’s style of work had on First Nations communities, his work also sheds new light on how forests are produced as commodities. As Oliver Thorn reports, the “‘pushing, bustling kind of man . . . doesn’t see anything in the woods but so many thousand board feet per acre’” (57). Concerning the Norquay timber dynasty, Rod reflects that the first Norquay, who was a petty officer on the *Discovery*, “had the journal habit” and “tells about the surveys they made that year [1792] and the next” (17). Thus, I argue, a line can be drawn from the surveys and writings of Dawson to the writings and surveys in the journals of the first Norquay. These surveys, in the words of Braun, facilitated the enclosure of the landscape now called British Columbia into imperial structures such as the North West and Hudson’s Bay companies,<sup>22</sup> and later the national structure of Canada—in short, these surveys lead directly to the possibility of Norquay land ownership.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, these surveys, “atomized” the specific entity of “trees” to become resituated in systems of signification such as economic capital, and as the specific interests and resources under contest in Bourdieu’s field of power. In other words, nature here has become separated and distinct from culture. As Bruno Latour remarks, “[o]nce you begin to trace an absolute distinction between what is deaf and dumb and who is allowed to speak, you can easily imagine that this is not the ideal way to establish some sort of democracy” (476). In Sinclair, it is clear

that this binary serves to silence many ecological and First Nations land ownership concerns.

This anatomization and commodification of the forest is further reinforced by the scientific conservationism alluded to by Norquay Senior in his remarks about the role of the forester. Consider, for example, Braun's reference to MacMillan Bloedel's forest management system when he argues that "[d]iscourses of scientific management efface the many ways that British Columbia's forests are contested spaces, as well as the historic practices by which the forest was produced as a domain separate from people" (38). Sinclair takes up the premise that forests are produced as a domain separate from people and follows this premise to its logical conclusion. In doing so, Sinclair demonstrates such a premise to be ultimately ecologically and economically untenable. The collapse of the Norquay Trust has left it with "liabilities practically four hundred thousand in excess of available assets" (253); in order to meet these obligations Rod decides to convert all of the Norquay timber holdings into money to meet the liabilities: "But there was still timber which with labour and machinery he could transform into money. He owned that clear of all encumbrance, thousands of acres of it, the finest virgin timber on the Pacific coast" (256-7). To borrow a phrase from Braun, the image left by following out this logic is "an *apocalyptic* image" (216). While Braun suggests that by the 1930s there was not "a language readily available by which to understand forestry as destruction" (214), I find the apocalyptic imagery of destruction to be precisely what Sinclair is portraying as the result of producing the forest as a commodity. Consider, for instance, the following description:

Where living green had clothed the hills there lifted stumps, torn earth,  
bald rock ledges. Desolation. The Granite Pool lay in its cliffy hollow,

bared to the hot eye of the sun. The deer and the birds had withdrawn to the farther woods. Animal life banished, vegetation destroyed. Barren. Bleak. Ugliness spread over square miles. (320)

Framed in terms of absence (“desolation”) and infertility (“barren”), timber is nevertheless repositioned here as part of a larger ecological system involving interconnected systems of plant and animal life, a system which recalls Rod’s earlier experiences:

He would have preferred to let Phillips Arm retain its beauty and solitude, its forested valley a home for deer and bear and coveys of grouse, its shining river the highway of spawning salmon to their spawning grounds . . . he liked to look south from Hawk’s Nest on a slope of unbroken green. (107)

In this latter description the landscape is seen to be a complete ecosystem, the forested valley not a utility but a home for animal life, a birthplace for salmon, and a place of human leisure where Rod can gaze upon the “unbroken green” of the forest. In the former passage, however, death is the focus rather than birth and possibility. The lifted stumps, torn earth, and bald rock ledges evoke images of the western front of World War I as much as the scarred earth left by logging activity. As the impact of the destruction filters through the figural<sup>24</sup> mind of Rod in this narrated monologue, the grammar begins to break down and fragment into monosyllables while the conscious mind of Rod struggles to comprehend the scene before him.

In following the “timber as utility” premise to the logical conclusion of environmental apocalypse, Sinclair departs from the dominant discourse to reveal capitalist exploitation of the idea of timber as an isolated commodity. Consider this stance in conjunction with the following narrated monologue: “[t]o Rod it seems chiefly an excuse for some financial juggling and to strip a lovely valley of timber, to pollute a beautiful stretch of sea-floored inlet with waste from sulphurous acid bleaching vats”



(107). Here, it begins to become clear that Sinclair uses a language of environmental destruction to signify his active resistance to the separation of timber from larger socio-cultural contexts. At the same time, the location of moments of conservationist rhetoric in the novel combines with this resistance to signal a larger economic vision in opposition to capitalism. Furthermore, by locating this critique of capitalism in the character of Rod, Sinclair subverts, in part, the binary logic of “pristine nature/destructive humanity” that seems to “authorize certain actors to speak for nature’s defense of its management (environmentalists, transnational capital, and the state)” while “marginalizing others (local communities, forest workers, First Nations) who understood, and related to the forest in very different ways” (2)—namely, the figure of Rod as logger. As Bourdieu reminds us, those agents who occupy the dominant, positive pole of the field of power—Grove, Deane, Arthur Richston, Mark Sherburne, and John Wall—depend on the articulation of the forests as a utility, as a harvestable crop. Thus, the positions outlined above in Sinclair’s departures from naturalistic, mimetic realism through Rod Norquay—Rod’s assumption of positions unlikely considering his class position and ownership of the means of production—continue to collapse the polarity or opposition of these poles and the power continues to shift away from the positive pole in the field of power.

### **Sinclair’s Economic Vision**

What then emerges out of these arguments? In answer to this question I turn to Raymond Williams’ definition of “the emergent” as meaning “new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationships” (123) being constantly created. Williams further qualifies this definition by stating that “since we are always considering

relations within a cultural process, definitions of the emergent, as of the residual, can be made only in relation to a full sense of the dominant” (123). While, in my opinion, Williams is seeking a model with which to analyze the “real world,” his model seems equally applicable to Sinclair’s fictional world. Indeed, as regards a “full sense of the dominant” I have demonstrated how the dominant pole of the field of power is represented, in turn, by the Norquay family, Grove Norquay, and the entrepreneurial industrial capitalist. I have also identified how the interplay between agents in the field is focused on the resources of the physical timber resource in British Columbia; the physical body, human rights, and description of resource labourers; and, lastly, the status and definition of the forest. When these arguments are taken together (the valuing of the rights of the worker, the echoes of sustainable yield management, and the subversion of the forest as utility doctrine) they present a model that runs contrary to the model of capital accumulation. Indeed, as James Doyle suggests in *Progressive Heritage: The Evolution of a Politically Radical Literary Tradition in Canada*, “[a]s far as Sinclair can see, industrial capitalism is by its very nature unable to create durable prosperity” (45).

In terms of Jean Barman’s remark that “supported by government, employers refused to recognize, much less negotiate with, representations of their employees” (219), it must be noted that one response was that “by violent means if necessary, capitalism would be replaced by a socialist order in which the means of production were publicly owned to ensure economic and social equality” (220). What I see emerging from my analysis of Sinclair, is a third possibility, one in which Sinclair can be seen as writing in a style similar to those whom Lodge refers to as

the politically engag  writers of the 1930s—Auden, Isherwood, Spender, . . .—[who] criticized the modernist poets and novelists of the preceding

generation for their elitist cultural assumptions, their failure or refusal to engage constructively with the great public issues of the time and to communicate to a wide audience. (47)

Structurally, Sinclair is representing a cooperative economic model where entrepreneurial capitalists such as the Norquays operate in a partnership of sorts with their employees. In fact, in a 8 October 1923 letter to Stewart White, Sinclair remarks that

I may be a wild-eyed theorist, but I am of the opinion that if American capital desires to perpetuate itself it will have to lay down the principle that the collective industry of the country will and must assume the burden of supporting the collective labour which motivates such industry.

[ . . . ]

A good many people are agreed that ultimately any industry which cannot guarantee its labour a secure livelihood, a reasonable provision for old age, and freedom from uncertainty while it works, should be eliminated ruthlessly.

[ . . . ]

I should like to see Mr. Leitch [*Man to Man: The Story of Industrial Democracy*]<sup>25</sup> devise a scheme whereby after introducing good will and cooperation into privately owned plants he could guarantee continuous operation and continuous employment to labour and unfailing dividends to the employers. (n. pag.)

Sinclair's remarks, in tandem with the narrative of *The Inverted Pyramid*, prefigure to an extent the idea of the modern welfare state. *The Inverted Pyramid*, published in 1924, reflects the basic thrust of this conversation toward a new economic model.

In addition to the arguments developed in the preceding section, I suggest that the first precept of this model, as represented in the novel, is the requirement of an intimate knowledge of the industry and labour in question. Thus, out of the dominant ideology “‘one doesn't need to do a laborer's work in order to acquire knowledge of labor’” (96) represented in the words of Norquay Senior, emerges Rod's claim to “‘want to know all there is to be known about timber, from the standing tree to the finished product’” (96), to

know “about the men who actually do the handling” (97). This emergent position-taking allows Rod to collaborate with Phil in resolving the dispute at the Valdez camp.

Furthermore, the knowledge he learns as a logger allows him to build a political alliance with agitator Andy Hall, who is hired by Rod to help redress the liabilities created by the Norquay Trust collapse later on in the novel.

In Rod’s choice to take on the liabilities of the Norquay Trust lies a second component of Sinclair’s model. While Rod’s decision to plunder the Norquay timber holdings to support the Norquay Trust is a disaster in environmental terms, it does introduce an ethics of responsibility into the capitalist process. The impersonal word “liabilities” masks the fact that “practically all” of the Thorn family money “is in the Norquay Trust” (258), as are the life savings of “eleven thousand dollars” which Mr. and Mrs. Stagg, the family caregivers, had saved over the years (275). When queried about such trust accounts and depositors, Richston, spokesperson for the board of directors of the Norquay Trust, asserts that “circumstances are too strong for us . . . it isn’t criminal to fail in business” (228). In contrast to the dominant practice of valuing profit over an ethics of responsibility, Sinclair rejects this opposition and constructs a hierarchical business model where ethics supplants profit. In Rod’s words, “[w]e aren’t legally responsible; we are morally” (254).

The most important component of Sinclair’s model is what he refers to as “supporting the collective labour which motivates such industry” (Letter to Stewart White). In the novel this means forestalling “agitation for better conditions by setting an example in the way of conditions. We provide first-class living quarters. We serve the best food available. We pay top wages, with the added inducement of a bonus based on

production. No man is to be fired for any sort of economic heresy” (283). In other words, the model is based on “security of livelihood, [and] a recognition of their rights as human beings,—two things that were everywhere recognized in theory but frequently disregarded in practice” (285). Rod’s words echo Sinclair’s statement that industry should “guarantee its labour a secure livelihood” (Letter to Stewart White). As noted above, Hak tells us that “in the establishment and operation of the production system, profit and loss were concerns at all stages. Labour power, machinery, timber, and credit were purchased at the lowest possible cost” (5). In Sinclair’s vision these ideals in the service of profit have been clearly superseded.

One direct result of the displacement of the capitalism-for-profit economic model is the political alliance, contingent though it may be, that it generates. In the bust-economy after the war, when the “post-war orgy of production had run its artificial course” (Sinclair 305), profit margins or timber were decreasing to the point of virtual loss. However, rather than shut down operations or inflict severe restrictions on wages and camp conditions, Rod chooses to explain in detail his economic situation to the loggers, to have them take part in the decisions to be made in the face of economic depression. Their response “[w]e don’t want a shutdown. We want to keep workin’. For pretty near two years now we’ve set wages and hours. Now that times are bad again, we’re willin’ to leave it to you” (312), signals the ethic of cooperation that has been created between labour and capital. Furthermore, it indicates a contingent political alliance that allows the company to maintain production during bust-time conditions that troubled other industrial capitalists. In Bourdieu’s framework, Rod ultimately succeeds in the “loser takes all” game (154). Here, the “underlying law of this paradoxical game is

that it is to one's interest to be disinterested: the advantage always falls to those who seek none" (154). Thus Rod's disavowal of the trajectory set forth by his habitus and his position at the dominant end of the field of power—his choice instead to occupy the dominated pole, to wed Mary Thorn, to work as a logger, to choose ethics and human dignity over profit—is the “winning” choice. This is also true regarding the *Bildungsroman* as theorized by Lukács. In response to Hegel, Lukács states that “the educational process does not always culminate in acceptance of, and adaptation to, bourgeois society. The realization of youthful convictions and dreams is obstructed by the pressures of society; the rebellious hero is broken, and driven into isolation, but the reconciliation with society of which Hegel speaks is not always extracted” (112). Rod is indeed broken, and does spend time in isolation, yet the “reconciliation with society” is not extracted. However, while Sinclair does leave Rod in semi-isolation, he closes his novel with an image of movement, of the “loser as winner.” Rod's words, the final words of the novel, “There's one thing to be said for shirt sleeves. They give a man room to swing his arms” (339), present an image of fighting, of mobility, of freedom, of labour, and of success. As Sinclair puts it, “It seems to me that the man – or woman – who keeps going when he has nothing much to go on but his nerve is a much more dramatic spectacle than any number of explosions” (Letter to Mrs. Bodger).

## Roderick Haig-Brown

I recall dozens, if not hundreds of bunkhouse discussions not a fraction less intense, if possibly less recondite, than those of the most vigorous intellectual groups. My friends were realists to a man; they begged me to tell the truth, all the truth, not as poets and writers and film directors see it, but as they themselves saw it—the daily truth of hard work and danger, of great trees falling and great machines thundering, of molly hogans<sup>26</sup> and buckle guys and long-splices. They made a profound impression.

-Roderick Haig-Brown, “The Writer in Isolation: A Surprised Exploration of a Given Subject,” *Writings and Reflections*, 1959  
60.

In this passage from “The Writer in Isolation: A Surprised Exploration of a Given Subject,” Roderick Haig Brown invokes the themes and ideas that I find most intriguing and captivating about his work—realist descriptions of the logging industry in general, the dangerous labour conditions and practices of this industry, the conservationism and unionization that arose as a result of these conditions and practices, the conflation of environmental knowledge (of “great trees”) and physical labour, the community and friendship between men in virtually all-male environments, and the unique intellectual and linguistic community within these environments. More difficult to tease out of his remarks is the implicit construction of gender, yet I suggest that the phrase “to a man”

signals the *construction* of “logger” as masculine, while also indicating or alluding to the exclusion of women from this labour community—a theme prominent in both *Timber* (1942) and *On the Highest Hill* (1949).

Most evident of these themes, however, is Haig-Brown’s attempt to convey the “daily truth of hard work and danger” in the woods. These novels represent a detailed account of the timber industry and its surrounding influences and institutions from approximately 1930 to 1947. Further, *Timber* and *On the Highest Hill* mark important moments, insights, and shifts in thinking during this period—one of these being the forgotten narrative of injuries and fatalities. I further contend that alongside this account, and still within the realist frame that Haig-Brown sets forth for his writing, is what I call his recovery-narrative of the “more than ten thousand men” (Waiser 251) who were involved in building Canada’s national parks and infrastructure between 1915 and 1946. More important, though, is my reading of these two texts as environmental texts according to the criteria set forth by Lawrence Buell in *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (1995). Reading these texts as environmental texts is crucial to an understanding of Haig-Brown’s ecocritical project of “evoking the natural world through verbal surrogates and thereby attempting to bond the reader to the world as well as to discourse” (Buell 102).

Haig-Brown also represents physical labour as a source of environmental knowledge and thus destabilizes the typical construction of an opposition or binary between environmentalism and resource extraction labourer. As I read *Timber* and *On the Highest Hill* in search of what they have to say about labour, it becomes clear that the most important insight into labour that they provide concerns gender construction.



Indeed, though I have decided to treat dangerous working conditions, the creation of parks, and the reading of these novels as environmental texts in discrete sections, the undercurrent or underlying connection between them is the role that gender plays in each instance. Here, my primary contention is that Haig-Brown, within his portrayal of the male-dominant industry and culture of logging, consciously or not, foregrounds and opens the door to an examination of homosocial and homosexual relationships between men within this culture.

The plot of *Timber* revolves around the characters of Johnny Holt, Alec (Slim) Crawford, Julie Morris and the relationship among all three. Johnny is the naturally gifted labourer and Alec, while also a gifted labourer, is the more cerebral of the two. Julie is Alec's cousin and eventually marries Johnny Holt. The majority of the novel details in great depth the nature, conditions, and community of work in the logging industry during the 1930s while representing historical events such as the gradual, complex, and conflict-ridden formation of unions within this industry. While logging is the primary focus of the novel, leisure activities such as hunting and fishing also play a prominent role—not a surprise given these were life-long passions of Haig-Brown. Alec and Johnny work in a variety of positions and camps, are eventually blacklisted for their supposed tendency toward agitation, and eventually resign themselves to working in a less-than-ideal camp where Alec is killed in an accident. In contrast to the focus found in *Timber*, the plot of *On the Highest Hill* ranges widely both in content and the historical period of the early 1930s to approximately 1947. Here the plot follows the character of Colin Ensley through the various stages of his life, including work in the logging industry, his travels across prairie Canada during the Depression, his role in World War II, his return to the town of

Blenkinstown, and his eventual self-exile and death in the mountain wilderness. In some sense, *On the Highest Hill* can be read as a *Bildungsroman* as Colin's transition from youth to adulthood is aided by a cast of supporting characters.<sup>27</sup> Will and Martha Ensley are Colin's parents and set forth for him an ideal of work and masculinity to live up to. His school teacher Mildred Hansen represents his romantic or sexual mentor, neighbour Earl Mayhew teaches Colin to hunt and provide for his family, and timber-cruiser Andrew Grant tutors Colin in the methods of surveying the land for timber and introduces him to the reclusive trapper Robbie. In my analysis of these two novels, I treat them as one. Where *Timber* is the microcosm, *On the Highest Hill* is the macrocosm, and in some sense the latter can be read as an answer or at least counterpart to the former. Both portray the realities of labour and both seem to answer the call of Haig-Brown's realist friends to "tell the truth . . . as they themselves saw it" (*Writer in Isolation* 60).

### **Dangerous Conditions and National Parks**

The man withdraws the saw    snaps it silent  
leans against a stump    gropes for a smoke  
on a tearing hinge of wood  
the tree tips    hisses down  
but the faller's aim has been faulty  
the hemlock strikes a standing cedar  
the butt breaks free    kicks back  
like a triggered piston.

There is no time to run  
the butt connects like a wooden hoof  
pins the man to the stump  
his ribs snap like sticks  
fastidious to the end  
he pulls free his wallet

places it safely above the blood  
on the tree that has felled him

-Peter Trower, from "Collision Course," *Haunted Hills and  
Hanging Valleys*, 2004, 71

In *More Deadly than War! Pacific Coast Logging, 1827-1981*, Andrew Mason Prouty

asserts that

[t]he lumber industry in the United States and Canada has a history of almost unrelenting violence (if that is the proper word)—violence committed against the land by the loggers and the reciprocal violence endured by the men themselves while 'opening up the country.' This element of violence has been overlooked in an otherwise comprehensive body of forest literature. (xvii)

Prouty further contends that "perhaps this is an instance of that phenomenon which the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence label 'Historical amnesia . . . a kind of selected recollection that masks unpleasant traumas of the past'" (xvii) and that "because many writers fail to mention the human wastage in logging and milling, one comes to conclude a tacit willingness to pretend that the violence never took place" (xviii). This failure or continuing historical amnesia is precisely what Haig-Brown addresses and redresses in *Timber*. By situating his narrative in the 1930s logging industry, and including both fatalities and the continued possibility of injury and fatality in his narrative, Haig-Brown forces his readers to deal with the very real "reciprocal violence endured by the men" in the woods. Furthermore, Haig-Brown demonstrates the emotional and psychological trauma that resulted from this violence, contrary to the rhetoric that men in this industry were impervious to emotional or psychological weakness. If it is Prouty's contention that—

of these human victims—not insentient trees and rivers but rather living, breathing men cut in two by flailing steel rigging, smashed by crumpling snags and falling limbs, crushed by rolling logs, dismembered by the spinning saws in the mills—about these victims, the forest protectionists and environmentalists have nothing to say. (xx)

—then Haig-Brown’s contention is that this violence does matter and is crucial to understanding the nature of work in the logging industry.

The most striking example of the role violence plays in *Timber* is Haig-Brown’s use of death-by-workplace injury to frame his narrative. The novel begins with an inquest into the death of Charlie Davis and ends almost immediately after the death of Alec Crawford, a death which occurs despite his central role in the narrative. Charlie Davis is killed while fitting the back tongs, attached to a guy line, onto the rear of a log in order to load it onto a railcar from its position on the landing (the front was already suspended – see Figures 1 and 2). In the process of attaching the back tongs, Davis failed to see the new “turn” or group of logs being “yarded” or dragged to the landing (Figures 3 and 4 offer an approximation); this turn of logs hits Davis and kills him. Fatalities such as this were unfortunately common in the logging industry. Consider the spar tree and cable rigging (Figure 4) as an illustration of Prouty’s claim that the new “highball [high lead] methods and fast machinery, which sent the singing cables flying over their heads in the West Coast forests, allowed loggers to maim and kill themselves in ways unheard of, and in numbers so great, that the appalling problem went unaddressed in the industry” (87). The spar-tree cables in Figure 4, under tension, upon breaking, or simply in motion, could easily kill, injure, or maim a logger. Indeed, Alec, in considering there was “four hundred feet of steel mainline to whip in and coil up on the landing,” reflects that “if a man gets a piece of that wrapped around his neck he can quit worrying” (214)—he would be killed

**Figure 1: Logs being loaded onto rail cars.**

**Note the figure to the bottom left of the suspended log. From the Capilano Timber Company Collection fonds; BC Historical Photograph Collection: Library Digital Collections. BC 1456/33/59. Date listed as "1919"**



**Figure 2: A logging crane about to load a log onto a rail car.  
MacMillan Bloedel Limited fonds. BC Historical Photograph Collection: Library Digital  
Collections. BC 1930/19/42. Date listed as 1942.**

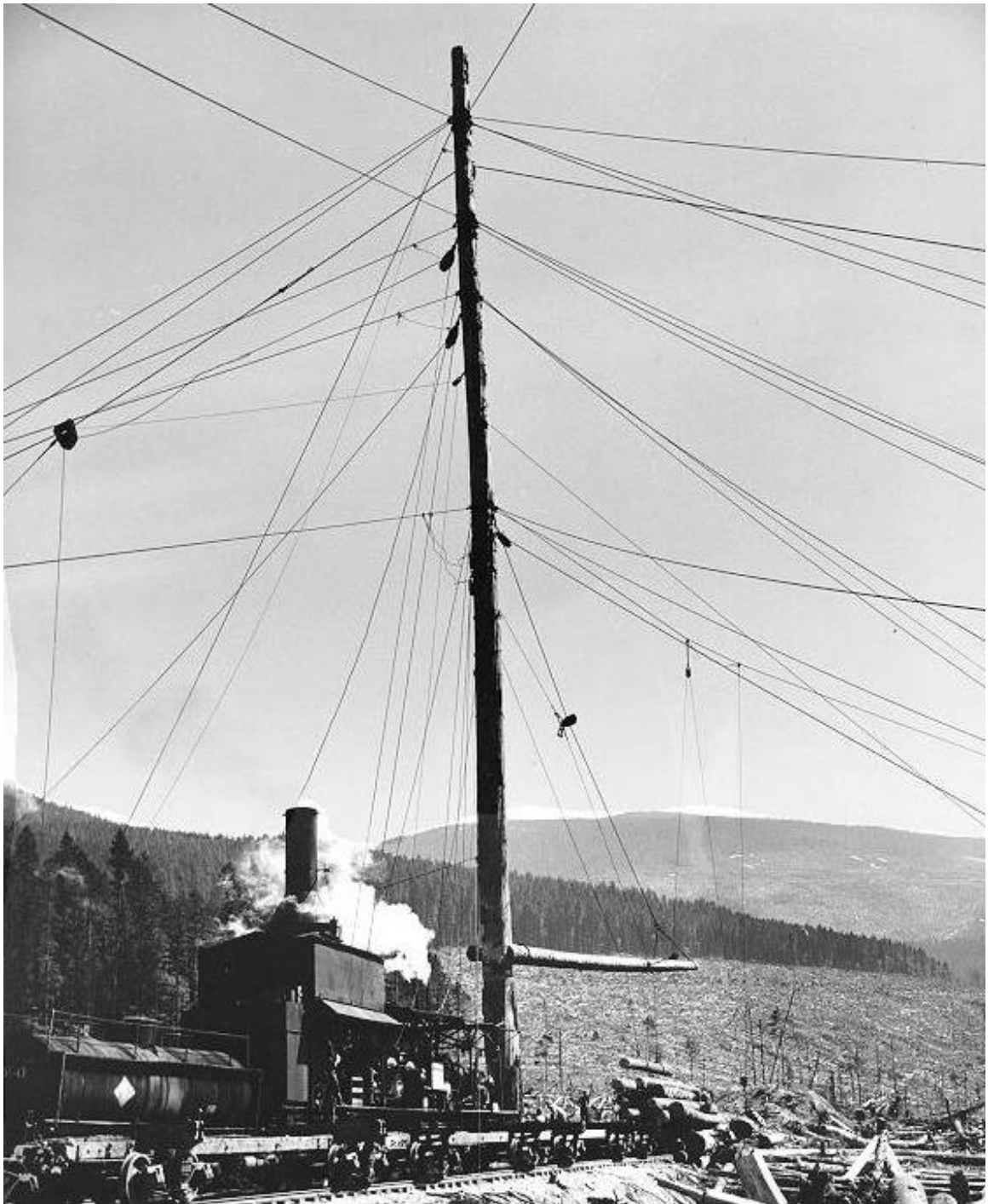


**Figure 3: A yarder using a skyline to bring logs to the landing.  
MacMillan Bloedel Limited fonds; BC 1930/19/50; date listed as 1942.**



**Figure 4: An example of a wooden spar, steel rigging, and donkey engine loading logs onto a waiting flatcar.**

**MacMillan Bloedel Limited fonds. BC Historical Photograph Collection: Library Digital Collections; 1930/547/1449. Date listed as 194-?. Photograph by Jack Cash.**





by strangulation or decapitation. Other injuries include Ted who, in a collision between train and speeder car, was left “lying awkwardly on a pile of split rock and the wrecked speeder was on his legs” (220). While the case of the fire that was racing through the camp (230), or the near tragedy of a train derailment (262), represent the continued potential for accident and injury, the image of Alec’s death with a “chunk” of tree “across his thighs, pinning him down” (373) near the close of the novel represents the indiscriminate nature of the violence in this vocation. How do these fatalities, injuries, and near-accidents function? On one hand, they simply serve as the historical backdrop to the logging narrative, a fact of life that the loggers dealt with regularly, and one which perhaps adds to the perceived romantic heroism of the occupation. On the other hand, they represent the forgotten narrative of death and injury in the woods; in the words of Prouty when he considers the list of “Fatal Accidents” published in industry journals: “Taken individually the ‘Fatal Accidents’ recited do not amount to much; in their cumulative effect, they have the horror of a battle report” (xxv). Indeed, at a glance, *Timber* describes a death by an impact with a turn of logs, a crash between a speeder car and a train, the threat and presence of fire, a near-derailment, and a crushing death under a chunk from a broken spar tree. Together, these images, like the published list of “Fatal Accidents,” present a far more gruesome and horrific picture of life as a logger than their individual presentation might convey.

Despite the horror and tragedy of these accidents, it is tempting to read them as integral to the identity of the logger as a hyper-masculine, outlaw-type figure. Indeed, to return to the rhetoric of “a breed apart,” which I used in my analysis of *The Inverted Pyramid*, it was often assumed that loggers were “special men who endured conditions

that were unacceptable in other walks of life” (Hak, *Turning* 147). Furthermore, a degree of mythology arose out of the harsh conditions of logging life and the wild characters that this life attracted. As Donald MacKay states, these “[c]haracters became small legends” (195). There was “‘Eight-day Wilson’ . . . [who] had a reputation of never working in a camp for more than a week or eight days,” “‘Rough-house Pete’ Olsen . . . [who] was talked about in more camps than he can possibly have worked” and who, “complaining that there were hemlock leaves in” the stew, “stuck his big, greasy caulk boots right into the pot,” and “‘Johnny-on-the-Spot’ [who] was . . . a fighter when he went to town, but in camp was quiet, even studious . . .” (MacKay 195). What stands out in these descriptions of legendary characters is that *reputation* is crucial. The reputation for endurance, and the willingness to do that which others would shy away from, are central to the image of the logger. This reputation functioned to aid owners in maintaining poor camp conditions, as an ideal for loggers to “live up to,” but also as a tool of the trade. As Richard Rajala suggests, “when times were slack, loggers who had travelled widely and established a reputation of proficiency were more likely to find work” (170). For very real and functional reasons, therefore, the fact of death and injury in the woods is tied directly to ideas of reputation and success via the concepts of endurance and perseverance.

One consequence of the interconnected construction of fatality, injury, and reputation, however, is the elision of the psychological or emotional trauma experienced by loggers when faced with these events. This trauma, in effect, is subsumed in the socially constructed and idealized reputation of loggers—a reputation that by its very nature does not leave room for tender or intimate emotion. In defining the male body, for example, Christopher E. Forth maintains that “the male body is conceptualized as an

ideally bounded entity, equipped with psychological and physical resources that maintain a sharp distinction between self and other while containing (or at least channeling) aspects of emotional life, which in the case of men often include the feelings of fear, sorrow, love and aggression” (8-9). In the case of the male-dominated industry of logging, this “other” can be seen as other men; thus, reputation effectively maintains an emotional division between men that precludes feelings of sorrow and fear in the face of tragedy. At the same time, “reputation” maintains the division between so-called weak, emotional women and strong, stable men.

This construction is an abstraction, a particular articulation or social construction of male loggers. Indeed, I argue that this articulation of “the logger” is contested and destabilized by Haig-Brown through the narrated lives of characters who experienced these injuries and fatalities. Here I turn to what Dorrit Cohn’s refers to as psycho-narration or “the narrator’s discourse about a character’s consciousness” (14), a style of narration used to summarize “diffuse feelings, needs, [and] urges” (135). Cohn further states that one advantage of psycho-narration

lies in its verbal independence from self-articulation. Not only can it order and explain a character’s conscious thoughts better than the character himself, it can also effectively articulate a psychic life that remains un verbalized, penumbral, or obscure. Accordingly psycho-narration often renders, in a narrator’s knowing words, what a character ‘knows,’ without knowing how to put it into words. (46)

Consider, for example, Johnny’s reaction to the death of Charlie Davis:

Johnny hung behind and looked at the big body on the stretcher. You wanted to be able to say something, tell the guy he had been good . . . You wanted to tell him it hadn’t meant a goddamned thing when you cursed him out for doing something crazy—not a thing except that you didn’t want him to get killed. (5)

This scene opens with a note of narratorial omniscience; the distance between narrator and character is readily apparent through the third person use of “Johnny.” By using the name of the character, the narrator—and by extension the reader—is located at a distant spatial and temporal vantage point, in particular, one where the narrator can both look upon and back (third-person, past tense) at the character. By the second sentence, however, this vantage point is no longer marked; the narrator recedes into the background while the reader is propelled forward through the transition into the second person, marked by the pronoun “you.” Crucial to understanding the above passage is the fact that it ends with “He turned again and went back into the courtroom” (5); this is a third-person monologue and is consistent with the general tense of the book. Thus, the “you” is not the “you” of the distant narrator in the first sentence, but the “you” of the consciousness, or psycho-narration of Johnny—but nevertheless still translated through the narrator, given that no direct quotation is indicated. While the “you” statements may seem to be second person, unsigned, self-quoted monologue, they, in fact, represent a point at which the narrator and figural mind of Johnny converge.

Further, because the passage makes claims about the Johnny’s emotional state, I read it as psycho-narration. This psycho-narration is also located in the repetition of both the word “wanted” and the speech indicators of “say” and “tell.” Here the verb “wanted” signals the unexpressed, emotional desire of Johnny to communicate with Charlie. The verbs “say” and “tell” represent the confessional mode of Johnny’s thoughts, his need for articulation, speech, and unburdening—his inability to establish this communication with Charlie, his inability to assuage himself of the guilt and regret he feels, mark the lingering psychological damage Charlie’s death has inflicted upon him. Also consider the use of

“goddamned” following the speech indicators. The sequential order of these terms signifies Johnny’s anger both at the death of Charlie and at his inability to tell Charlie that his reprimands arose from goodwill and care; the residual anger here is a further marker of psychological trauma.

A similar instance of psycho-narration occurs in the following passage:

Johnny felt again the tightness of chest and throat that wanted to reach out and back, to say all the words that had not been said and live the years of strong life, of work and drinking and talking and laughing that were shut away for ever now in Charlie’s big body. (23)

The point of view in this passage is, again, clearly that of Johnny’s, yet the language is just as clearly the language of the third-person narrator; the language does not correspond to the sometimes ungrammatical, sharp, unemotional idiom that marks Johnny’s dialogue. Also clear is the sorrow indicated by the clenched chest and throat following the introspective verb “felt,” as well as the desire and yearning to bring Charlie back, to speak and talk with him once again. Yet, Johnny’s want is forever located in the impossible condition of the past tense, an unrealizable hope or dream—the inability to fulfill Johnny’s unspoken desires suggests feelings of powerlessness and helplessness, and again marks the lingering trauma caused by Charlie’s death. Ironically, the verbalization of Johnny’s sorrow, regret, desire, and anger is ultimately articulated not by Johnny, but through the filter of the narrator, and in turn, identified with by the reader. In other words, the narrator here verbalizes “what a character ‘knows,’ without knowing how to put it into words” (Cohn 46).

A further example of Sinclair’s articulation of Johnny’s emotional life is his reaction to the death of Alec: “he felt his heart fast and sick inside him and his eyes were blurred with furious tears so that everything about him seemed indistinct” (373). Noting

that this passage is written in the third person and uses the verb “felt,” I read this sentence as an example of psycho-narration. Here, the narrator uses a lack of punctuation to indicate the fluid and confusing mass of emotions that are spinning through the mind of Johnny—there is no comma, no period, to slow down, measure, or adequately indicate the depth and complexity of grief and sorrow that Johnny feels in this moment. Grammar ultimately breaks down in the expression of these emotions. Of course, it is precisely this manipulation of grammar that makes it clear that it is the narrator, not Johnny, who is responsible for articulating emotion in this manner. While these moments of psycho-narration, of reflection and emotion dealing with trauma and death, are not a central focus of the novel, they nevertheless challenge the articulation and construction of the logger as a hyper-masculine, unemotional individual. Just as much, they also challenge the construction of the logger as a romantic, mythological being, a standard to live up to. Paramount, however, is the fact of the violence and emotional trauma in itself; it is these moments in the text that redress the “historical amnesia” regarding violence in the logging industry and the “tacit willingness” of some writers and historians to ignore such violence.

If in *Timber* Haig-Brown redresses the historical amnesia of death and injury in the logging industry, in *On the Highest Hill* he redresses the historical amnesia surrounding the use of so-called relief workers in creating and maintaining Canada’s national parks. Bill Waiser in *The Untold Story of Canada’s National Parks, 1915-1946*, argues that

[w]hile the country was gripped by a seemingly unshakable economic malaise and the government searched vainly for a cure, the Parks

Department enjoyed the luxury of several hundred labourers, who toiled at a variety of development, recreation, and maintenance projects. These were not the 'lost years' for the national parks in western Canada; the national playgrounds would be ready for the return of prosperity. Out of work and in many instances out of hope, many of these men, in spite of the conditions of their employment, found in the park camps a temporary refuge from the worst ravages of the Depression. (84)

The *Encyclopedia of British Columbia* states that the “first camps in BC were organized by the provincial government in 1931” and “were absorbed by the federal government in 1932” (“Relief Camps” 596). The *Encyclopedia* further reports that “inmates received accommodation, meals, work clothes, medical attention and a daily cash allowance of 20 cents,” and that “in BC there were 237 relief camps, more than in any other province” (596). One of Waiser’s central points is that this use of relief workers in building parks is “untold.” Indeed, his statement that “the national park camps were silent by 1937, and little time was lost removing the structures and clearing the sites” (126), seems to point to the erasure of this aspect of provincial and national history. In fact, the entry “relief camps,” in the *Encyclopedia of British Columbia*, contains no specific mention of park labour at all. Haig-Brown, in contrast, specifically names “‘relief work’” (191) in the context of building parks during the latter half of the 1930s. Colin, hired to be a “push,” a “straw-boss” or a “symbol of authority” (192) in the camp and to teach his charges the necessary skills to complete the work, reflects that “they were developing a small park near the low, slanting falls across the Strathmore River, building roads and trails, flights of steps down awkward places, bridges across the tributary creeks, signs to guide the summer visitors” (192). Thus, in the first instance, as he did with violence in *Timber*, Haig-Brown redresses the historical amnesia surrounding the creation of parks by simply including this episode in his novel; he *peoples* the “cleared landscapes” and *creates* his

own literary and linguistic *structures* in place of the physical structures were later removed.

Equally important is that in representing the relief camp park labour, Haig-Brown represents the collapse of a particular ethos of labour. In the words of Will Ensley this ethos dictates that “[a] man that’s good never has to work. Work looks for him” (29). Implicit in this ethos is the construction of masculinity, of the constructed social male role as provider. As Waiser explains, “[i]t was widely believed in early twentieth-century Canada that there was always work to be had and that any able-bodied person on relief was lazy . . . Relief carried with it a stigma—it was a badge of failure and disgrace” (54). This failure and disgrace is not simply a failure to obtain work but a failure to provide for self or family, a failure to measure up to the socially constructed masculine standard in circulation at the time. Consider the exchange between Colin and his brother-in-law Clyde Munro:

Colin: ‘What is it? . . . Relief work?’

Clyde: ‘The camp is. But you’d be more like on the staff.’

Colin: ‘Sounds like it might be O.K.’ (191)

Colin, prepared to simply “pull out” and leave once again, is quite skeptical about work in the relief camp; his initial questioning indicates his hesitation—a reflection of the popular attitude toward relief work and one likely inherited from his father. It isn’t until Clyde states that Colin would be “on the staff” as opposed to on relief that Colin accepts the proposition; the work-ethos passed on to him by his father, and his masculine identity thus remain intact.

In contrast to Colin’s staff position are the men of the camps. The first crew under Colin’s charge were the “‘single unemployed’ of the province, most of them young and



city-bred" (192). These men, presumably because of their youth and "city-bred" work experience, are attracted to Colin and the type of physical labour and "craftsmanship" (192) which he represents and is able to teach them. The second crew under Colin, however, are men "a good deal older the Colin" and had no interest in the work he had to show them. Rather, they "were careful to do no more than the barest minimum of work" (195). Here, Haig-Brown represents the collapse of the work ethic represented by Will Ensley. In fact, Will, having been blacklisted, is described as "'not a sure man anymore'" (190). Clyde Munro, Will's son-in-law, explains that "'[i]t's his pride that's gone'" and that "'the things he [Will] believes in haven't worked out for him'" (190). Clyde further remarks that "'[i]t's not easy for a man as old as Mr. Ensley to change his whole way of life. Especially when he's been one of the top men in his trade'" (190). When the attitude toward labour of the second, older group of men under Colin's charge is examined alongside Will's failing pride and confidence, it seems clear that the unwillingness of the men to labour under Colin indicates not their laziness, but rather the psychological effects of the failure of their work-ethos, of their need to work in a relief camp. Indeed, when Colin is challenged about his own interest in labour, he responds by stating that he is "'[j]ust trying to earn [his] keep'" (195). This response is met by the rejoinder of Mel Ross who remarks "'[g]o ahead . . . [y]ou're the one that's getting paid to work, not us'" (195). While Ross and his remarks ostensibly represent the sarcastic attitude of the men and their general tendency toward agitation, this interpretation is belied by the undercurrent of concern indicated by Ross' mention of wages. His mention of "pay" reminds the reader of the twenty-cent per day wage the men received as well as the more serious fact that the labour they are performing is inherently seen as *valueless*, as labour

that, no matter how skilful or productive, is not assigned value according to the men's idea of a fair or living wage. Implied here is thus the collapse of the ethos or ideology that dictates skilful and productive labour is a guarantor of good wages and further employment.

While it is tempting to dismiss this older group of men as lazy or as professional agitators, I argue that they are men who, like Will, have witnessed and suffered the collapse of their ethos, their pride, and their "whole way of life" (190). Thus situated, these men can be interpreted as either psychologically broken and unable to accept the new conditions of their labour or as actively rebelling against these new conditions. Possibly, they "simply see" through the capitalist system that treats them as exploitable labour. These positions are reinforced by the narrated monologue attributed to Colin:

They wanted a higher rate of pay, without the planned hold-back that was supposed to help them out when they left, and a promise that the camps would be continued through the year instead of closing down in early spring, when work became more plentiful . . . most of all they want to be sure of something, not to go back to town at the end of a couple of months and start looking again with only a few dollars between them and hunger . . . They are one little part of hundreds and thousands and hundreds of thousands of people, all across North America, who aren't sure they can do enough and get enough to keep them alive. (197-8)

In using the park relief camps as a part of his narrative, Haig-Brown recovers the narrative of these men; he tells a part of their story. Part of this story is the idea that personal and family security, the sense that the workers and their family would not face hunger or demise, is no longer possible; security and surety, stability, and the ability to feed person and family—these were guarantees that could no longer be made by recourse to skill and hard work. Haig-Brown, therefore, in his representation of these men, and of these camps, in part fulfils the demand made by Waiser to tell the story of Canada's

national parks. To use Prouty's words, Haig-Brown refuses to participate in the tacit willingness to ignore this part of Canadian history.

### **Haig-Brown and the Environmental Text**

The decision of those of us who profess English has been, by and large, that the relationship between literature and these issues of the degradation of the earth is something that we won't talk about. Where the subject unavoidably arises, it is commonly assigned to some category such as 'nature writing,' or 'regionalism,' or 'interdisciplinary studies,' obscure pigeonholes whose very titles have seemed to announce their insignificance.

[ . . . ]

[A] nature-oriented literature offers a much needed corrective, for one very important aspect of this literature is its regard—either implicit or stated—for the non-human.

— Glen A. Love, "Revaluing Nature." *The Ecocriticism Reader*, 1996, 227-8; 229-30.

Roderick Haig-Brown is most often identified with his work in environmental politics, especially in the dispute involving Buttle Lake (Strathcona Park, British Columbia) in the middle of the twentieth century. It was a dispute with "dimensions and strategies" such that, in the words of Arn Keeling, it "earn[s] it the label of the province's first

environmental controversy” (*Dynamic* 258). Nevertheless, and surprisingly, little work has been done to examine Haig-Brown’s narratives through the lens of ecocritical theory. Arn Keeling, in both “The Profligate Province: Roderick Haig-Brown and the Modernizing of British Columbia” (co-authored with Robert McDonald) and “‘A Dynamic, Not a Static Conception’: The Conservation Thought of Roderick Haig-Brown,” touches on Haig-Brown’s novels, but remains focused on his conservation work. Likewise, writers such as Allan Pritchard in his two part “West of the Great Divide,” Anthony Robertson in *Above Tide: Reflections on Roderick Haig-Brown*, E. Bennett Metcalfe in *A Man of Some Importance*, and W.J. Keith in “Roderick Haig-Brown,” all touch on the subject, but do not offer a sustained analysis of his work in this regard—especially of the novels *Timber* and *On the Highest Hill*.

I suspect part of the problem lies with the pedagogically useful but overly simplistic term “setting” in combination with the reputation of Haig-Brown’s novels as naturalist. I suggest that setting as such recedes into (or is reduced to) the background; it is of little importance—simply a function or characteristic of a particular type of novel. As Buell suggests, setting “depreciates what it denotes, implying that the physical environment serves for artistic purposes merely as a backdrop, ancillary to the main event” (85). One way out of this impasse is, of course, to read a text ecocritically, as an environmental text. Indeed, both *Timber* and *On the Highest Hill* are environmental texts according to the four criteria outlined by Buell:

1. The nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history.
2. The human interest is not understood to be the only legitimate interest.

3. Human accountability to the environment is part of the text's ethical orientation.

4. Some sense of the environment as a process rather than as a constant or a given is at least implicit in the text. (7-8)

Establishing these two novels as environmental texts provides a framework for analysing setting as more than simply a backdrop “ancillary to the main event,” but rather as a method of bonding the reader with the environment by means of written description. Further, through the lens of ecocriticism Haig-Brown's novels can be seen to destabilize the binary between the environmental advocate and the resource extraction labourer by conjoining labour and environmental knowledge.

To return to Buell's criteria, both novels clearly evince the idea that human history is implicated in natural history. Indeed, the acts of logging in *Timber* and timber cruising and logging in *On the Highest Hill* during the 1930s and 40s directly implicate human beings, through the acts mentioned, in the physical alteration of the natural wilderness. That is, the activities of logging and timber cruising cannot be extricated from the alteration of the forest to logging slash.<sup>28</sup> In fact, Colin's job in timber cruising, the act of surveying and classifying a given landscape to locate and estimate timber in terms of species, characteristics, quantity and cost, results in the transformation of the land from live ecosystem to commodity since timber cruising produces the anatomization and isolation of particular forest products from other forest and animal systems for the purpose of production and profit. As with Bertrand Sinclair's representation of surveying, Haig-Brown reveals the divide between nature and culture. Latour is again instructive in explaining that “for purely anthropocentric—that is political reasons—naturalists have built their collective to make sure that subjects and objects, culture and nature remain utterly distinct, with only the former having any sort of agency” (483). In this case,

human history is seen to actively construct an androcentric articulation of nature distinct from culture, and according to its use and value. By representing this activity, and its outcome—namely the destruction of forest land in “Colin’s Valley” (215)—Haig-Brown ties human history directly to natural history through physical transformation and social construction alike. This representation of physical transformation and social construction, in turn, also fulfils Buell’s fourth criterion, that of the environment as a process rather than as a constant or a given.

Illustrating Buell’s second and third criteria Haig-Brown creates long descriptive passages about the natural environment, which indicate that human interests are not the only ones in the novel, and that there exists a human accountability to the environment.<sup>29</sup> Consider *Timber* when Alec treks through the South Fork of a canyon where “the whole of the canyon was already in shadow, and looking away from it he saw the sun, huge and red, far down towards the gulf. He felt softness under foot and found that he was standing on a heavy blue-green mat of juniper; he stepped back from it, ashamed to have crushed it under his caulks” (357). Alex feels shame at the destruction of the juniper, and though a brief moment in the novel, it suggests the novel’s ethical orientation toward nature, one where human interests are not the only ones and that a man can feel accountable to nature. *On the Highest Hill* presents this same ethical attitude. Colin, a naturally gifted hunter, reflects while hunting a deer:

I don’t want to shoot him, I don’t want to hurt the silence, I don’t want to see him dead and see his blood. I hate the blood . . . We have to have meat and I’m yellow to be afraid of the blood and not to want to shoot . . . [is it] his dead eyes and the sound he would make when I put the knife in his throat? (62)

Important here is the assignment of gender to the buck. Rather than dehumanize the buck as an “it,” Colin’s reference to “him” humanizes the buck and underlies the empathy

Colin feels toward the animal. In short, it is through Colin's empathy for the pain and suffering the buck might feel, as evidenced by the "sound" the buck would make while dying, that the non-human interest is foregrounded and the reader, through the bond inherent in the first-person "I," feels an accountability toward the environment.<sup>30</sup>

Moments such as these abound in both texts, whether they are complex descriptions of a trout stream in *Timber*, or condemnations of logging practices at the close of *On The Highest Hill*. When taken together, these moments confirm these two novels as environmental texts and highlight the relevance of an ecocritical analysis.

In *Timber* and *On the Highest Hill* Haig-Brown devotes much time to descriptions of the natural landscape. In the naturalist mode, he attempts to provide as much detail and minutiae as possible in his rendering of the so-called natural world. Yet, as Buell remarks in a slightly different context, there are many "filters through which literature sifts the environment it purports to represent" (84). Buell further explains that

These filters begin with the human sensory apparatus itself, which responds much more sensitively for example at the level of sight than of smell and even at the visual level is highly selective . . . For these reasons our reconstructions of environment cannot be other than skewed and partial. Even if this were not so, even if human perception could perfectly register environmental stimuli, literature could not. Even when it professes the contrary, art removes itself from nature. (84)

As Buell notes, this argument seems somewhat obvious, as is the idea that follows from this argument that there is a high level of intention and deliberate selection involved in the art of portraying any environment. Nevertheless, one reason why the novels of Haig-Brown have been ignored is a result of the debates over the value of realism that has led to somewhat of an anti-realist or anti-referential theoretical stance in the contemporary academic study of literature. This stance, in the words of Buell, "forbids the project of evoking the natural world through verbal surrogates and thereby attempting to bond the

reader to the world as well as to discourse” (102).<sup>31</sup> In other words, “we need to recognize stylization’s capacity for what poet-critic Francis Ponge calls *adéquation*: verbalizations that are not replicas but equivalents of the world of objects, such that writing in some measure bridges the abyss that inevitably yawns between language and the object-world” (italics added, Buell 98).<sup>32</sup>

The power of environmental representation to bridge the abyss between language and the object-physical world, to connect the reader with the world as well as to, and through, discourse, is easily illustrated by a passage from *Timber*:

He sat down with his back against a big alder, but stood up again almost at once and went down to the river. He squatted by the edge of the water and began turning over the rocks, searching for caddis grubs and mayfly nymphs and the other small insects of a troutstream. It surprised him to find stonefly crawlers still there and he began to search with a new interest, turning over rock after rock until he had found a dozen or more. He put one hand down in the water and held it there until the cold became uncomfortable. That’ll be it, I guess, he told himself; cold enough to make them late. (341-2)

Notice the movement of Alec from his sitting position beneath the alder to beside the stream. The reader, located in a distant spatial-temporal vantage point, is drawn by this motion into the action by the stream; as Alec squats and begins to turn over rocks, the reader’s vision narrows from the alder to the rocks in the stream—all focus is centered here on the curiosity generated by Alec’s search. As Alec turns over each rock, so too does the reader; as Alec searches for grubs and nymphs, the scene becomes entirely foreground; all background is removed. Alec’s surprise thus becomes the reader’s surprise to find stonefly crawlers, and both minds search with a renewed interest toward discovery; both eagerly continue to turn over rock after rock. In this way, the scene *comes alive* for the reader; we share the curiosity, the surprise of discovery, and can imagine the feel of the cold stream on our hands. Moreover, Haig-Brown integrates a



pedagogical style into the action of the scene to give the reader a lesson in ecology: the alder is a tree to be found beside a troutstream; caddis grubs and mayfly nymphs are both fishing bait and food for trout and can be located beneath the rocks in a stream; stonefly crawlers generally appear prior to the caddis grubs and mayfly nymphs but can persist in the food chain depending on the temperature of the stream; and the temperature of a stream can be judged by its effect on the human hand. In this way, Haig-Brown provides insight into the ecosystem of the stream as well as entomological knowledge concerning the sport of fishing. The concurrent simplicity and complexity of this passage makes it superb. Through a microscopic lens, Haig-Brown imagines, in words, what many individuals could not and thus bridges the divide between language and object-world and links the reader with the environment.

A similar pattern can be seen in *On the Highest Hill*. Consider the narrated monologue of Colin when describing a gully along his travels:

It was bad country, a narrow little valley, steep-walled so that the sun scarcely found a way into it, damp and moss-grown . . . on the slopes the second-growth conifers were so thick that it was difficult to force a way between them; near the creek salmonberry and devil's club, alder and salal strove together in fantastic competition. (280)

Here again, Haig-Brown builds a dense, complex image of a particular ecosystem and interweaves environmental knowledge with the representation of landscape. This stylized image of the gully is used to demonstrate the growth pattern of second generation conifer trees in terms of location, spacing, and light; also seen is the growing location of salmonberry, devil's club and salal alongside their competitive and interwoven growing patterns. A similar scene occurs when the narrated monologue of Alec presents a scene a "few feet above the river" where "[d]eep-orange tiger-lilies dropped far out over the trail and occasionally there was the strong scarlet of late-blooming columbine" (343). Readily

apparent here is the seasonality of particular plants, their growing location, and their colours in bloom. Through these patterns, through this knowledge, Haig-Brown once again invites his reader into the natural environment. In these moments, Haig-Brown destabilizes the anthropocentric tendency of fiction—an action that is especially pressing given the environmental concerns and troubles of the twenty-first century. Why is Haig-Brown’s position here important? In my mind the most compelling answer is one I again borrow from Buell who asks us to

think of environmental representation as akin to a novel of manners . . . To require late twentieth-century urbanites to discriminate between edible and inedible plants in the forest [or growing seasons of grubs, nymphs and flies] . . . seems about as finicky as to require them to be as conscious as Jane Austen and Henry James were of modes of proper chaperonage, polite replies to engraved invitations, and rituals for making social calls. Yet both are forms of competence in external affairs on which prestige and sometimes even survival have depended. (107)

The common theme that runs through the preceding examples of Haig-Brown’s portrayal of the connection between reader and environment is the transmission of environmental knowledge. Furthermore, all of these examples center on individual journeys into nature, into a space that presumed to be somewhat outside of urban and rural development, a space where leisure is conflated with the labours of hiking, fishing, and hunting, and observation. These journeys, however, are not the sole method by which Haig-Brown represents environmental knowledge. Indeed, one of the most startling and perhaps counterintuitive aspects of Haig-Brown’s novels is that they represent physical labour as a means of gleaning environmental knowledge. What I am suggesting is that the characters in the two novels represent a “way of knowing” nature, a scientific, physical, ecological, and emotional knowledge of, and connection to, nature that urges the reader to re-examine and break down the binary between labourer and environmentalist.

In “‘Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?’: Work and Nature,” Richard White suggests that many environmentalists “ignore the ways that work itself is a means of knowing nature” (171), and that “[e]nvironmentalists have come to associate work—particularly heavy bodily labor, blue-collar work—with environmental degradation. . . . Nature seems safest when shielded from human labor” (172). White further explains that “[t]his distrust of work, particularly of hard physical labor, contributes to a larger tendency to define humans as being outside of nature and to frame environmental issues so that the choice seems to be between humans and nature” (172). These remarks are similar to those of Bruce Braun, some of which I quoted earlier:

In the popular press, and in the rhetoric used by key actors, debate over the future of these forests [Clayoquot] was often cast in terms of a binary logic (pristine nature/destructive humanity). This I feared, presented the complex politics of the rainforest in far too simple terms, and in a manner that stood in the way of a progressive ecopolitics attuned to the profusion of entangled events, actors, and practices that constituted BC’s ‘war in the woods.’ Not only did this binary logic authorize certain actors to speak for nature’s defense or its management (environmentalists, transnational capital, and the state), it risked marginalizing others (local communities, forest workers, First Nations) who understood, and related to, the forest in very different ways. (2)

In contrast to this binary logic and dismissal of work as a means to environmental knowledge, White demands a recognition that “work provides a knowledge of, and a connection to, nature” (178). Similarly, Braun states that in contrast to the “forest politics in BC,” which often assumes the forest to be “self evident” and existing in a “space outside politics,” a more productive question is “how something called the ‘forest’ is made visible, how it *enters history* as an object of economic and political calculation, and a site of emotional and libidinal investment” (3). When White’s insistence on the connection between work and nature is combined with Braun’s assertion that the forest enters history as a site of emotional investment, it is no great leap to contend that Braun’s

“emotional investment” is one aspect of the knowledge of and connection to nature, and that this knowledge is one way in which nature enters history.

For example, Colin Ensley, in *On the Highest Hill*, is taught early in the novel how to cut cordwood for the family—a rite of passage that “meant for him a long advance toward manhood” (39); when Will Ensley remarks that ““I was a year younger than you when my father started me cutting cordwood”” (40), it becomes clear that this rite of passage is multi-generational. Will’s advice to Colin is not to cut down young trees because ““you’ll want trees twenty years from now,”” and to ““drop”” a tree ““across the lean”” because in this case ““there’s nothing to hurt there and it’ll let your tree down easier”” (41). A few pages later, Colin has taken over the task of cutting cordwood entirely, but becomes embarrassed when his childhood chum asks why he won’t accept help. The subsequent third-person mixture of narrated monologue and psycho-narration reveals that Colin “did not want to admit to Johnny that he loved the work, the sharp clean bite of the axe-strokes, the flight of white chips from the deepening cut, the scent of crushed leaves and stripped bark; or that he wanted the whole job to be his own achievement, from start to finish” (45). In this early experience in the woods, Colin’s emotional investment with both work and nature is clear. On one hand, the pride and accomplishment in his work is expressed through the sense of success embodied by the “flight of white chips,” the “deepening cut,” and the desire for achievement. On the other hand, the emotional experience of these feelings of pride, accomplishment, and success, is linked to, and anchored by, the physical and sensory experience of nature—the trees he is cutting down and the scent of the “crushed leaves and stripped bark.”

At the same time, Colin is building a hierarchy or schema of knowledge about nature that encompasses the physical and sensory characteristics of the alder tree through the process of its life and death—at what age he can cut it down, its lean in relation to surrounding trees, the damage it could cause as it falls, the scent that arises from its death, and the physical feel of the chips, branches, bark, and axe as he chops it down. Importantly, this passage also highlights the idea of nature as a process, as a concept constructed and produced by humanity. In this example, nature is constructed by Colin as producing desirable physical, sensory, emotional, and social effects. The pleasure of physical labour, the sensory experience of colour and scent, the feelings of success and accomplishment, and the social belonging of participation in the family community are all produced by, and thus produce nature as a site of labour, belonging, pleasure, manhood and utility.

In *Timber*, the monologue of Alec most clearly demonstrates the coupling of environmental knowledge with labour:

There was felled timber all about him, the fresh cut ends of logs showing redly out of tumbled masses of broken limbs, the bluish underside of the needles making a piled and cushioned background for red-brown bark of fir logs, the gray of hemlock and occasional silver of balsam. (38-9)

[ . . . ]

Before noon he had picked and marked six trees, one of them a small hemlock that would be used only to raise a larger tree into position, but the others, good solid firs, well placed to country and track and on ground that would make fair landings. (40)

The first example is one of observation and is ostensibly a literal description of the waste and havoc left behind by a logging operation. Indeed, from this point of view, the double entendre “broken limbs” humanizes the devastation and the scene becomes one of carnage and reminiscent of war. On another level, however, a knowledge of the

environment is implicit in this industrial scene. The marking of trees according to colour supports this view—blue marks the underside of needles, red-brown marks fir, gray marks hemlock, and silver marks balsam. As the observant eye of Alec travels across the logging slash, he sees the destruction of industry, but he simultaneously labels and categorizes this destruction according to species and colour of tree—a knowledge and expertise that is here inextricably linked to the forest industry.<sup>33</sup> In the second example, more action-oriented than the first, a similar theme is clear. In this passage, Alec’s knowledge of trees is demonstrated through the selection of particular species for a particular task. The hemlock that Alec identifies must be selected according to its position in the landscape, its relation to other trees, and most importantly, its strength—the latter a characteristic necessary for its role in raising a larger tree into position. Similarly, the two “good solid firs” are identified in relation to the shape of the landscape, their overall straightness, and again, most essentially, their sturdiness and strength. These trees will likely become spar trees and will be used to yard fallen trees to the landing—identifying them according to strength is thus crucial and would likely demand a thorough knowledge of such characteristics as growth rates and root structures. Ironically, it is an incorrectly chosen spar tree that later kills Alec, a fact that underlies the expertise and knowledge that are essential in this activity. In both examples, Haig-Brown is marking out a socio-political position that foregrounds the fact that environmental knowledge is learned through and is essential to the resource extraction labour of logging.

In *On The Highest Hill*, these connections and constructions are further evident in the scenes where Colin is employed in surveying. Here, the narrator remarks, “he found

no monotony in the great trees of the flat valley because to his eye no two of them seemed alike; each had its own particular way of surging upward from its roots, each its own lean, its own colour and texture of bark, its own climb to its lowest branches, its own marked position in relationship to its neighbors” (97-8). Now Colin has moved beyond the basic physical and sensory knowledge of a single species of tree and has begun to learn all the constituent parts of an ecosystem: the identification of individual species of trees, their growing conditions, the manner in which they are positioned in order for growth to occur, and how the conditions of each tree relate to the surrounding trees. While some simply see a wall of green, Colin’s discerning eye registers the wonderment and diversity of the westcoast landscape, and, at the same time, this discernment and lack of monotony suggests Colin’s growing emotional investment in nature, which is facilitated through his labour. This association of wonder (the opposition of monotony) with nature produces a concept of nature that includes wonder. White argues that these connections are a part of what Pierre Bordieu calls “habitus.” To add to the definition of habitus in my work on Sinclair, I return to Bourdieu who, in *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, asserts that

The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (e.g. the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition) produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively ‘regulated’ and ‘regular’ without in any way being the product of obedience to rules . . . . (72)

The best formulation in my mind is when Bourdieu quotes Durkheim:

‘ . . . in each of us, in varying proportions, there is part of yesterday’s man; it is yesterday’s man who inevitably predominates in us, since the present amounts to little compared with the long past in the course of which we were formed and from which we result. Yet we do not sense this man of

the past, because he is inveterate in us; he makes up the unconscious part of ourselves . . . .’ (79)

According to White, “working—how one works, how one wields a spade, how one handles a horse—imparts a bodily knowledge and a social knowledge . . . .Working communicates a history of past work; this history is turned into bodily practice until it seems but second nature. This habitus, this bodily knowledge, is unconsciously observed, imitated, adopted, and passed on in a given community” (179). I would extend White’s assertion to include emotional connection and investment. Colin’s bodily knowledge of swinging the axe, a knowledge learned and inherited from his father and grandfather, as well as the associated sensory and emotional linkages of love, pride, and success, are thus transmitted to the community through a process of observation, imitation, and adoption. All activities are thus implicated in the gathering and transmission of environmental knowledge.

By connecting work to a practical and emotional investment in and knowledge of nature, Haig-Brown implores us to deny and disrupt the binary between environmentalism and resource extraction labourers. He asks us to see nature not as a static entity outside of politics, not as a universal or romanticized essentialist wilderness, not as an reified object to be battled over, but as an idea, as an integrated part of the world, and as a process that is constantly shifting, changing, and being produced in myriad ways. Lastly, he urges us not to deny the fundamental emotional and epistemological connection between work and nature. I believe that Haig-Brown’s novels represent an emergent environmentalism that includes work. He points to the real-world division between environmentalist and labourer while admonishing us to redress and bridge this division. The political importance of this stance is simple. To recognize the



validity of the labourers' emotional investment in nature, to recognize the many ways in which nature is produced, is to open up the possibility for contingent political alliances that can work together toward common ethical-political goals, whether these be sustainable wages or the preservation of old growth forests.<sup>34</sup>

### **Friendship and Homosexuality in *Timber***

That masculinity should be incorporated into working-class studies only makes sense given that historically men workers themselves often made very explicit connections between their work and their gender identity as men.

-Steven Maynard, "Rough Work and Rugged Men: The Social Construction of Masculinity in Working-Class History," 1989, 159-69.

Given the long history of the brutal subordination of gay men—a subordination often aimed directly at gay men's gender identities—this would have been an obvious place to mention gay masculinities.

-Stephen Maynard, "Queer Musings on Masculinity and History," 1998, 186.

While I find the historical veracity of *Timber* in regard to the mechanics and concerns of the logging industry to be one of the most compelling features of the book, and indeed of

Haig-Brown's writing in general, I also concur with Anthony Roberson who, in *Above Tide: Reflections on Roderick Haig Brown*, argues that "[t]he relationship between Johnny and Alec provides the human centre of the book. It is a friendship that recognizes the erotic element in all friendship, though neither man seems consciously aware of the sexual side of their affection for each other" (58). In fact, the homosocial, if not homosexual, relationship between Johnny and Alec opens the door to an examination of same-sex relationships in the male-dominant culture of logging camps.<sup>35</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick explains that while "homosocial" may "be characterized by intense homophobia, fear and hatred of homosexuality" her work attempts to "[d]raw the 'homosocial' back into the orbit of 'desire,' of the potentially erotic" and thereby "hypothesize the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual" (1). With regard to the force of desire and eroticism, Sedgwick remarks that how "far this force is properly sexual . . . will be an active question" (2)—precisely the question involved in the relationship between Johnny and Alec. Haig-Brown in this sense writes, through fiction, an unwritten—perhaps to some, unwritable—part of history. Indeed, homosexual acts were criminal in Canada during this period; Roy Cain in "Disclosure and Secrecy among Gay Men in the United States and Canada: A Shift in Views" explains that "the dominant clinical position on homosexuality during the 1950s and 1960s held that it was a psychopathological condition" (26) or that it was "a mental illness" (28). One result of these beliefs and positions is that "secretiveness about one's homosexuality was widely viewed as normal and desirable; openness, conversely, was seen as an expression of personal and social pathology and as a political liability to gays in general" (25). Thus, Haig-Brown's *Timber*, written in 1942, marks an important

moment in signalling an acceptance, or at least presence, of homosexual disclosure. If, as Andrew Lesk argues in *The Play of Desire: Sinclair Ross's Gay Fiction*, to consider “As *For Me and My House* to be in any fashion homosexual also poses, like [Laura] Robinson’s ‘lesbian’ Anne [*Anne of Green Gables*] a threat to the academic sense of a heterosexual national literature” (4), then so too does considering the relationship between Johnny and Alec in *Timber* pose such a threat—or, in other words, continue to build upon a well-established tradition in Canadian literature. Were there homosexual relationships in west coast logging camps? The probable answer is “yes.” Yet, the answer also depends in part on how these relationships are defined. Steven Maynard, in “Queer Musings on Masculinity and History,” suggests that the early twentieth century was a “historical period in which homosexual activity did not necessarily confer a homosexual identity” (191). In examining nineteenth-century British Columbia, Adele Perry states that “relations between men could range from the practical to the emotional to the sexual” (515). Her claims would logically extend into the twentieth century and are supported by Maynard, who makes it clear that homosexual relationships between men were at least possible in the logging camps. He argues that “[e]vidence for northern Ontario in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for example, makes it clear that men in bush camps not only played cards and the fiddle, but they also engaged in sex with each other” (“Rough” 167). Maynard does, however, qualify his position in a later article where he modifies his original position to argue that “[i]n the complex sex/gender system of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, some working-class men had sex interchangeably with women and men without calling into question their identity as ‘normal’ workingmen” (“Queer” 189-90). In the end, I agree with Maynard when he suggests that

Evidence from places such as logging camps, then, opens up a variety of interesting questions. Certainly it points to the malleability and social construction of sexual identity and forces us to ask how the material conditions of the bush camp transformed and loosened the hegemony of a rigid heterosexual masculinity. (“Rough” 168)

The first encounter in the novel between Johnny and Alec occurs after the inquest at the beginning of the novel. The two friends have not seen one another for some time, and upon learning Alec is back in town, Johnny leads a group of men to his hotel. The third-person narrator describes their greeting:

He turned to Johnny and held out his hand. Johnny took it and felt the moment of shyness between them, the knowledge in each that this was something he had looked forward to and the quick fear that it might not be as he had hoped, that a month of different things and places and people might have changed something. (15)

There is no immediate dialogue between the two characters. One reason for this is posited by Robertson who argues that “Haig-Brown gets around the inarticulateness of his characters by presenting their thoughts discursively, giving them an expressiveness of idea and feeling that couldn’t be demonstrated in dialogue” (55). Thus, while the scene is a simple scene of greeting, a handshake and a hello, it is also a discursive representation of ideas and feelings that cannot be otherwise demonstrated, the signal of a relationship that for social and political reasons cannot be publicly disclosed or even articulated by the men themselves. In fact, Johnny does not shake Alec’s hand, but takes it—a subtle, ambiguous gesture that runs the gambit from handshake to gentle caress. The shyness and “quick fear” of Johnny, in this reading, indicates psychological anxiety over the nature of their unspoken-unspeakable relationship as much as whether or not the friendship has altered.

One of the most significant methods Haig-Brown uses to reveal the homoerotic relationship between Johnny and Alec is that of the voyeuristic moment or gaze. Crucial

in analyzing these moments is the work done by Laura Mulvey in “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.” Mulvey explains that “[t]he cinema offers a number of possible pleasures. One is scopophilia (pleasure in looking). There are circumstances in which looking itself is a source of pleasure, just as, in the reverse formation, there is pleasure in being looked at” (1174). She further comments that “[i]n a world ordered by imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is stylized accordingly” (1175). The dynamics of the gaze are readily apparent when Johnny considers the figure of Alec; the third-person narration reads like a poetic blazon:

his red mouth twisted with that smile and his blue eyes looking at you from his smooth evenly brown face. Slim was like a swell-looking woman sometimes; brown curly hair, always lighter in summer time just above his forehead, where he pushed his hat back; long round chin, full lips and straight nose. It was good to look at him. But he wasn’t like any woman you could come near, or any soft woman. . . . His hands were big, long-fingered and wide, and there were long hard muscles across his back and on his flat belly. It wasn’t right to think Slim was like a woman, except for his face sometimes and when he talked sometimes. (47-8)

It is immediately clear that Johnny, at least within the third-person narration, sees Alec as an object of desire. It is also clearly Johnny’s gaze that renders Alec in a particularly desirable, handsome way; in the words of Mulvey, Alec has been *stylized* according to the fantasy of Johnny. One way of analyzing this scene is to argue that the only acceptable form Johnny’s desire can take is that of desire for a woman and thus he *stylizes* or constructs Alec in the only acceptable form his desire can take, the only form through which his desire can be disclosed.<sup>36</sup>

The push/pull tension of the passage supports this reading. Following the lingering gaze on Alex’s “full lips and straight nose” Johnny reflects, “It was good to look at him,” but at once states that “he wasn’t like any woman you could come near”

and thus resists his own fantasized stylization of Alec. To participate fully in his own fantasy of Alec as a woman, or as enjoyable to look at, is to fully give voice to his erotic desire for Alec, to the erotic vision of his friend; his refusal of his own fantasy is symptomatic of the anxiety Johnny experiences about his homoerotic feelings and a resistance to these feelings. At the same time, the passage can be read as an affirmation that it is precisely in the ways that Alec is not like a woman that Johnny finds him desirable. It is no surprise, therefore, that the narration proceeds directly into a stylization of the more typically masculine attributes of Alec's body, the repetition of "big" and "long" an oblique reference to his imagined penis. Again following a lengthy erotic description of Alec, Johnny mentally pulls away to reflect "It wasn't right to think Slim was like a woman"—a repeated commingling of resistance and affirmation of the homoerotic feelings he is experiencing. Yet, in the same line, Johnny's thought is modified to become "except for his face sometimes and when he talked sometimes," a last desperate attempt to make the articulation of his desire acceptable in thought, if not in dialogue.

A second more explicit and powerful moment where the male gaze operates occurs when Johnny and Alec are in the "wash house":

Slim [Alec] was already stripped . . . He straightened up and watched Johnny take off his shirt. Johnny's skin was very white, smooth as a girl's . . . Slim watched the movement of firm, rounded muscles as Johnny stripped; his body was so smooth that you didn't judge the strength at first. Good shoulders, yet not spectacularly wide; chest heavy with muscle, very thick through; big triceps, thick forearms, thick belly leading straight down from ribs to hips; round buttocks, round thighs, thick calves, small, high-arched feet. Then the firelight from the boiler outlined the muscles in shadows and you saw for one sharp moment the marble of the Greek athlete . . . (70)

Here the gaze is both explicit and directed as indicated by the repeated verb “watched.” In what may be read as a masturbatory moment, Alec stands naked in the wash house and stares at Johnny as if he were putting on a striptease—watching as Johnny takes off his shirt, watching the movement of his muscles, and watching him strip off his remaining clothes. Given the proximity of the men and the presumably small confines of the camp wash house, it is logical to conclude that Johnny is aware of Alec’s gaze, that in the words of Mulvey “there is pleasure in being looked at.” In this erotically charged scene Alec’s gaze travels downward, anatomizing Johnny from his shoulders to his “high-arched feet.” In this passage, however, the gaze is Alec’s, and it is he who stylizes Johnny as the receiver of his gaze; it is Johnny who exhibits a marker of femaleness—the smooth skin of a girl—that initially attracts Alec’s attention. It is just as evident, however, that it is the naked, muscled, masculine body that Alec desires. As Richard Dyer explains in “The White Man’s Muscles,” “the built body presents itself not as typical but as ideal. It suggests our vague notions of the Greek gods and the *Übermensch*” (265).<sup>37</sup> As a prefiguration of the “built body” Dyer describes, Johnny is stylized as having the ideal body and is explicitly linked to notions of Greek gods and homosexuality in ancient Greece through mention of the “Greek athlete” of the final line. A further inspection of the passage reveals a preponderance of adjectives describing size and girth: big, wide, heavy, round, thick. The word “thick” itself is repeated four times in the passage, especially in the movement from forearms, to belly, to hips, to buttocks, to thighs, forming a circle around the absent phallus while forcing the gaze to consider that which cannot be expressed as an organ of desire, even in thought; the anatomization of Johnny’s naked body with the exception of the genitals is itself a technique for rendering it visible

through omission. As Alec's vision of Johnny is crystallized in the shadows of the boiler, so is his half-shadowed desire for Johnny crystallized in the mind of the reader.

The homoerotic relationship between Alec and Johnny reaches its apex in the marriage between Johnny and Julie. In describing Julie, Johnny reflects that "[t]hey were alike; he had known that in his first sight of her as they brought Hank's boat into the wharf . . . The girl's face was lighter, softer, yet fuller and more rounded than Alec's, but as her changing expressions lighted it Alec was in each one . . . Her lips were very soft and full, bright with life under the smooth skin, yet they were shaped as Alec's were" (94-5). The marriage of Johnny to Julie, when read through this lens, is in actuality a marriage between Johnny and Alec. Each moment of expression by Julie is a moment where Johnny sees Alec; each intimate kiss of Julie's lips is concurrently a kiss of Alec's lips. Julie is reduced to a function of the relationship between Johnny and Alec; she is the embodiment of their socially, politically, and legally forbidden union.<sup>38</sup>

Stephen Maynard reports that

Radforth suggests that no 'openly acknowledged' subculture of same-sex relations existed in northern Ontario shanties. But must a subculture—or something not quite so elaborate as a subculture, perhaps sexual networks—be openly acknowledged in order to exist? Sedgwick would be the first to encourage us to ponder whether the epistemology of the shanty closet was one that functioned on the basis of the 'open secret,' that is, something known by many but rarely acknowledged in any overt way. (Maynard, "Queer" 192)<sup>39</sup>

Likewise, as far as my research has taken me, no openly acknowledged subculture of same-sex relations existed in the logging camps of British Columbia. The questions Maynard asks are, however, worth repeating: must such a subculture, sexual network, or sexual relationship be acknowledged in order to exist? In my mind, the answer is an unquestionable "no." Were same sex relationships in logging camps something known by



many but rarely openly disclosed? Certainly the political and psychological, not to mention social, discourse of the time valued secrecy over disclosure. Analogues such as those written about by Maynard and Perry, in addition to the analogues of other male environments such as the military, seem to warrant further investigation in the area of logging camps and logging camp narratives. The presence of the homoerotic relationship between Johnny and Alec—possibly based on Haig-Brown’s experiences and observations in logging camps—seems to support the claims made by Maynard and Perry. More importantly, the representation of a homoerotic relationship in a 1942 novel set in the male-dominant industry of logging, marks a starting point in understanding the dynamics of this environment and further destabilizes what some might call a heteronormative literary tradition in Canada. In other words, by interpreting the relationship between Johnny and Alec, I hope to continue, in some small measure, the path set forth by Peter Dickinson when he seeks to transform “the *invisible* presence of queerness in Canadian literature into a more *manifest* or *embodied* presence” (3).

## **Reflections on the Logging Industry in Literature**

One of the persistent questions of this chapter is: “what does this have to do with labour?” One answer is that often narratives that represent labour have as much to do with surrounding ideas and conceptions as they do with the representation of a particular industry. Thus, Sinclair’s novel is just as much about creating a particular narrative structure and about presenting a particular economic model as it is about the precise nature of logging. It is just as much about the presence of the highly intelligent Andy Hall

in a logging camp and the particulars of his philosophy as it is about the complex nature of union formation. Similarly, Haig-Brown's novels, while often uniquely specific and precise about the activities of logging or broad-axe work, are just as much about male relationships or bonding the reader to the environment through labour—whether this labour is industrial or leisure oriented; they are just as much about marking particular moments in time and omissions from history as they are about the blacklist system or the politics of logging camps.

All three novels continue to produce meaning and suggest further research. Christopher E. Forth argues that “developments central to modernity at once reinforce and destabilize the representation of masculinity as an unproblematic quality of male anatomy” (5). One result of this is what Forth calls the “*double logic of modern civilization*, a process that promotes and supports the interests of males while threatening to undermine those interests . . .” (5). An example would be the paradox of technology where “the great machines that extend male powers also threaten to constrain or diminish them at the same time” (5-6). It is easy to see this double logic in the case of Rod Norquay and Will Ensley; a reading of these texts through the lens of this double logic would be particularly compelling and productive. Another possibility would be a reading that examines the roles of Mary Thorn, Julie Holt, and Martha Ensley. In the case of Martha Ensley, a particularly forceful argument could be articulated which builds on the work done by critics on the role of the farm woman in rural communities. In *On the Highest Hill*, it is Martha who is ultimately responsible for the survival of the family and it is Martha who literally works herself to death in order to ensure that her family survives.

Also fruitful would be a further examination of these texts in historical terms, to analyze the construction of masculinity in light of the blacklist system in opposing union formation and how this system led to the demise of a skill-based articulation of masculinity for those who were blacklisted and unable to get work, and how, in turn, a new sense of masculinity emerged and was wedded in part to the idea of unionization in contrast to the prior focus on the individual. However, above all, in examining realist texts that purport to give us “the truth,” it is crucial to undertake an exacting postcolonial reading. To refuse such a reading is to refuse the labour and presence of all non-immigrant populations in British Columbia and to participate in a tacit compliance to render these presences invisible. In the words of W. Peter Ward, it is to cling “tenaciously to the myth of the ethnic mosaic: the belief that the nation has evolved more or less harmoniously as a multicultural society” (x).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See James Doyle's *Progressive Heritage*.

<sup>2</sup> Zola's well-known "The Experimental Novel," from the same collection I use here, is where he uses the scientific experiments and methods of Claude Bernard to, in part, develop his ideas of the naturalistic novel.

<sup>3</sup> While Bourdieu does not explicitly state that the fields are interchangeable with respect to one another they do appear to change positions within his own analysis. For example, he describes the literary and artistic field (also the field of cultural production) as "contained within the field of power" (37), which in turn is "itself situated at the dominant pole of the field of class relations" (38). Equally imaginable, however, is a situation where the field of class relations operates within the field of power, or indeed within the field of cultural production—though Bourdieu would likely frame the latter structure in terms of agent-positions instead of as a field per se.

<sup>4</sup> I see this last remark as similar to Fredric Jameson's dialectic between dominated and dominant where he argues that "a ruling class ideology will explore various strategies of legitimation of its own power position, while an oppositional culture or ideology will, often in covert and disguised strategies, seek to contest and to undermine the dominant 'value system'" (*Political Unconscious* 84).

<sup>5</sup> All references to Gordon Hak in my work on Bertrand Sinclair are from this work. His subsequent work, *Capital and Labour in the British Columbia Forest Industry, 1934-74*, will, in part, inform my work on Roderick Haig-Brown.

<sup>6</sup> Rod Norquay's recounting of the stages of the family's success from fur-trading, to the gold rush of 1859, to the current timber dynasty, firmly locate the narrative in the history of British Columbia outlined by the Staples Thesis of Harold Innis.

<sup>7</sup> Despite the anachronism, I have chose to refer to the province of British Columbia here for ease of reading.

<sup>8</sup> If, as many small indications in the text suggest, Mary Thorn's heritage is of mixed race, then race too would play a significant role in the tension between poles, between upper-class expectations and Rod's desire for Mary Thorn.

<sup>9</sup> Descriptions of the Norquay family support this definition of habitus. Descriptions such as "Rod himself did not realize the lightning-quick quality of his own perceptions" (23) or "Grove, the eldest son of the house [is] a true Norquay in physique" (23) are common. If Bourdieu is proposing a form of essentialism in his concept of habitus, some essential physical, social, financial, biological or genetic characteristic that distinguishes the bourgeoisie from other classes, I would vehemently object. On the other hand, socially constructed ideals in these categories would provide benefits to particular individuals from particular classes seems logical—particularly where the ideals are constructed by a particular class or group for the further benefit of that class or group. It is this latter definition of habitus that I follow here and that I believe to be represented by Sinclair.

<sup>10</sup> While "narrated monologue" has come to be "free indirect discourse," or, in the case of Bourdieu, "free reported speech and quotation" (157), I have maintained the use of "narrated monologue" to adhere to the terms specified by Dorrit Cohn in *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction*, the text that figures most importantly in my own understanding and definition of the style.

<sup>11</sup> The Norquay Trust, first mentioned in the novel in the time period of 1911, is based on the Dominion Trust in Vancouver, British Columbia, founded in 1903. Daniel Francis in *L.D.: Mayor Louis Taylor and the Rise of Vancouver* relates that "since it was founded in 1903, Dominion Trust had become one of the largest investors in the local real estate market" (104), and that at the time Dominion Trust was "the city's

first skyscraper” and “enjoyed the distinction of being the tallest building in the British Empire” (104).

Historically,

as property values tumbled, loans made against real estate had to be written off and investments that looked like sure things in boomtime turned out to be busts. As well, the thirty-two-year-old general manager of Dominion Trust, William Arnold, had been making unauthorized loans that became worthless. On October 12, 1914, in the garage of his Shaugnessy home, Arnold shot and killed himself. (104)

Francis states that “less than two weeks later, Dominion Trust went bankrupt” (106). In comparison, Grove is seen in the novel to be somewhat a victim of manipulation by financial investors more shrewd than himself. Other details, such as the bankruptcy and death remain similar. E.L. Bobak in “Seeking ‘Direct, Honest Realism’: The Canadian Novel of the 1920’s” suggests that *The Inverted Pyramid* is “based on the collapse of the Dominion Trust Company” and that “Sinclair’s purpose in the book is to make clear the link between the building of shaky financial empires and the war” (96). This aligns with Laurie Ricou’s statement that the novel is interesting because of “the economic effects of World War I on a family-controlled timber dynasty” (“Bertrand William Sinclair”). I find, however, that other than representing the shaken, postwar character of Rod, and the fact that Phil “went west” (197), Sinclair spends little time dwelling on the war or its effects. The Dominion Trust, while a catalyst for Rod’s actions in the second half of the novel, and a polarizing device for the novel’s structure, plays a diminished role in the book.

<sup>12</sup> In terms of the Thorn position at the negative, dominated pole of the field of power, consider Oliver Thorn’s description of his life to Rod:

[t]here’s the fellow like me; more a dreamer than a doer; inclined to be contemplative rather than actively constructive—or destructive; more apt to take pleasure in seeing a tree grow than in cutting it down; able to work and plan and think clearly in respect of his individual acts, but somehow incapable of herding and driving and compelling other men to function for him [ . . . ] My family’s wants are simple. A reasonable amount of security. A chance to read and think. Freedom from hurry and worry. That seemed good enough for me. (58)

This speech in combination with descriptions of the Thorn family, locate them firmly at the negative pole of the field of power and in opposition to all that is represented by Grove and the Norquay family.

<sup>13</sup> Phil, as the head of the family timber business, can also be located in this position.

<sup>14</sup> Bourdieu states that “we know that one of the aspects of Frédéric’s impotence is that he cannot write” (157). Likewise, Rod does not seem able to write. Of his own attempt to write the “Iliad of the pioneers,” his family history, Rod says “‘it’s dead. I’ve got to breathe the breath of life into these people. And I don’t know how” (99). In fact it is Mary Thorn who proves to be a successful writer with her novel *The Swirl*. Rod asserts that “There’s truth and power in the thing [ . . . ] some corking good description, some fine characterization, and some almost brilliant writing” (205). The interplay between potency and impotency in terms of writing works well in terms of Bourdieu’s analysis, but is, perhaps more fruitful in terms of an examination of how gender is constructed in the novel. Richard Lane, for example, in the chapter “War of Two Worlds” from *Literature and Loss*, suggests that “Although she has written the novel that Rod failed to write, the covert gendered opposition is that of active male fighter / passive female writer” (51).

<sup>15</sup> Following this exchange, Grove abruptly changes the scope of the conversation and criticizes Rod’s relationship with Mary Thorn through the pronouncement “‘[i]t’s hardly the thing for you to cultivate her publicly...A fellow can’t carry on these country kid acquaintances in town” (71). Considering Rod’s growing intimacy with Grove’s wife Laska Wall in the pages that precede this exchange, it is tempting to engage in an examination of how masculinity is constructed in the novel. It is possible here to view both Rod’s friendship with Laska and his marriage to Mary as a response to the rivalry with Grove. In this sense, one might follow the path of critics such as Gayle Rubin, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and René Girard and posit that the novel operates through Girardian erotic triangles of rivalry between men with women positioned as objects of exchange.

<sup>16</sup> Interestingly, Cohn is using Frédéric from Flaubert's *Sentimental Education* as her example here.

<sup>17</sup> To continue the analysis, it is possible to consider Rod's logging career and marriage to Mary alongside the definition of *Bildungsroman* given by Martin Swales in "Irony and the Novel":

In its portrayal of the hero's psychology the Bildungsroman operates with a tension between a concern for the sheer complexity of individual personality on the one hand, and, on the other, a recognition that practical reality—marriage, family, a career—is a necessary dimension of the hero's self realization, albeit one that by definition implies a limitation, indeed constriction, of the self. (51)

This definition works in tandem with the tension between Rod's position as a Norquay, his search for fulfillment, his desire for some undefined sense of freedom, and his desire for Mary. In short, it represents his oscillation within the field of power.

<sup>18</sup> While Sinclair does give readers some sense of the construction of masculinity in the logging industry and the technical terms used, a more accurate and all-encompassing narrative of these aspects of the industry can be found in the trilogy written by Peter Trower, and, to a lesser extent, the recent novel *The Man Game* by Lee Henderson.

<sup>19</sup> A further consequence is that the construction of masculinity here is detrimental to the loggers; their bodies may literally be "used up" by suffering through unacceptable working conditions. This does not bode well for any future search for work, for longevity, or for physical comfort in old age.

<sup>20</sup> This departure from historical mimesis is supported by Jean Barman's account of this period in her chapter "Reform and its Limits: 1871-1929" in *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia*. Here she reports that "[d]issatisfaction over lack of safety or low rates of pay was from time to time expressed in strikes, but usually to no avail. Supported by government, employers refused to recognize, much less negotiate with, representatives of their employees" (219). Furthermore, Hak states that "coastal



loggers in 1913 remained hostage to fluctuating markets and the control of employers. They had no union organization and were still unable to mobilize strike action to further their goals” (149).

<sup>21</sup> While not a focus here, Braun’s work in this area dovetails with my earlier citing of Richard Lane’s statement that “Sinclair invites a postcolonial reading of his texts which examines such a claim to historical veracity” (80). Bringing together the remarks of Braun and Lane in this manner works to tie forestry narratives directly to processes of colonization and is a fruitful avenue of further inquiry.

<sup>22</sup> By “imperial” I mean that these two companies function as outposts of the French and English Empires and as part of these empires, they work to further the process of colonization and resource exploitation.

<sup>23</sup> See Cole Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia*.

<sup>24</sup> While Cohn does not explicitly define “figural mind” in *Transparent Minds*, I take her meaning (and mine) to be the mind as represented in language. Importantly, Cohn makes the distinction between an authorial mind and a figural mind. The figural mind, albeit as a representation, is as close to a real mind and its workings as possible.

<sup>25</sup> Leitch suggests a system of organization based on an employee House of Representatives, middle management Senate, and executive office Cabinet. Bills must pass all three levels of industrial government and can be vetoed by the executive Cabinet. The result is a much stronger voice for the workers where none was had before.

<sup>26</sup> “molly hogan” means a single strand of wire rope rolled into a circle with six complete wraps that may be used as a temporary method of connecting the eye splices of two lines of the same size or in pin shackles to replace the cotter pin; “buckle-guys” are guy lines around the middle of a spar tree.

<sup>27</sup> See Gordon Philip Turner’s doctoral thesis *The Protagonist’s Initiatory Experiences in the Canadian Bildungsroman 1908-1971* (1979).

<sup>28</sup> Debris such as bark, small trees, tree tops, branches, limbs and brush left behind after logging operations.

<sup>29</sup> In Haig-Brown's "Hardy's Dorset" (in *Writings and Reflections*), he makes it clear that Hardy knew his grandfather—interestingly, a figure who twice held the post of Mayor of Castor Bridge, a position held subsequent to and following the publication of Hardy's novel by the same name. Haig-Brown met Hardy in 1924.

<sup>30</sup> As a side note, this position coincides with that of Haig Brown in "On Hunting" (*Measure of the Year*). Here he states "I still love hunting as a supreme sport . . . . But I have realized, and admitted to myself at last, that I don't like killing; that I never did like it" (184).

<sup>31</sup> While any representation of the environment is necessarily a construction and sees the environment as an object that can be represented in literature, the point is that attention to environmental details, however constructed or selected, can "in some measure" bond the reader to this world. While this idea is not limited to the realist mode, I suggest that realism is particularly well suited to representing what Buell calls "verbalizations that are not replicas but equivalents of the world of objects" (98).

<sup>32</sup> There is, in my mind, a crucial problem with this premise: it does not interrogate the type of world that is forming a bond with the reader. For example, while I see Haig-Brown bonding the reader to a pastoral landscape at times and a natural landscape at other times, both landscapes are devoid of non-white settlers, immigrants, and any presence of First Nations peoples, habitations, and artifacts. While I do not see this as a reason to invalidate this particular ecocritical mode of interrogation, the postcolonial theoretical paradigm must always be kept in mind considering the ethical consequences of such a structure.

<sup>33</sup> In fact, Haig-Brown himself remarks that, "[o]ne of the first jobs I had in North America was scaling timber behind contract fallers. . . . It meant knowing the species, recognizing them quickly and accurately by bark, by grain, and by leaf" (*Measure* 45)

<sup>34</sup> For brief accounts of Roderick Haig-Brown's position on the environment, see Alan Pritchard's "West of the Great Divide" (1982; 1984), Laurie Ricou's introduction to *On the Highest Hill*, and Haig-Brown's *The Living Land* (1961).

<sup>35</sup> The idea of homosexuality as a theme in Haig-Brown's work is not foreign. In fact, in his introduction to *On The Highest Hill*, Ricou brings up the theme of homosexuality as written about in the correspondence of Haig-Brown with his editor, Richard W. Erickson—though in this novel it is "female homosexuality" (xxii) that is being represented.

<sup>36</sup> Of course, in the context of homosexuality, this reading poses the problem that homosexuality is here understood as rooted in the desire for markers of femaleness—unless, the reader is to believe that this is how, in 1942 or in the 1930s of the novel, homosexuality was understood by Haig-Brown (himself or to represent it) and by extension Johnny and Alec.

<sup>37</sup> Dyer also remarks that "until the 1980s, it was rare to see a white man semi-naked in popular fictions" (262). While Dyer is working primarily with film, his remarks ring true for fiction. In contrast to white bodies, Dyer states that "in the Western, the plantation drama and the jungle adventure film, the non-white body is routinely on display" (262). One reason for this is that "clothes are bearers of prestige, notable of wealth, status and class: to be without them is to lose prestige" (262-3). Conversely, there is also "value in the white male body being seen" (263). Here, the argument is that "whites—and men—are where they are socially by virtue of biological, that is, bodily superiority. The sight of the body can be a kind of proof" (263). Johnny's naked body is both surprising and possibly a marker of superiority. While, I don't think Haig-Brown is making this point, I do see this moment as productive in relation to the absence of non-white characters.

<sup>38</sup> I am alluding here to the work of Sedgwick in *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*.

<sup>39</sup> Here, Maynard is referring to Ian Radforth's "The Shantymen" in *Labouring Lives: Work and Workers in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (1995), edited by Paul Craven.

### 3. Discourses of Resistance: The Object of the Interior in the Creative Non-Fiction of Harold Rhenisch

Instead of seeing, on the great mythical book of history, lines of words that translate in visible characters thoughts that were formed in some other time and place, we have in the density of discursive practices, systems that establish statements as events (with their own conditions and domain of appearance) and things (with their own possibility and field of use). They are all these systems of statements (whether events or things) that I propose to call *archive*.

—Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 145

Archaeology describes discourses as practices specified in the element of the archive.

—Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 148

The *BC Studies* field trip to the southern Interior provides a forceful reminder of the complex relationship that exists in British Columbia between the whole and its parts. To understand this province, we need to stand on its head the old adage that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. It is to the parts that we must look.

—Jean Barman, “Seeing British Columbia,” 9

Graeme Wynn, in his introduction to the Winter 2010/11 issue of *BC Studies*, a special issue dedicated to the Okanagan, remarks that, “[t]hrough more than four decades, and 167 issues, the pages of *BC Studies* have included little about the province’s Okanagan region” (3). In fact, Wynn states that a “keyword search (‘Okanagan’) of all back issues returns thirty-eight entries” (3)—an abysmal statistic given that the sole purpose of the journal is the study and exchange of ideas in British Columbia. Perhaps, as Jean Barman seems to suggest, it is the *inability* of British Columbians to “stand on its head the old adage that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts” (9) that has led to the neglect of the Okanagan region of British Columbia. Barman further explains that “[i]t is the whole that is most often evoked in print or other media” and therefore, “[w]e take the whole as our reference point, sometimes so much so that we forget that the parts exist at all” (9). Even more strongly, she declares that “[t]hose of us who live in urban settings are the most neglectful. Our smugness in being Vancouverites or Victorians causes us to conflate our part with the whole . . . . We equate ourselves with British Columbia” (9-10). It is precisely this identification of urban centers as synonymous with British Columbia that Harold Rhenisch takes issue with and resists in three of his works of creative non-fiction: *Out of the Interior: The Lost Country*, *Tom Thomson’s Shack*, and *The Wolves at Evelyn: Journeys Through a Dark Century*. Despite the neglect or systemic invisibility of certain aspects the Okanagan, it is just as clear that the Interior<sup>1</sup> holds a special fascination; as Wynn points out, “the Okanagan has long been an alluring fragment (or figment) of Canadian (and wider) imaginations” (3).

Indeed, discourses about the Interior are diverse and plentiful. Wynn cites the travel section of the November 2010 *New Zealand Herald* as featuring a “spectacular selection of photographs with the phrase: ‘Canada’s Okanagan region has the potential to spellbind with its mix of nature and development’” (4). Similarly, the 2010 *Thompson Okanagan Vacation Guide*, produced under the auspices of British Columbia’s Ministry of Tourism, Trade, and Investment, describes how “[s]heltered behind ridges that rise to the Thompson Plateau in a climate moderated by the waters of Okanagan Lake, blessed with rich soils deposited by volcanic eruption and glaciation, the West Kelowna and Westbank areas have long been renowned for agricultural bounty” (8). Confederation poet Bliss Carmen, in “In the Okanagan,” writes “Here time takes on new leisure / And life attains new worth / And wise are they who treasure / This Eden of the North.” (487). In an equally Edenic description, Emily Carr in “Cariboo Gold,” a selection from *Growing Pains*, writes that “[t]he foliage of the trees were threaded with the cotton-wood’s silver-white stems. Long, level sweeps of rippling gold grain were made richer and more luscious by contrast with the dun, already harvested stubble fields” (419). George Bowering, in a story from *The Box*, describes how “[v]ineyards stretch along the formerly light brown benches of the valley’s hills” (15), and, in the novel *Caprice*, he recalls how “you would have seen late-morning sunlight flooding the light brown of the wide grassy valley and making giant knife shadows where the ridges slid down the hillsides” (1). In *Red Dog Red Dog*, Patrick Lane suggests that “[i]t was stone country where a bone cage could last a thousand years under the moon, its ribs a perch for Vesper sparrows, its skull a home for Harvest mice” (14). Harold Rhenisch, in *Out of the Interior*, remembers that “In the week before the apples blossomed, storms that had come

two hundred miles over the mountains from the sea broke over the ridges and filled the valley with a liquid light, surging” (7).

Also noteworthy for their evocations of the Interior are the three-volume series of sketches, stories and poems published under the title *Heart of the Cariboo-Chilcotin*, Eric Collier’s autobiographical *Three Against the Wilderness*, the Turtle Valley novels of Gail Anderson-Dargatz, and the stories of Paul St. Pierre that led to the CBC drama series *Cariboo Country*. Common to almost all these descriptions are the oblique references to labour: the “agricultural bounty” of the Interior region. While not an exhaustive list, these descriptions and publications, these figments and fragments—ranging from a travel advertisement to fiction, tourism literature, autobiography, memoir, television, poetry and non-fiction—indicate the allure of the Interior and its need for critical attention.

In Foucauldian terms, I consider these figments and fragments to be discourses about the *object* of the Interior, or more precisely, the Interior comes about in and through these discourses. This is what I believe Foucault means when he talks of the “density of discursive practices” (145), and that, when brought together, these practices constitute an archive—a series of discourses and statements about a particular object. Discussing French writers from different fields of study, Foucault explains:

But what it [unity characterized by the positivity of a discourse]<sup>2</sup> does reveal is the extent to which Buffon and Linnaes (or Turgot and Quesnay, Broussais and Bichat) were talking about ‘the same thing’, by placing themselves at ‘the same level’ or at ‘the same distance’, or by deploying ‘the same conceptual field’, by opposing one another on ‘the same field of battle.’ (142)

Again, the idea here seems to be the attempt to bring together writers who work in various fields, in different discourses, but who share a particular discourse-object, who are, in effect, talking about “the same thing” despite their different approaches, practices,



and intentions. Collectively, these writers, or likewise those who write about the Interior of British Columbia, can be constituted as producing or constituting an archive, “that which describes discourses in their multiple existence and specifies them in their own duration” (146). Once such an archive is established, the work of archaeology begins. According to Foucault, archaeology “describes discourses as practices specified in the element of the archive” (148). Each individual discourse, therefore, whether this be the discourse of poetry and fiction, on one hand, with creative non-fiction and tourism literature, on the other, is a *practice* or series of *statements* in the archive, which are elements of study in an archaeology. In other words, archaeology “is the systematic description of a discourse-object” (156).<sup>3</sup>

For my purposes, I am defining an archive as it relates to the discourse-object of the Interior. It is important to note that any archive is by its own nature open. Definition, in my view, does not close the archive, but rather is one archival construction among many possible archives that could be defined in relation to the same discourse-object. Specifically, I am interested in the autobiographical discourse of Rhenisch in his three works of creative non-fiction. I use the term autobiographical discourse hesitantly. On one hand, Rhenisch himself terms his works creative non-fiction. On the other hand, all three works in question do seem to align with Paul John Eakin’s approach to autobiography which asks “what such texts can teach us about the ways in which individuals in a particular culture experience their sense of being ‘I’” (4). In each of his three works, Rhenisch has positioned himself in a variety of cultures and experiences that seem intended to tell his readers something about his sense of “being ‘I.’” In reference to the texts themselves, Petra Fachinger states that *Out of the Interior* “blurs the genres of

autobiography, biography, poetry, fiction and documentary” (169), Laurie Ricou reminds us of “its subtle direction to read the political economy of Kenyan coffee plantations against the colonialism of a Keremeos orchard” (89), and that one level of history in the book “is the satisfying detail of the orchard economy, a subject little written into British Columbia literature” (90). Indeed, *Out of the Interior* revolves primarily around Rhenisch’s orchard experiences in the Okanagan area of what is referred to as the British Columbia Interior and involves such cities as Naramata, Kelowna, Vernon, Penticton, and Keremeos, as well as the Similkameen Valley. The book opens with the image and chapter title “My Father’s Hands” and is very much about the experiences Rhenisch has with his father, almost all of which are used to create, in narrative form, a history of the orchard industry in the area. The narrative is episodic, and while there are brief forays into Rhenisch’s German background, this is not the focus of the book. In terms of style, the narrative ranges from factual description of the Okanagan landscape to a detailed, poetic list of “Rosy Apple Aphid, Ambrosia Beetle, European Red Mite, Bruce Spanworm, Leafroller, Budmoth . . .” —a paragraph-long inventory of the various insects his father encountered and tried to eradicate. All of these textual particulars, however, are in some fashion directed toward Rhenisch’s represented “experience” or “sense of being ‘I’” (Eakin 4).

In style, narrative voice, and structure, *Tom Thomson’s Shack* is much the same as *Out of the Interior*. Bryan N.S. Gooch suggests that *Tom Thomson’s Shack* revolves around “glimpses of a boy growing to become a worker at various trades and a writer, of coming to terms with the land, of the impact of mining and commercialism on small-town British Columbia [and] of orchards and bee-keepers . . .” (n.p.). In the words of

Rhenisch, “this is a book of the forest where I live and of the farms which brought me to it, told in the conversational style of an orchardist’s coffee breaks” (4). The focus on the orchard, on the farm, is still crucial to the narrative of *Tom Thomson’s Shack*, but is not the only focus of the book. Rather, the book uses the orchard and the forest (the forest being Rhenisch’s residence in the Cariboo region near Spences Bridge) as counterpoints to the city of Toronto where Rhenisch is promoting the book of poems, *Iodine*. The country/city divide is ever-present in this text as Rhenisch works out the ways in which the farms he came from and the forest where he lives are connected to and alienated from Toronto, but also support the urban culture, lifestyle and architecture he encounters there.

*The Wolves at Evelyn* stands out as significantly different from, and darker than, Rhenisch’s two previous works of creative non-fiction. In *The Wolves at Evelyn*, Rhenisch details his family’s past from Germany to their move to Evelyn, British Columbia, and the Interior farms of his childhood. In her review of *The Wolves at Evelyn*, Lisa Szabo describes the text as “a conflation of family memoir, autobiography, history, and oral storytelling” (167). Similarly, Alex Rettie categorizes *Wolves* as “[p]art history, part memoir and part extended essay,” and suggests that “it explores the nature of our relationship with our surroundings . . . through the prism of Rhenisch’s German immigrant family” (59). Impossible to encompass in a summary, *Wolves* is a book of stories. Here, there is the story of the firebombing of Dresden, of the burning of an apricot orchard in the Okanagan, of the *Wandervögel* youth movement in Germany, and of the cold in Northern British Columbia. More importantly, the volume demonstrates how all of these stories are, in fact, the same story, and how Canadian identity makes

sense (or doesn't) for those who live in a space, time, and history largely ignored in official and public discourses about what it means to be Canadian.

Clearly, these three works are not autobiographies in the most restricted definition of the term. Just as clearly, however, I suggest, along the lines of Eakin, that they do constitute autobiographical discourse in that we must "accept the gambit of autobiography's referential aesthetic" (4). In other words, Rhenisch is basing his work on biographical fact, however much these facts are "necessarily mediated by available cultural modes of identity and the discourses in which they are expressed" (4). More important for my purposes is Eakin's work on relational identity. Here Eakin reminds his readers that when considering the subject of autobiography, the first-person pronoun "I" is "neither singular nor first" (43), and that the self "is defined by—and lives in terms of—its relations with others" (43). Drawing on writers such as Susanna Egan, Nancy K. Miller and Shirley Neuman, as well as his own work, Eakin arrives at the phrase *the relational life*, a phrase he uses "to describe the story of a relational model of identity, developed collaboratively with others, often family members" (57). Importantly, "the story of the self" in terms of relational lives, is "not ancillary to the story of the other, although its primacy may be partly concealed by the fact that it is constructed through the story told *of* and *by* someone else" (58). In blurring or defying the traditional boundaries of the genre of autobiography in its strictest construction, these types of narratives are autobiographies "that offer not only the autobiography of the self but the biography *and* autobiography of the other" (58). Thus it is that the work of Rhenisch ranges from the image of his father's hands in an Okanagan orchard, to memories of poetry readings in Toronto, to the fire-bombing of Dresden.

The underlying premise behind the work of Rhenisch comprises his resistance and challenge to discourses he locates as dominant in the Interior. Furthermore, he seeks to redress this dominance, in part, by creating or maintaining a place-based identity centered around his particular understanding of agriculture and history in the region. In many ways, Harold Rhenisch's challenging of the dominant discourses of the Interior and his position as an advocate for the Interior region are characterized by tensions and paradoxes. The first such paradox is alluded to on the first page of the Prologue to *Out of the Interior*. Here, Rhenisch refers to the Interior as a "lost colonial island," an "abandoned country" that is now "being re-colonized" (1). Yet, for Rhenisch, the "real Okanagan . . . still . . . exists"; it is an Okanagan characterized by the orchards and visions of men like Jake van Westen, Hugh Dendy, and Bill Embrey. The problem here is that Rhenisch seems to be locating the orchard-culture of the Interior as a "first society" through the word "real" when, as even his remarks about colonization make clear, it is European settlers of the Interior who colonized the land in the first place. Farming and orcharding are activities directly related to the dispossession and displacement of First Nations people in the area. In this sense, the "Okanagan" Rhenisch yearns for seems to be precisely that of the "lost colonial island." Furthermore, the reduction of a populated and thriving contemporary landscape to images of abandonment mirrors the colonial exploration and settlement discourse that falsely rendered this same landscape empty for the purposes of settlement in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. That is, the true irony or paradox in Rhenisch is that he reads the contemporary Okanagan as a victim of processes that, at least in part, his orcharding culture precipitated and participated in.

A source of further irony or tension is the way that Rhenisch locates tourism and tourism discourse as a colonial power, as one of the instruments whereby the Interior is being re-colonized. The irony here is that it is international discourses of tourism that often led to European settlement in the region to begin with. David Dendy explains the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century policy of the government of

offering land on easy terms to genuine settlers (160 acre pre-emptions available at one dollar per acre, payments deferrable) and liberal bonuses of lands to railway promoters. Success of this policy is shown in the 800% increase between 1881 and 1911 of employment in agriculture. (Cent 5-6)

Similarly, Michael Dawson describes how British Columbia's "coastline and interior regions offered not only the sublime spectacle of mountain scenery but also industrial opportunities ranging from canneries to copper mining" (41-2). While Rhenisch is thus correct in identifying tourism discourse as historically connected to the region and possibly dominant in it, he does not acknowledge the role that tourism first played in the region's settlement and economy—again, a role directly connected to colonizing the land. In short, he demonizes tourism without locating its role in the colonial society he seems to long for.

Perhaps the height of irony in Rhenisch occurs with regard to his poetics. He frequently takes issue with the shifting discourses and changing landscape of the Interior. His anger is most prominently directed at so-called icons of Interior tourism: the commercial winery, the hotel industry, and the golf industry. Often his accusation is that these industries portray wine, agriculture, and golf as images devoid of meaning and as lacking a true connection to work and place. Instead, they are mechanisms designed to further commercial pursuits, to increase profit. Undoubtedly, this is true. At the same time, much of Rhenisch's poetic imagery can be interpreted in the same way. While his

work does seem connected to the Interior and the people who live there, the beauty of his work also functions touristically. *Out of the Interior* opens with Rhenisch's description of his father's hands: "[t]hrough those hands he saw the world. When his eyes settled on an apple, a Macintosh, white with wax and yeast, the whole day before him drained immediately down out of the air and through his nerves into his hands, and they tried to grab it" (7). The closing passage of the first page in *Tom Thomson's Shack* describes how "after the whine of tires settles, after the screeching of the trains, the wild, wheatgrass wind blows in the deep mountain valley, with the rising and sinking of the earth to the sun. It never stops" (7). I find both passages haunting and beautiful—this is the point. Rhenisch's poetic language, in some ways, is designed to *sell* the Interior to his readers; it tries to make us fall in love with the simple beauty of a Macintosh apple, to make us feel the caress of the wind as we stand in a field of wheatgrass, and to help us cleanse our thoughts through contact with fruit—that which was planted and cultivated by human hands. If he does not succeed in selling his ideas, his version of the Interior, then his political project fails. In a discussion with Brian Mennell, Rhenisch remarks that "[s]omeone has to talk about these things"—meaning the changing Interior. One of Mennell's responses is that "You do it in poetry. No one reads poetry" (104). Rhenisch's rejoinder is "Maybe I can change that." (104). It is unclear whether or not Mennell is referring to Rhenisch's poetry, or the poetic language of *Out of the Interior*. If it is the former, then Rhenisch's creative non-fiction is the answer to Mennell's charge. In this scenario, these texts are deliberate tools of persuasion and directed at political change through persuasion or trying to "sell" his point of view, and when his books sell, there is some profit to be made, however minimal this might be. There is nothing wrong with this

endeavour other than the failure of Rhenisch to acknowledge his own subject-position within these competing touristic discourses. While there is no doubt that the Interior is a changing, shifting place, and that tourism discourses may play a dominant role, it should be acknowledged that the work of Rhenisch functions the same way.

Hence, it is from the site of paradox, tension, and irony that Rhenisch's critiques, and my readings of them, emerge. To examine Rhenisch's three texts, I draw on concepts from the work of Eakin in combination with the Foucault's ideas of archeology and the archive, and to a lesser extent, the ideas of Fredric Jameson and Raymond Williams. Foucault's theory of the archive provides the overall framework through which discrepant discourses are brought together in an archive of the discourse-object: the British Columbia Interior. Eakin's theory of relational identity is the means whereby the anecdotes and stories within the work of Rhenisch function to express his identity and the identities of others around him and, on a larger scale, function to represent the "other" of the rural-agricultural Interior identity. Jameson's idea of a cultural logic operates at the microcosmic level of discourse to show how certain discourses, which are subordinate, work to contest those which are dominant; likewise, the work of Williams is key to my understanding of how the role of the dominant can never achieve full dominance.

The next section of this chapter, Education and Rural Alienation, will be more descriptive in nature. Here my emphasis is on the interplay of the discourse-statements and I examine the way in which Rhenisch challenges and is in tension with discourses he locates as dominant. In particular, I define an archival structure which includes the relational, autobiographical discourse of Rhenisch alongside the larger discourses of public education, the nationalist discourse of Peter Gzowski, and the academic discourse



of Margaret Atwood. With regard to archaeology, the discourses of relational identity in Rhenisch—the personal, anecdotal stories told in the vernacular—are subordinate discourses, but are also statements (*énoncé*; “events or things”) in the archive that contest the dominant discourses of education, and nationalism. In Jean Barman’s terms, these dominant discourses become equated or conflated with the whole, whether this whole be Canada, British Columbia, or Canadian urban centres. The parts, the stories of those who live in the Interior—the relational identities and statements of those represented in the work of Rhenisch—are not recognized as existing and “want their own viewing” (Barman 10).

In the third section of this chapter, *Selling the Interior*, I continue to define an archival structure of the Interior, this time by juxtaposing the discourse of Rhenisch with that of tourism. Again, my approach is primarily descriptive in nature and is focused on establishing the strength of tourism discourse; in terms of argumentation, my focus is limited to the tension and conflict created between tourism discourse and that of Rhenisch—tension and conflict which often result from Rhenisch’s contradictory positions. I suggest that through Rhenisch, supported by readings of tourism discourse, certain aspects of tourism as it occurs in the Interior can be read as statements. In particular, I suggest that tourism discourse-statements, such as those put forward in the areas of wine and golf tourism, are seen to be dominant by Rhenisch. In turn, these discourses bring into existence an understanding of the Interior in tension and conflict with the understanding of the Interior represented by the relational-identity and autobiographical discourse of Rhenisch. My interest here is not so much in the unique functioning of tourism discourse, but in the way Rhenisch uses the discourses of the

personal and the relational to challenge and contest the dominant statements of tourism with statements of his own. In doing so, Rhenisch is asserting a deterministic discourse which, while problematic in many ways, seeks control over the identity of the self and the other in such a way as to maintain, strengthen, and bring forward the identity of the Interior as a locale centered around agricultural labour and the personal stories of those who live there.

In the fourth section of this chapter, A Discursive Place-Based Identity, I use the framework of Soren C. Larsen in conjunction with Foucault, Eakin, Jameson and Williams to demonstrate how Rhenisch is actively involved in creating a place identity rooted in the geography of the Interior. I see Rhenisch as creating an insider/outsider binary which, though once again fraught with contradiction, establishes a moral authority for insiders, while also precluding outsiders from the possibility of entering into any conception of insider identity. Rhenisch establishes this insider/outsider binary by representing the physical and sensory experiences and knowledges that connect self, family, and community to the geography of the Interior through shared experience and history. These experiences, in turn, create a place identity that is founded on intense feeling and connection with the landscape. Finally, I suggest that one of the primary goals of Rhenisch is the demand that this identity be recognized. Furthermore, if such an identity is not recognized, if the “whole” of society does not understand itself in terms of the agricultural periphery that supports it, then environmental sustainability and survival are in jeopardy. While I agree with Rhenisch that a rural, agricultural identity is important, the particular identity he constructs is troubling. As I demonstrate in my conclusion, where I read Rhenisch through the lens of Daphne Marlatt’s *Ana Historic*, the

particular *version* of farming and orcharding he seems to endorse is one which operates under a patriarchal ideology and one which refuses to engage with the benefits that have accompanied the transformation of the Interior over the twentieth century.

## **Education and Rural Alienation**

Today, the growth of other industries, large cities, and a population without links to agriculture has gone so far that some primary schools in the Okanagan find it necessary to run ‘field trips’ for their students so that the children may have the thrill of actually picking fruit off a tree.

—David Dendy, *A Fruitful Century*, 112.

Rhenisch represents a sense of alienation as experienced by the rural farming culture of the Interior. In the words of David Dendy, “[o]ne subtle result of the changing nature of the Okanagan with its retirement communities and new tourist and other industries, [is] that the urban population was alienated from the fruit growers” (Dendy, *Fruitful* 111). I see Dendy as referring to the new, arguably urban, population of the Okanagan, but more specifically, the urban tourists and visitors who reside in cities such as Vancouver and Toronto. Rhenisch represents this alienation as occurring in two specific ways. First, he draws attention to the role of the national and provincial educational system in contributing to an alienated rural population. Secondly, he demonstrates that in contemporary public and literary discourses about what it means to be Canadian, there

seems to be no place for the rural agricultural worker—precisely what Barman is speaking about when she writes that “[i]t is the whole that is most often evoked in print or other media. We take the whole as our reference point, sometimes so much so that we forget that the parts exist at all” (9).

One of the contributing factors to the sense of alienation felt by rural farm workers is education. As Rhenisch states, “year after year after year we sent our young people off to receive a university education in Vancouver and Victoria, and with hardly any exceptions they stayed there” (*Tom* 107). In the first instance, then, there is physical alienation. The younger generation leaves the rural community to obtain an education in the urban centres where the largest universities are. This alienation persists when, “with hardly any exceptions,” those who sought out a university education do not return to the rural community. There is a direct connection being made here between education and physical alienation. Some facet of the educational process as it plays out in Vancouver and Victoria seems connected to, or to at least correlate with, the failure of people to return to the Interior. The effect of this physical absence can be devastating to the community. In the words of Rhenisch, “[w]ithout the energy of the young and the cultural inheritance they represent, the valley has little intellectual, spiritual, and cultural continuity in time and development through time” (*Tom* 107). The transmission of culture, the transmission of what Wendell Berry calls the “birthright knowledge of agriculture” (26), ceases with the departure of the next generation. If, as Rhenisch says, “[p]runing is a religion, a secret knowledge passed down from father to son” (*Out* 158), then the cycle of knowledge is broken when the so-called prodigal child does not, in fact, return.

Part of the problem is the discourse of public education. While Rhenisch points to the university education available in Vancouver or Victoria, more to the point is the history of public education in British Columbia and the Interior. Speaking of the time around 1941, when many industries became concentrated in regional areas, Harris and Demeritt explain that “this spatial division of labour,” a particular logic of regional specialization and concentration, “produced a sharply differentiated, regionally specialized agriculture: beef cattle on the interior grasslands, orchards in the Okanagan, wheat in the Peace River” (247), and so forth. This “logic regionalized agricultural landscapes, work routines, skills, and to some degree, rural cultures” (248). Yet Harris and Demeritt are quick to point out that these regionalized landscapes “existed within the same regulative state and, increasingly, within a similar information field” (248). In fact, children of orchardists in the Okanagan and of “wheat farmers in the Peace River Area followed the same curricula at school and listened to the same programs on the radio” (248). Indeed, the curriculum would have been the same in Kelowna as it was in Vancouver. In other words, orchardists felt the “homogenizing cultural pressures of modern information fields, reinforced by the greatly increased scope of government” (249). That is, students in rural areas were perceived to have been educated through an urban discourse that centred around the province and the nation—in Barman’s words, those “political entities” that “absorb our time and energy, and principally regulate us politically, financially, and socially” (9)—a pattern that persists in the present day.

The focused, specialized, heterogeneous, regional cultures and discourses that developed out of geographical and regional concentration had no place in the urban-centric educational process. Children seen to have been educated through a series of

discursive practices and formations that placed the city at the centre of provincial and Canadian identity as well as superior to agricultural rural communities. One result of this homogenizing cultural pressure is that “in the mid-seventies the drop-out rate at high school rose to almost 70 percent as we all fought to integrate—or comprehend—an urban education that was dragging us away” (*Out* 179). Speaking of his generation, who attended high school in the 1970s, Rhenisch further remarks that “[w]e moved to the cities, easily, because we saw ourselves as the city, and we saw our rural culture achieve full expression in the cities. We were taught that way” (*Tom* 159). The lens or discourse through which individuals apprehended their rural reality became an urban one; individuals were taught to see their surroundings as peripheral to urban centres and as supplying value—the achievement of full expression—to those centres. The utterance of Rhenisch to this effect can be read as a Foucauldian statement whereby the naming of this process, the *statement* of loss, the statement of incomprehension, becomes a statement of resistance. Rhenisch’s relational discourse is focused on “we,” the children and community, but also extends inward to include “I.” While the space of the self is here “literally occupied by the autobiography and self of the other,” it also offers “a measure of self-determination, for the other’s story, the other’s life, is possessed—indeed created—by the recording self” (Eakin 61). In other words, the statement, inclusive of self and other, represents a determinism, a particular authority in which the story of the educational process is told in terms of loss, in terms of an incomprehensible “dragging away,” rather than success and, thus, resists and challenges the dominant discourse. On one hand, there does not seem to be any place for, or conception of, a rural, agricultural

identity and culture in the education system, and, by extension, the province and the nation. On the other hand, Rhenisch's statements are creating such a place.

In Foucault's terms, if objects are defined "by relating them to the body of rules that enable them to form as objects of discourse and thus constitute the conditions of their historical appearance" (53), then the historical appearance, the existence of the Interior comes into being, in part, through a discourse—that of education—which fails to do precisely that (enables it to form as an object of discourse). Concerning the enunciative modality, the "speaker," in this case the state (as responsible for curriculum), holds the qualifications, the "special quality [or] prestige," and is "sanctioned by law [and] tradition" to "proffer such a discourse" (55). Here, the speaker, institutional site, and position of the subject (student) are such that the discourse of education, a discourse that fails to recognize the validity of Interior agricultural identity, is dominant and to an extent oppressive. Having experienced an education that seemingly has no place for the rural experience, inhabitants of the Interior are faced with the images and discourses of their culture from which they have been excluded, marginalized and erased. What Rhenisch represents is nothing short of an identity crisis where a particular group of people—due to education—have been left out of the picture, the discourse, of their community and thus out of the idea, conception, and discourse of the Canadian nation. In *his* representation, however, in the statements *he* is making, Rhenisch is bringing this identity into existence, or at least affirming such an identity, through an alternate discourse.

At the same time that the inhabitants of the Interior are experiencing the effects of an urban-centric education, they also face discourses about the Canadian nation that do not reflect their lived experiences. Consider the relationship Rhenisch describes between

broadcaster, writer, and reporter Peter Gzowski and himself. Speaking on behalf of the Interior community, Rhenisch writes that “for us who lived in the bunchgrass and pine mountains of British Columbia in those years, Peter was Canada. He was family . . . When we listened to Peter we believed that the idea of Canada worked” (*Tom* 93). Here, the discourse Gzowski, representative of the nation, seems to generate a feeling of community and of belonging to Canada among the agricultural workers—along lines similar to the ideas in Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*. While Anderson is focused on the print medium, the idea of a shared imagination via the “text” of a radio program is analogous to his work. The workers in the mountains, along with the rest of Canada, share in the reception of Gzowski’s words as well as the dialogues, debates and conversations that emerge therefrom—these shared ideas contribute to a sense of nation. In comparison, are Rhenisch’s reportedly direct experiences with Gzowski in Toronto. When asked by his publishers who he wanted to invite to his Toronto reading of *Iodine*, Rhenisch responded: “Peter Gzowski. It would be great to have him there” (*Tom* 93). However, when Rhenisch “stood in the middle of the black stage of the Palmerston Public Library and looked for Peter in the crowd. He wasn’t there” and Rhenisch “read without him” (*Tom* 95). Likewise, when faced with an overly quiet reading in Victoria, Rhenisch remarks that “Hardly anyone had come to the reading: Peter was in town” (*Tom* 96). To some extent, it is irrelevant whether or not Gzowski was invited to Rhenisch’s event or whether he was in fact the cause of the poor attendance at the reading. Instead, I argue that Gzowski functions as a synecdoche for official or mainstream Canadian discourse and culture. When Gzowski fails to show up for Rhenisch’s reading, it is official Canada not showing up to comprehend the rural identity; it is official Canada that



undercuts the idea and discourse of nation that resided in Rhenisch and by extension in the minds of those others “who lived in the bunchgrass and pine mountains” of the British Columbia Interior. Insofar as Rhenisch and *Iodine* symbolically represent the Cariboo, Okanagan, and Similkameen, Canada fails to be present to this region. The absence of Gzowski collapses the entire scene of national belonging in the bunchgrass and mountains. Those labourers were not labouring as a family or community of Canada for Canada because the other side of the partnership failed to materialize or even recognize that its rural “half” existed. Furthermore, in the example of the Victoria reading, Canada symbolically prevents others from being present at and recognizing the existence of the rural agricultural labourers. This is precisely Rhenisch’s point—the “Torontos” and “Vancouverites” (Barman’s Vancouverites and Victorians), that are in part supported and sustained by the labour and produce of those in the valley, refuse to recognize rural existence.

The challenge to this discursive construction is that the relational identity expressed by the story of the workers in the bunchgrass and pine mountains where they listened to “American country-and-western radio and its songs of loss and pain,” and where “hay flew out of the backs of [their] pickups as [they] drove home for lunch,” (*Tom* 93), is a statement in the archive representing tension and conflict with the dominant. As a statement, the relational structure of the story tells something about the “autobiographer’s identity, about its roots and involvement in another’s life and story” and, therefore, about the “focus of the autobiography is on someone else’s story” (Eakin 60). The story, this statement of the other, is the narrative of workers in the fields. It is the story of a community of people who share the experience of labour, of art (music), of

land, and of loss and pain. Rhenisch, through discourse, is asserting and demanding recognition of the existence of the rural labourers who are connected to urban centres through production and the music they listen to. He is discursively creating the stories of these others through his “recording self,” while undermining the discursive construction that ignores such stories.

The elision of the lived experiences of rural communities from conceptions and discourses about Canada also occurs in literary discourses—a forum which is often actively concerned with articulating what is and is not considered to be the “Canadian experience,” what does and does not constitute or represent the *narrative* of being Canadian. In terms of the academic, literary representation of the Canadian experience, Margaret Atwood is often seen to represent an early authority and reference. In *The Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada*, Shannon Hengen explains that “Margaret Atwood’s name became synonymous with the cultural flowering that took place in Canada during the last 25 years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century” (48). Yet the Canada that Atwood represents and describes in her critical works is one that is seemingly unrelated to the world of the Interior in which Rhenisch resides. Of Atwood, Rhenisch states:

The Canadian novelist Margaret Atwood, for one, smiled her way right through two books about images of the land in Canadian Literature: *Survival* and *Strange Things* . . . . To those of us prying the woodpeckers off our windowframes among the black poplars, or crowbarring our carrots out of the Cariboo clay, *Survival* looks like a White Paper, a federal government report prepared for a select parliamentary committee by a writer sitting at a desk passing laws about the snow-drenched land on which my mother and I have lived our lives. (*Wolves* 131)

Rhenisch’s criticism of Atwood is harsh, and a distinction needs to be made between her purpose in *Survival*—to study and theorize Canadian literature—and Rhenisch’s claim that she is writing comprehensively about the actual and entire Canadian landscape.

Nevertheless, methodologically, Atwood does work from the physical, natural landscape of Ontario through the literature to make her claims. For example, she states that “[n]ot surprisingly in a country with such a high ratio of trees, lakes and rocks to people, images from Nature are almost everywhere” (49). Here she moves from a “real world” landscape to a landscape depicted in narrative form. Added up, these images “depict a Nature that is often dead and unanswering or actively hostile to man; or, seen in its gentler spring and summer aspects, unreal” (Atwood 49). In terms of hostility, Atwood suggests that water and snow “are the usual implements [of death], though” there is also “[d]eath by bushing, in which a character isolated in Nature goes crazy” (55). However true these ideas may be to some Canadians in central Canada, or represented in some literature, this discourse does not represent the Interior of British Columbia as Rhenisch sees it and lives in it.<sup>4</sup>

Winter, the season of bitter cold and snow, is for Rhenisch not a temperature reading, a value from a weather report, or a signifier of death, but a way of life and a season of light, joy, freedom, and sublime beauty. In other words, a temperature value of “thirty below” may be accurate, but it obscures how the cold is seen by those who live it. Rhenisch explains: “I spent my winters staring into the mouth of the sky as the colours fell out of it minute by minute, and then into the stars. They took my breath away” (92). Here, the winter is not ominous, unanswering or hostile. It is a prism or kaleidoscope of ever-changing colour. It is human, personified, open, inviting; and, just as the shifting colours of dusk fade into darkness, the sky is lit once again by the stars. If Gerard Manley Hopkins exhorts us to “Look at the stars! look, look up at the skies!,” then Rhenisch takes us there, and our breath too is swept away by visual delight and memory. Perhaps, as Allan Pritchard suggests, the survival thesis “serves admirably as a means of defining the

regional characteristics of the literature of British Columbia—if one merely reverses its central propositions” (*A View of* 96). Indeed, Rhenisch reveals that

In the bush, the North is home, security, safety. It is the bear wandering through blueberry meadows and old avalanche trails, the beds of glaciers, a cabin on a trapline, a lake in the shadow of mountains, the light playing on aspen trunks. It is the liberating blue release of snow . . . . When winter storms come down from the Yukon to the Interior, we have come home. We run outside and laugh. (*Wolves* 144)

Home. Safety. Security. The bear does not attack, but rather it *wanders*. Glaciers do not terrify or inspire the degree of sublimity and awe that they might in the work of Percy Bysshe Shelley; instead, they rest as if on a bed. Rhenisch takes his readers through a window or a mirror where they can see the light playing on aspens, and hear the snow-inspired laughter. Snow liberates rather than confines, and rather than a desperate attempt to escape the winter, Rhenisch seeks it out; it is home. The tension and conflict between the statements of Atwood’s discourse and those of Rhenisch are clear.

To return to Foucault, it is important to note that “the unity of discourse on” a particular object

would not be based upon the existence of the object . . . or the constitution of a single horizon of objectivity; it would be the interplay of the rules that make possible the appearance of objects during a given period of time: objects that are shaped by measures of discrimination and repression, objects that are differentiated in daily practice, in law, in religion . . . . (36)

While Foucault is citing the object of madness, the same framework can be applied to the object of the Interior, not the physical referent but the concept or idea of Interior. Implicit in Foucault’s idea that discourse makes possible the appearance of an object is the absence of discourse about an object renders that object invisible, especially in the interplay between dominant discourses of education, or those espoused by Gzowski and Atwood, in comparison to subordinate discourses like that of Rhenisch and the

community he writes about. Intentions aside, discourses of public education, public figures, and academic theorists come together to position the object of the Interior as subject to measures of discrimination and repression. Eakin cites psychologist John Shotter to make the point that “identity formation, then, is socially and (more specifically) discursively transacted” (63); Eakin thus exhorts us to see the “relational dimension of identity formation” rather than the false “legacy of a culture of individualism” (63-4). In some sense a resistance to Foucault’s seeming insistence on discourse divorced from a referent, Rhenisch locates the Interior identity, the concept of Interior, precisely as the referent of the physical landscape and community. The bush, the bear, the blueberry meadows, the glaciers and the liberating snow, all function as statements in that they ground or *discursively transact* an identity formation for Rhenisch, his “sense of being ‘I’” (Eakin 4), and by extension for the Interior in the physicality of the landscape—a formation that seeks to undo the measures of discrimination and repression that fail to acknowledge this formation.

In discussing “the reader as citizen,” Atwood states that “[t]he reader looks at the mirror and sees not the writer but himself; and behind his own image in the foreground, a reflection of the world he lives in” (15). Atwood further remarks that “if a country or a culture lacks such mirrors it has no way of knowing what it looks like; it must travel blind” (15-16). Her words explain precisely the predicament that Rhenisch encounters and represent in the Interior. Symbolically, if not literally (and certainly not intentionally), the discourse Atwood creates about Canada is a discourse that brings into existence a discourse-object (Canada) in which the discourse, the culture and identity of the Interior, is absent; there is no mirror-image, no “image in the foreground,” and hence

no “reflection of the world he lives in.” Faced with mirrors such as the survival thesis, faced with an academic and public discourse of Canada that omits the Interior experience, the Interior is traveling blind among the larger discourses of Canada. Rhenisch represents what it means to exist in a space that “has no way of knowing what it looks like.” However, his discourse, the discourse of the winter, the cold, the fruit, and the landscape of the Interior, while working from a subordinate position, *is* such a mirror that at once asserts the absence of mirrors at the macrocosmic level and provides one; every instance of his work, each discursive moment, is actively involved in discursively transacting an identity formation for the Interior of British Columbia.

## **Selling the Interior**

Nature endows the Thompson Okanagan with all the ingredients for a feast of eye and palate. Vineyards flourish on sun-drenched slopes. In fertile valleys, rivers and lakes bring life to orchards, pastures, vegetable gardens and herb plantations. Cattle roam grassy rangeland and flowers grow wild on hillsides and mountain meadows, cultivated in gardens both public and private . . .

“Flavours of the Thompson Okanagan” *Thompson Okanagan Vacation Guide 2010*, 2.

This is an abandoned country, and it is being re-colonized. What is being colonized or exploited, today, is not the earth that was

colonized in the past, but the culture that grew out of that approach, the images of the land in which I first walked, surrounded by birds and sun and wind.

—Harold Rhenisch, *Out of the Interior*, 1.

Having contributed to the colonial process in its first phase, tourism promotion then contributed to a process of selective amnesia in its second phase—a process that normalized European control of the land and encouraged both visitors and hosts to reimagine the ‘resettlement’ of British Columbia as benign, comforting, and consumable fare.

—Michael Dawson, *Selling British Columbia: Tourism and Consumer Culture*, 1890-1970, 176.

Descriptions of the Thompson Okanagan such as the ones quoted above are ubiquitous in British Columbia tourism literature. The descriptions are rich and full of inviting adjectives that beseech prospective travellers to shake free of their concerns in favour of a relaxing vacation, surrounded by flowers, pastures, lush hillsides, and flourishing vineyards. As early as the fourteenth century, the term “vacation” was used to indicate “freedom, release, or rest *from* some occupation, business, or activity” (emphasis added) and by the fifteenth century to suggest “freedom or respite from work” (“Vacation”). It is, in a sense, only fitting for vacation guides to omit any reference to, or image of, work or labour. There are no grape or fruit pickers in the above passage, no family of Joads from

Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, no one performing the cultivating, weeding the gardens, or slaughtering the cattle. It is the "rivers and lakes" that bring life to the orchards—not people. In short, there is no *work* being done here. The question Harold Rhenisch asks us to consider, though, is what happens when these images, this type of discourse, becomes the accepted narrative of a given place? Who is empowered and who is exploited? What happens to the working people in the background of the image, but not present in it? In answer to these questions Rhenisch refers to what he terms a second wave or instance of colonization of the Interior where the agriculture-based society is remade and reimagined by an image, concept, and discursive formation of the Interior that excludes the agricultural labour. Such a second wave of colonization will build upon the first instance of colonization of British Columbia. It is, after all, the colonization of British Columbia by a European settler society that provides the framework and vocabulary for the arguments Rhenisch makes. In terms of the archive, the two discourses in question are the discourse of tourism and the locally-focused discourse of Rhenisch. According to Rhenisch, it is clear that the dominant discourse is that of tourism. To use the terminology of Michael Dawson quoted earlier, "the absence of narratives, images, and discourses of labour is normalised within the dominant discourse of tourism enterprises and tourist activities" (176). The functioning of tourism discourse in this fashion is far from unusual; indeed, it would be quite remarkable if such a discourse became sidetracked from the pursuit of sales and profit in favour of the promotion of labour practices. The point here is to examine the process as it affects the object of Interior and to demonstrate how the personal, relational, autobiographical discourse of



Rhenisch is in tension with, and works to contest, that of a dominant discursive formation.

In approaching the idea of a consumer ethic and a consumer culture, Dawson turns to sociologist Don Slater's *Consumer Culture and Modernity*. One of Slater's components of a consumer ethic and culture is that "it is a culture in which 'core social practices and cultural values, ideas, aspirations and identities are defined and outlined in relation to consumption rather than to other social dimensions such as work or citizenship . . .'" (Dawson 6). Rhenisch points directly to this criterion when he states that "[b]y ripping out all of its orchards for retirement homes and motels, Penticton has destroyed the dream that brought people here" (*Out* 69). This image is one of physical and conceptual transformation. Physically, the orchards are being removed and retirement homes and motels take their place. As introduced species, fruit trees cannot be said to be a part of the inherent natural environment per se, but, just as clearly, they are elements of nature in the sense outlined by Wendell Berry when he talks of the "givens" of "land, plants, weather, hunger, and the birthright knowledge of agriculture" (26). Hence, the material transformation of the landscape here represents a transition from living, food-producing orchards to a non-living, built environment. If, as Eakin suggests, an author can "affirm[] the possibility of self-determination" by appropriating their "working-class story from the dominant culture's controlling design by interpreting it" (55) themselves, then surely this is the case here. Rhenisch, as orchardist and writer, takes his working-class story of orcharding and positions it against the tourism-based design that is focused on the development of retirement homes and motels. In doing so, he asserts the discourse

of the personal, of the local community, against the dominant discourse of tourism development and investment.

There are, however, problems with Rhenisch's position. It seems clear that he is advocating values attached to agriculture in order to resist the emerging dominance of tourism and tourism infrastructure. This argument seems to be framed in terms of class. Everyday people in Rhenisch are located on the farms; it is "people" who once had a dream of what Penticton could be. Yet, it is "Penticton" itself that has ripped out the orchards in favour of retirement homes. The use of "Penticton" as an agent has rendered the process impersonal—people are not involved. "Penticton" in this way is analogous to an impersonal corporation. Alternately, "Penticton" stands for the government or city council. In both instances, the working-class farmer or orchardist is located in tension with concerns of the governing classes. The issue is that retirement homes and motels do provide work (and shelter) for the working class and many farms are owned by the upper class as well as by large agribusiness corporations. Farming itself is by no means an antithesis to large-scale business concerns. Rhenisch's argument, therefore, only functions on behalf of smaller, independent farms and works against those working class individuals employed in the tourism industry as well as larger business and tourism concerns. His argument is limited specifically to the small-scale, working-class farmer to the exclusion of all else.

While there is value produced by shelter and from the economic contributions of residents and tourists, the important point in Rhenisch's terms is the physical move from a life-sustaining landscape to one that is not. Conceptually, retirement and tourism replace orchards and agriculture as the discourse, lens or narrative through which the

Interior is represented and understood. The orchards that remain are not seen as functional, as supplying food and value to rural, urban, provincial, national and international centres; they are attractions or novelties to be visually consumed for the explicit purposes of selling motel rooms and places in retirement homes. The motels themselves represent the image of transience. They are often unlive in, unused; they house all the accoutrements of a home without the physical, emotional, and spiritual life of a home; they represent mobility and transience. The retirement homes are places from which to consume the landscape; they are disconnected from the labour and agriculture of the region. Physically and discursively (conceptually), then, the object of the Interior is being remade, reimagined. The “core social practices and cultural values” of agricultural labour and culture have been reoriented or displaced by—and are now in conflict with—the values of profit and consumption. The focus of the picture has shifted from one that foregrounds the agricultural way of life to one that focuses on tourism. Crucial to this argument is that this new image of the Interior is one that excludes work (including motel labourers), reduces the images of labour to consumable visual commodities, and obliterates those individuals who actually perform the physical labour associated with the production of the consumable image of the orchard and the actual orchard alike.<sup>5</sup> In other words, “the Okanagan and Similkameen have become an article in a travel magazine” (*Tom* 107).

In the *Thompson Okanagan Vacation Guide 2010* travel magazine, the contents are broken down into recreational activities followed by community listings. The

introduction, therefore, is followed by “Wine and Fabulous Food,” “Arts and Culture,” “Spa and Wellness,” “Outdoor Adventure,” “Winter,” “RV and Camping,” seven separate listings for golf, and subsequently a community-by-community listing. While the “Arts and Culture” section is not as explicit in its foregrounding of consumable commodities, the section itself is a catalogue of advertisements of things and experiences for purchase. For instance, listed here are four seasonal wine festivals (Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter), GeoTourism Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) adventures, First Nations artists, as well as a host of museums and markets. It is crucial to see that the economic benefits and recognition of artists and cultures here are to a large degree positive. The negative aspect of this scenario is that all of these activities and experiences are directed toward selling a product and, as such, bear little relationship to the actual circumstances of the artists lives or to the communities in which they live. Consider the inclusion of First Nations cultures and imagery. According to Dawson, using such imagery began in the mid-twentieth century because “aboriginal culture” was “ideal for the purposes of tourism promotion” because “it was both increasingly uncommon and appeared to be suitable ‘foreign’” (164). On one hand, the promotion of First Nations goods and culture can have a positive economic effect; however, the overriding premise, that this promotion is designed in terms of consumption and profitability, does little to reduce systemic cultural and political problems such as land rights, racism, poverty, equal education and so forth. In other words, using culture as a consumable tool to draw visitors to a given region is inherently problematic.

The primacy of consumable activities, goods, and experiences in the guide is evident at the outset from the hierarchical order of their appearance in the contents. While

the community listings in the table of contents suggests a historical or cultural overview of each community, each community section is instead filled with further advertisements for goods, activities and experiences. Under the community heading “Oliver,” for example, is the phrase “Wine Capital of Canada,” faced by advertisements from NK’MIP, Inniskillin and Jackson Triggs wineries (55); Penticton, billed as a “Time to Breathe,” presents a sun-filled vineyard faced by advertisements for lodgings and a winery (57); West Kelowna and Westbank promise “Rural Sophistication,” where an image of Lake Okanagan is coupled with that of Mission Hill winery and is faced by further advertisements (61). In terms of discourse, the important feature of the guide is its seeming anonymity. The guide is copyrighted by the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association and is attributed to HelloBC.com, a trademark of Tourism British Columbia, which falls under the British Columbia Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Investment. Despite being a government publication, the vast range of information and advertisements—primarily private competitive advertisements—renders the guide anonymous—especially considering the disclaimer of any endorsement or responsibility on the part of “Tourism British Columbia or the Region” (right inside cover). Discursively then, the guide operates as an authority, published by the provincial government and through a process of selection, yet is anonymous in terms of its contents, endorsements, and overall lack of attribution or responsibility. This anonymity is in direct conflict and tension with the personal, autobiographical, relation discourse in the work of Rhenisch.

The most prominent industry among all communities in the guide is the wine tourism industry. The guide entreats the reader to “walk among the vines, tour a

winemaking facility and above all, taste, taste, taste” (3). By comparison is Rhenisch’s attempt to describe the Gewürztraminers of the Okanagan, how they taste “of the sun, blowing in yellow and white squalls against the purple hills, and the lake so far below, a totally different colour from the sky, glowing” (*Tom* 78). At first glance, Rhenisch seems accepting of wine tourism, and these two descriptions seem to agree. However, Rhenisch does not stop at poetic physical description; his words locate wine in the particular, in personal experience, and in the local weather and colours of the Interior. Wine is a product of physical labour and a means of participating in a relationship with the land, a way of *seeing* the “blowing yellow and white squalls against the purple hills.” For Rhenisch,

[w]ine-making is an ephemeral art, as rigorous as calculus, and despite recent attempts to codify the range of human taste on a cardboard wine-wheel—‘hints of raspberry and blackcurrant’ on the one side to ‘traces of skunk and kerosene’ on the other—wine can’t really be codified or touched. (*Tom* 73)

Though no active agent of codification is mentioned here, Rhenisch is alluding to the increased commercialization of the wine and wine-tourism industry through his reference to the “cardboard wine-wheel,” and his use of the standard phraseology of contemporary wine-labels. By singling out commercial wine-production, while simultaneously praising wine-making as an “ephemeral art” that facilitates access to the land via labour, Rhenisch is specifying a divide between homemade “basement wine” and commercially produced wine, and suggesting that the latter functions solely in terms of profit and tourism.

Discursively, he is challenging the valorisation of commercially produced wine. The codification of human taste on a cardboard wine-wheel places such a limitation on the range of taste available that the taste becomes meaningless, impersonal. Like the impersonal, anonymity of the vacation guide, the taste of wine becomes anonymous; if all

wine tastes the same, or falls within the same predetermined range of flavour, then uniqueness and distinction are abolished. Though it (ironically) functions *like* tourism discourse, the discourse of the personal, the statement of the taste of the sun, the hills, the squalls and the lakes is elevated above the statement of the anonymous, of the commercial, and thereby resists and contests its dominance.

In a more forceful passage, Rhenisch states, “I take issue . . . that the exploded monastery of Mission Hill winery, set up on a mountaintop like a film set, obliterate[s] the views around itself, [and] draws thousands of tourists a day to see its Italian bell tower and its French bell, its Austrian stone fountain and its family crest” (*Wolves* 141). The significance of the explicit image of the Mission Hill winery is that it is an image designed solely for the purpose of profit. As a physical building, it represents the remaking of the mountaintop. As an image, a discursive statement, it “obliterates” all that surrounds it; the imposing structure of the winery becomes the focal point of this landscape, the literal and symbolic discourse-statement through which the region is viewed; the gaze of visitor and resident alike is oriented toward this structure and away from other aspects of rural society. As Dawson asserts, “to ensure maximum tourist enjoyment required not only an efficient and welcoming host population but also a determined effort to direct tourists’ attention toward some aspects of the province’s social reality and away from others” (209). While the structure of Mission Hill is not a provincial one (i.e. built by the province), it is an image included in provincially produced tourism literature, and though there is likely no intention on the part of the Mission Hill winery to direct the tourist gaze away from particular social realities, there

is clearly an intention to direct the gaze toward the winery—an intention evident from the sheer size and grandeur of the structure. Intentionality aside, then, the Mission Hill winery, and others like it *functions* as a statement in the archive to direct the tourist gaze *toward* their experience and product, and therefore *away* from other social realities such as labour and rural culture.

Implicit here is the colonization of a landscape by a structure, image, and discourse of that same landscape. Like a “film set,” Mission Hill winery—a synecdoche for all large-scale commercial wineries in the area—is for Rhenisch unreal. It is staged, organized, and orchestrated for a particular purpose: to sell the experience of Mission Hill. Part of this staging, this orchestration, is the inclusion of the “Italian bell tower,” the “French bell,” and “its Austrian stone fountain.” All three elements are foreign introductions, not through a process of history, but intentionally and deliberately as curiosities, as consumer attractions. In marketing terminology, these three items represent “product differentiation” or a “unique selling proposition” (Holloway 132). Companies often use physical features to “personalize their products” (Holloway 133), and the marketer “aims to create an ‘aura’ or cluster of benefits for the product, which distinguishes it from its competitors in often indefinable ways” (134). As Dawson suggests, “it is clear that tourism is as much about purchasing goods and services as it is about obtaining ‘authentic’ experiences” (9). In the words of Raymond Williams, “it is impossible to look at modern advertising without realising that the material object being sold is never enough: this is indeed the crucial quality of its modern forms” (185). In these terms, the Italian bell tower, French bell, and Austrian stone fountain signify product differentiation through the creation of an “aura” or “authentic experience” as a



complement to the material objects of wine and wine-related products that are being sold.<sup>6</sup>

Consider the following description of the bell tower, found on the Mission Hill website: “[s]tanding 12-storeys tall and visible as guests approach the winery, the Bell Tower, with its lightning rod and pelican-inspired weathervane, taken from the von Mandl family crest, entices visitors to enter the grounds” (Mission Hill “Bell Tower”). Again, the central problem here is that this aura, this “authentic” cultural experience, is a manufactured one; its purpose, clearly described in the Mission Hill literature, is to entice “visitors to enter the grounds.” It is an archival statement of the discourse-object Okanagan that excludes the experiences and histories of those who live there, of those who work in agriculture and on small-scale vineyards. To return to Slater’s criteria of a consumer culture, “a consumer culture is ‘mediated by market relations.’ Individuals no longer ‘make the goods through which we reproduce daily life.’ Instead we choose ‘between a range of alternative commodities produced by institutions which are not interested in need or cultural values but in profit and economic values’” (qtd. in Dawson 6). When entering Mission Hill’s “Imposing, fortress-like entry gates,” visitors are “in no doubt that they have entered a very special environment, a sanctuary to the world of wine” (Mission Hill “Entry Gates”); this sanctuary, however, is connected not to need or cultural value, but to market relations and economic values—the visitor is simply a target of a large scale wine-tourism advertising campaign. While a winery can hold cultural value, the issue here is that such value is artificial and hence *valueless*. By “taking issue” with this winery, by exposing its location in the dominant discourse and its symbolic representation of this discourse, Rhenisch is discursively repudiating it.

Like many of the texts Eakin examines, Rhenisch's work provides "unusually comprehensive accounts of the social communit[y] in which" his earlier self was formed and in which he has lived for much of his life. His "self" is a product "of a particular time and place" and the "identity-shaping environments" in his texts are "nested one within the other—self, family, community set in a physical and cultural geography, in an unfolding history" (85). What readers learn about Rhenisch's identity-shaping environment is how drastically it is being altered, and what these alterations signify in terms of the self and community identity—what is absent, what is repressed. Thus, the work of Rhenisch is essential in maintaining a focus on the personal, on the community, on the "basement" wine-makers and labourers of the Interior in opposition to the dominant discourses that refuse and suppress such recognition in favour of their own goals—in the case of tourism, sales and profit.

Jockeying for position with wine and wine-tourism in Interior tourism discourse is golf.<sup>7</sup> Just under 19 percent (18 of the 95 pages) in the guide is dedicated to it, not including the occasional advertisement outside of the dedicated golf section. No other activity or community listing occupies this much space. Wine, at seven pages—in addition to approximately fifteen out-of-section advertisements—falls into second place for space allocation. Rhenisch quotes a selection of tourism discourse about golf: "'Tee off in a working orchard at Kelowna's nine-hole McCulloch Orchard Greens Golf Club. Historic orchard equipment is even displayed at the ninth hole!'" (*Tom* 214). His response to this advertisement is that "It sounds great, alright. Except that of the four hundred and fifty acres of the orchard, just about every single acre was removed from orcharding to put up the golf course"(214). As an archival statement about the object of

the Interior, the creation of McCulloch's Orchard Greens is in direct tension and conflict with the personal, relational discourse of Rhenisch that describes the removal of the referent, the "Orchard," which Orchard Greens supposedly signifies. Similarly, Kelowna's Harvest Golf Club<sup>8</sup> is "a championship length golf course carved through a majestic hillside orchard" (*Kelowna* 43), where it is possible to "play among the apple orchards" (*Thompson Okanagan* 36). Of 254 acres, 54 acres are devoted to a "working orchard" with another 10 acres devoted to wine grapes (Harvest); statistically, only 25 percent of the golf course is devoted to crop production; 21 percent of the golf course is devoted to the working orchard. As in the example from Rhenisch, it seems likely—especially considering the phrase "carved out"—that "about every single acre was removed from orcharding to put up the golf course." The tragedy, according to Rhenisch is that, in the case of Orchard Greens, it is situated on "the best Orchard land" and therefore the "land is of historic importance," but "unfortunately, [there is] this business about the pseudo-history at the ninth hole" (215). As statements, advertisements such as those about Orchard Greens function discursively to bring into existence the object of Interior in such a way that inhabitants and visitors can feel as if they are experiencing the Interior in its fullest historical conception—the history of agricultural production is seemingly available and accessible through the visibility and continuity of the "historic orchard equipment" through to the modern "working orchard"; this is the dominant discourse. Rhenisch mocks the truth and historical veracity of this discourse by including the advertisement within his discourse. Simultaneously, he replaces the statement of Orchard Greens with the statement that Orchard Greens is not, in fact, a full working orchard and that the actual historic importance of the land—that it "was the home orchard

of the pivotal orchard company in the Okanagan” (*Tom* 215)—has simply been ignored. It is not simply the destruction of orchard land that Rhenisch resents, but that the cultural history of orcharding in the Interior has been omitted from the public eye. Instead, the public is presented with displaced cultural artifacts that purport to relate cultural history when they are actually designed to attract and please consumers.

In *The Economy of Icons: How Business Manufactures Meaning*, Ernest Sternberg uses Niagara Falls as a case study to reveal “two phases of touristic composition: *staging*, which consists of setting up, arranging, and contextualizing an attractive motif; and *thematizing*, which meaningfully situates the attraction through themes such as picturesqueness, freakishness, technological wondrousness, and romance” (111). Sternberg further contends that in terms of staging, arranging “must be accomplished in two respects: spatially, with respect to surrounding props and motifs; and sequentially, with respect to a series of touristic activities” (117). The primary motif in this case is the golf course, which in turn is “situated within a larger stage arrangement” (Sternberg 117)—the vineyard and the orchard. The props in the example given by Rhenisch include the “historic orchard equipment” displayed at the ninth hole and a small-scale working orchard and grape growing at the Harvest Golf club. Spatially, players and tourists are in close proximity to these props, which represent the motifs of wine and orchard culture without meaningfully participating in either. As with the bell and tower of Mission Hill, these props are introduced as a means of differentiating the golf experience at these two venues from that of their competitors. To this end, they have *manufactured* the motif, the supposed authentic experience of grape and fruit production. As with Niagara, “the tourist’s access” to the golf course is “spatially arranged through a

number of prospective platforms”—golf holes in this case—and “sequentially arranged” as a step-by-step journey that “begins and ends at the parking lot” (Sternberg 117)—potentially with a short visit to the onsite restaurant. The importance of the spatial and sequential arrangement and the staging of the golf course is that the entire experience is carefully constructed and manufactured. Visitors are spatially and temporally directed along a given path; likely only certain aspects of grape and fruit production are made visible; only authorized breaks in play—such as lunch at the onsite restaurant or departing—are allowed. The consumer experience is controlled at every step.

Thematically and discursively, the vineyard and the orchard are associated with the *sense* of culture, the idea of a romanticized pastoral landscape, and the picturesque. As Rhenisch states, “[p]eople come a long way to enter the painting in which I live.” (Tom 190). As is clear in the example of golf course promotion, the landscape becomes a painting: rolling green hills, orchard trees, and grape vines dazzle the senses. Or, as the *Thompson Okanagan Guide* remarks in the introductory note about golf in the region, “Lush river-banks, dry sage hillsides, deeply forested mountains, rocky cliffs, blue lakes . . . talk about terrain” (32). Discursively, the painting is the artificial, the manufactured, and the staged. It has a foreground and a background; attempts are made by an authority (the painter) to control and direct the gaze of the viewer. In opposition, the term “live” is personal. The land is personal; it is where people work, eat, sleep, play, live and die. In the case of tourism discourse, the landscape is reduced to playable terrain, a consumable commodity. The problem is that the commodity of the terrain is divorced from reality, but is also one that seems to define and represent the current reality. The image is created and the gesture toward the agricultural and orchard industries through the inclusion of a

“working orchard” is just that—a gesture. Such a gesture ignores the lives of those who work in these industries and want to be recognized for it.

In the words of Rhenisch,

. . . Hugh and I remember the years when a migrant worker, an orchard owner, the packinghouse manager, the doctor, the guy who sold you your shoes downtown, all had prestige, dignity, social honour, and cultural belonging . . . . We remember what it was like to define our selves, not to be defined—or even dismissed—by others. (*Tom* 147)

While the racial and class equality in this anecdote is doubtful, the rhetorical purpose of the passage is clear. Here Rhenisch interpolates the story of his self with that of the “other”—Hugh, the migrant owner, the doctor and so forth. Eakin suggests that this “display of the story of the other in what is nevertheless an autobiography illustrates Steedman’s assertion that ‘children are always episodes in someone else’s narrative’” (60-1). To extend this suggestion, I read Rhenisch as a “self” who is an episode in the narratives of the people and community that surround him. Eakin maintains that “the implicit determinism of this view of relational identity is inescapable, and it informs the act of self-representation accordingly” (61). In other words, by placing his self as an episode in someone else’s narrative, “the other’s story, the other’s life, is possessed—indeed controlled by the recording self” (61). This is, in part, how he maintains the illusion of race and class equality in the passage. The words of Rhenisch, then, when he invokes the cast of people in the community, signify a determinism. In opposition to the spatial and temporal control of the golf course, in opposition to the control of the gaze by tourism, the discourse of Rhenisch operates deterministically as a method of control and authority (self-definition) over the story, over the discursive formation of the community’s identity. Ironically, while Rhenisch is himself dismissive at times, here he disputes and opposes the discourse of tourism that attempts to either dismiss the identity

of those in his community or do the defining for them by using his own deterministic discourse.

In “Undressing the Ad: Reading Culture in Advertising,” Katherine T. Frith reminds us that advertisements are “not just messages about goods and services but social and cultural texts about ourselves” (1), and she suggests that one way to “understand ‘how’ an advertisement means is to learn how to deconstruct them” (3). She turns to Frank D. McConnell who explains that deconstruction “finds the real significance of literary and philosophical texts not in their explicit meanings, nor even in their implied meanings, but in their unintentional meanings - in the slips, evasions, and false analogies that betray the text's ‘ideology’” (McConnell 100). Robert Goldman in *Reading Ads Socially*, makes a similar claim when he comments that “[a]dvertisements have sociocultural consequences and repercussions that go beyond the corporate bottom-line, even though it is that bottom-line which motivates and shapes the ads” (2). He endorses a “critical reading” of advertisements, which “seeks to excavate the social assumptions that are conventionally made (and glossed over) in the split seconds that it takes us to decipher an ad and move on to the next” (2).

Rhenisch’s discourse presents an interesting conundrum. On one hand, he correctly identifies a process at play in the transformation of the Interior and the way that tourism discourse operates to obscure lived realities. Yet, often, his discourse inherently makes the same claims to authenticity that tourism discourse does. The claim to authenticity that Rhenisch is making fails to take into account its own constructedness. The idea of authenticity in Rhenisch quickly falls apart first because the concept of a particular “correct” or authentic reality is itself flawed, and second, as Rhenisch himself

admits, the history of agriculture in the Interior is built on or over the history of the First Nations. Further problems emerge through the fact the Rhenisch's discourse largely excludes any non-white, non-male voices—in essence, the authentic narrative he uses to challenge dominant discourses is implicitly limited, biased and flawed. Nevertheless, based on my excavation of advertisements above several things are clear. One sociocultural consequence of tourism discourse in the Interior is the omission of labour from the current narrative of the region—it doesn't "sell." Likewise, the orchard and farming cultures and industries of the Interior are excluded from the narrative produced by tourism advertisements, or, if they are indicated in an advertisement, they are used for promotional purposes—reduced to consumable fare. In turn, these omissions make it easier to forget where food comes from; they make it easier to ignore the struggling farmers of the Interior despite their demands for fair working conditions and prices—in short, they make it easier to fail to recognize orcharding, farming, and ranching as essential components of society. The value Rhenisch's discourse holds is precisely these things; yet, they need to be combined with the benefits the tourism industry brings to the region, as well as with a more racially and gender-balanced account.

## **A Discursive Place-Based Identity**

Agrarianism is this compelling and coherent alternative to the modern industrial/technological/economic paradigm. It is not a throwback to a never-realized pastoral arcadia, nor is it a caricatured, Luddite-inspired refusal to face the future. It is, rather,



a deliberate and intentional way of living and thinking that takes seriously the failures and successes of the past as they have been realized in our engagement with the earth and with each other.

—Norman Wirzba, “Introduction,” *The Essential Agrarian Reader*, 4

In understanding Rhenisch, it is crucial to keep in mind these words of Wirzba. Agrarianism is not “a throwback to a never-realized pastoral arcadia, nor is it a caricatured, Luddite-inspired refusal to face the future” (4).<sup>9</sup> Perhaps Wendell Berry states it best when he remarks that “[i]ndustrialism begins with technological invention. But agrarianism begins with givens: land, plants, weather, hunger, and the birthright knowledge of agriculture” (26). Certainly land is a commodity. Yet, I believe Berry is writing about the “given” *existence* of land and the *human* birthright to it. It is the reduction of these “givens” to commodities, and the obfuscation of these givens by the rapidly developing culture and tourism industry of the Interior that Rhenisch writes against. While these “givens” can be supplied by corporate agriculture, Rhenisch contends that a sense of family and community is lost, as is the transmission of knowledge within these structures. By exploring the orchard industry through the personal, social, political, economic, and most importantly, familial discourses of life in the Okanagan and Similkameen valleys in the Interior of British Columbia, Rhenish insists on the value of this way of life. He is putting forward a specific ethics of agrarianism, or a *way of seeing*, that, through discourse, creates an identity of resistance to the dominant tourism culture, or the “hegemonic place identity” which emerges after

large-scale or commercial “labor or capital consolidates control over the local relations of production and is able to align its material and cultural practices with those of vernacular experience” (Larsen 947). In Barman’s terms, Rhenisch is creating an identity that resists the conflation of the urban “parts” of the country with the whole; he too is arguing that “[b]y seeing the parts, we come to a much better understanding of the whole” (Barman 10). Whereas in the preceding sections of this chapter Rhenisch is challenging particular discourses, here I demonstrate how he discursively creates a specific place-identity. Like his arguments about a second wave of colonization and the dominant discourse of tourism, however, this identity is limited and located in contradiction.

Soren C. Larsen in “Place Identity in a Resource-Dependant Area of Northern British Columbia, contends that “postwar (WWII) industrialization in the north has led some to conclude that its endogenous place identities have now disappeared as outsiders increasingly appropriate the region to fit their own needs and visions” (944). By extension, the resource-driven, tourism-based culture of the Interior may *appear* to have led to the disappearance of its endogenous place identities. Furthermore, “[t]ransnational resource firms, for instance, exploit the area as a reservoir of labor and raw materials whereas many urbanites see it as a romanticised wilderness to be consumed through tourism” (944). This process is clear in the Interior, where the labour of the agricultural worker supplies the urban centres with goods and resource firms with profit; the argument that tourism has appropriated the Interior landscape for consumable fare is easily proven by recourse to the examples of wine and golf tourism.

It is precisely in these conditions, however, that Larsen suggests that place-based identities are being maintained and created in resistance to the hegemonic norm. For

example, “The residents of these towns [in Larsen’s study] created a politically charged sense of place after World War II by pitting emotional attachments to their home region against the late-capitalist forces of Fordist industrialization and outsider power in the province” (944). What’s more, “[a]s residents and others appropriate the environs, they imbue simple locations with deep meaning as the locales in which livelihoods and life histories are made” (947). Larsen further explains his point by turning to Annsi Passai who suggests that “[a]t base, senses of place are profoundly personal phenomena, composed of the ‘situated episodes of life history which unavoidably have ‘geographical’ dimensions: real, imagined or utopian’” (947). At the same time, Larsen remarks that senses of place “can form a basis for shared group identities as personal experiences acquire degrees of intersubjectivity through the routines and practices of social interaction” (947) (see also Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*). Larsen insists that “[o]n the collective level, affective identity is the process of making the categories of group (that is, collective self) against the ‘other’” (947).<sup>10</sup> Raymond Williams makes a similar point in rather different terms:

What really has to be said, as a way of defining important elements of both the residual and the emergent, and as a way of understanding the dominant, is that no mode of production and therefore no dominant social order and therefore no dominant culture ever in reality includes or exhausts all human practice, human energy, and human intention. (125)

What Williams wants us to understand is that *the dominant* never fully achieves full dominance. While “what the dominant has effectively seized” is the “ruling definition of the social,” it also excludes what may be “seen as the personal or the private” (125). Williams here leaves room in the area of the personal or the private for a resistance to the dominant. It is precisely this area that I see Larsen working with when he speaks of appropriating the environs or imbuing a locale with “deep meaning.” This is also

precisely the area that concerns Rhenisch. His discourse, the discourse of the autobiographical, the relational, the personal, is almost entirely focused on imbuing *place* with deep meaning, on bringing into existence a place identity in resistance to the hegemonic or dominant norm.

The core of Rhenisch's resistant place identity in the Interior is agriculture, characterized by a simultaneous attachment to and tension with the environment. Remembering the spray of chemical fertilizer, pesticides and fungicides from childhood, Rhenisch remarks that "[t]he spray would drift a hundred feet, in slow motion, through the rows. It smelled of ashes and weeds and mildew and paint and death, yet for me it is the smell of life, the smell of the farm" (*Out* 57). The farm, the labour in the orchard, is home, is life. At the same time, the spray is connected to death—the chemicals are responsible for death and disease in the community as well as the barrenness of the land. Despite this contradiction between attachment to the memory of spraying in the orchards and the destruction caused by chemicals, there is a division being made here between those who have this experience and those who do not—and perhaps also a division between those who produce the chemicals and those who use them and feel the effects. It makes little sense to compare death-causing chemicals to life, yet these things are connected in his memory and can only be understood as a symbol of life, of the farm, by those who have participated in the action of spraying. Thus Rhenisch begins to assert an insider/outsider binary, a tactic of resistance on Rhenisch's part that connects the Interior agricultural worker to the land as home in a way that an outsider cannot—despite any potential outsider position of dominance. The tourism industry, for example, and by extension the retirement and tourist communities, cannot make the same connection

between land, life, home and farm—their histories are not connected to the sensory experiences shared by the agricultural community in the Interior. When Rhenisch states that “spraying is the only action in his life that my father has been able to repeat” but that “every time he has sprayed since that year of frost and early rain he has grown violently sick” (65), the identity being constructed is not only connected to the passage of knowledge and tradition from father to son, but also to the cycles of sickness, life, and death in each family. In other words, for insiders, those of the agricultural community in the Interior, the Interior is being marked as a locale “in which livelihoods and life histories are made” (Larsen 947).

The division between insider and outsider is even more evident in the following selection from *Tom Thomson’s Shack*:

I did not learn to graft apple trees out of a book, but I have taught men and women to do this work, bent over in long rows of tiny trees, fitting the cambium layers precisely together in the forty-degree sun, as the marsh smells of Osoyoos Lake and Okanagan Lake and Skaha Lake rose up into those hot hills, carrying with them the laughter of tourists and the roar of their Mercury outboards. (124)

The declaration that Rhenisch “did not learn to graft apple trees out of a book” at once establishes a sense of family or community. If not a book, the conclusion is that Rhenisch was taught by either his father—a conclusion supported by the father’s role in *Out of the Interior*—or by other members of the Interior community on whose farms he worked.<sup>11</sup> In turn, Rhenisch teaches others the art of grafting. In both examples, the need for human contact and person-to-person transmission of knowledge is seen as essential. In the act of learning and teaching, in the physical nexus of contact between people and the land, the insider community is formed. Those who do not have the knowledge or experience of this network of learners and teachers, those who have not experienced the physical labour of

grafting, do not have access to this community; they are outsiders. Furthermore, there is a hierarchy of knowledge implied here whereby “book learning” is devalued in comparison with learning through experience. In this way, Rhenisch is establishing a moral authority over the learning that takes place through public education and through books. By establishing such an authority, he is further strengthening the insider/outsider divide. In his conception of this construct insiders not only hold the moral “upper hand,” but also control over the knowledge itself—who receives it and who does not. Thus, the simple advocacy of experiential learning becomes a marker of authority and power that resists outsider dominance and is a hallmark of Interior place-identity.

The moral divide between insider and outsider is further evident in the second half of the passage where the laughter of the tourists and the roar of outboard motors carries into the orchard. The outboard motors are associated with speed and power, yet this speed and power are harnessed, not for productive purposes, but for excitement and pleasure. The outboard is a symbol of leisure and consumption; gas is consumed by the engine and emits pollution and noise. Rather than purposeful travel, boaters move from one location on the lake to another for enjoyment. In other words, the activities of the tourists, in part responsible for the degradation of the lake water and air quality, damage the physical environment. They are placed in direct opposition to the activities in the orchard and placed in opposition to Berry’s givens of “land, plants, animals, weather, hunger, and the birthright knowledge of agriculture” (26). Structurally, the orchard is physically separated from tourists on the lake below and thus positioned hierarchically and symbolically above, or as morally superior, to the tourists and their activities. The values in the orchard are located in the actions of creating life through the literal and

symbolic cultivation of the apple. Here, it is labour rather than leisure which is valorised. In terms of identity, Rhenisch is again pitting the personal against the impersonal, the acknowledged against the anonymous, the specialized knowledge of grafting and cultivation against generalized laughter and leisure activities. Discursively, he is marking out positions of power and resistance for the place-based identity he is constructing—an identity that so far has been connected to the importance of family, local community, local knowledge, experiential learning, labour, and agrarianism.

All instances of Rhenisch's insider/outsider binary are located in contradiction. Physical labour and knowledge are valued over book learning, farms are valued over retirement homes, and resident farmers are valued over tourists. In each instance, the former is allocated privilege and an insider position with the latter being relegated to an outsider position. As with any such binary, the position of the subjects is what determines who is inside and who is outside. Just as Rhenisch's structure works, so too does one where the retirees, tourists, and university graduates form an insider position to the outdated, outmoded outsider position of Rhenisch. Furthermore, the structure of the binary itself, as it is set up regarding the tourists on the lake, robs the tourists below of any claim to residence, knowledge, and the farming culture. Retirees and tourists too may be family farmers—yet this isn't necessary to collapse the binary. Even as tourists, people may have, like Rhenisch, a conception of the Interior connected to memory through years of holidaying in the region. Their memories too, anchor them to this place and offer alternative understandings of the Interior that could aid Rhenisch's program of recognizing value in labour and agriculture. By anchoring their sense of the Interior in the tourist activity of fruit-buying and visits to family farms, for example, tourists could be a

critical source of political power when it comes to devoting resources to protecting family farms and small-scale businesses. Their memories might be as firmly connected to the family orchard as Rhenisch's are—just in a different manner. Instead of taking this into account, Rhenisch generates a binary stance and shuts down dialogue, possibilities, and contingent alliances. He neglects the stories and lives of those whom he purports to resist—precisely his criticism of the dominant discourses in circulation. Herein lies the contradiction and irony.

An interesting parallel can be made here to the work of Monica Heller on ideological shifts in francophone Canada. As Rhenisch argues of the Interior, she maintains that “francophone Canada lived on the margins of power, articulated with but dependant on the wealth base of Canadian society” (Heller 14). Heller explains that for francophone Canada, “the legitimizing ideology” of “‘traditionalist’ nationalism,” one “which borrowed heavily from Romanticism,” was “to remain the dominant discourse . . . through the middle of the twentieth century” (14). Important for my purposes is the fact that in this discourse the “French Canadian nation was responsible for the maintenance in North America of conservative values of religion, language, and ‘race’ . . . values understood to have been abandoned in France after the Revolution” (14). Further, these values were connected “to the land as nature rather than as political territory” and “located nationally not in a territorialized nation-state, but rather in the organic body of the collective and its individual constituent members” (14). Heller's description of this traditionalist discourse and associated values almost directly echoes the sentiments of Rhenisch with regard to identity in the Interior. While Rhenisch is seeking to advocate for a particular place identity in the rural Interior, he can also be read as refusing to make



the shift from traditionalist discourses to modernist discourses—a shift Heller identifies as occurring in the shift from resource industries to tourism (see her chapter section “Lelac: Potatoes, Milk, Trees, Tourists, and the Highway”). Yet, in some ways, the identity Rhenisch promotes is outmoded because he is a traditionalist who is looking backward rather than forward.

It is within these contradictions that Rhenisch locates his ethos of labour, one intimately connected to family. Writing about his father, Rhenisch describes his father’s time spent at a camp for young boys in Germany: “It was there that he learned that we were virtuous and pure through our work with the soil, we were the rulers of men, and he trained us in it, with work” (*Out* 50).<sup>12</sup> The patriarchal hegemony of these words, the connection between work, labour, and the Hitler youth, as well as discourses of hard bodies and of the blood-right to land and power are unmistakable in this passage. There is an evident tension between Rhenisch and his father’s German history as well as between the presence of his mother in his narratives and the presence of his father—an inequality he comments on in his prologue to *Out of the Interior*. Rhenisch makes it clear, however, that much of what his father learned in this youth camp was, in his father’s words, “all sorts of propaganda” and other “useless shit” about “Hitler this and *Heil Hitler* that” (51). The Nazi rhetoric of the camp and the patriarchal framing of the passage aside, the crucial element here is the connection between parent, child, labour, and soil. It is a connection that cements the family’s sense of history from the Interior back to Germany, and one which unites and solidifies the Interior agricultural community, identity and culture around similar experiences of family and of working the land. This philosophy persists in *Tom Thomson’s Shack* when Rhenisch remarks that it is “[t]hrough the work of

our hands we keep the earth alive. The earth, that language of wood and snow, is found in no other way” (*Tom* 128).

What Rhenisch proposes is, in short, an ethos of labour whereby the most valuable relationship humans can have is with the earth itself through the act of working with that which the earth provides: soil, plants, animals, wood and snow—an act which occurs through family and community and fosters these relationships. As Rhenisch states, “Family and self and the farm were the same: all our energy—all the energy we burned off together—had gone into the land” (*Out* 70). I believe that this is what Paul B. Thompson is thinking about when he writes that “agriculture is, in short, a natural activity, properly emergent within many of the ecosystems in which the human species is found. To speak this way *is* to take the earth, the soils, the waters as living, if not animated, and to understand this life is to seek, in some sense the spirit of the soil” (19). What Rhenisch is adding to the equation is that such an ethos is inevitably bound up in the local and in the geographical landscape of home. In Berry’s terms, if “[t]he people of ‘the cutting edge’ in science, business, education, and politics have no patience with the local love, local loyalty, and local knowledge that make people truly native to their places” (25), then Rhenisch is demanding a recognition of the nexus of local love, local loyalty, and local knowledge with the fundamental labours of agriculture and the land. What he ignores are the ways that this discourse can take on a more modernist position by recognizing the powerful connections between family, labour, and place that may operate outside of the agricultural community but are just as firmly connected to the place he calls home.

In Foucault's terms, the statement here is the conception of the Interior as characterized not just by golf, tourism, leisure, token history, or non-recognition, but by love, loyalty, knowledge, family, community, agriculture and labour. Further, Rhenisch is foregrounding the importance of such a conception. After all, "the urbanite no less than the farmer is implicated in this web and so must appreciate the requirements and the costs for living things. To fail to do this is to risk ecological and cultural ruin" (Wirzba 7). While at once discursively creating a place identity rooted in deep feelings attached to history and livelihood, Rhenisch is simultaneously arguing that the continuing failure to understand the whole *through* its parts, to understand British Columbia and Canada *through* regions such as the Interior, is to risk the destruction of culture. If culture in its truest form is "the growth and tending of crops and animals, and by extension the growth and tending of human faculties" (Williams 11), and humans depend on agricultural production for survival, then in both instances a failure to see the parts may result in a failure to survive.

While on one hand Rhenisch seems to be advocating or prescribing some essentialist view of identity, on the other he is discursively marking out identity positions in the Interior in tension with the dominant, and in doing so, creating one of many possible place-based identities. Collectively, not all will belong to the discursive formation that Rhenisch is creating, nor will those who do fit his conception in all its aspects. At times, his discourses are marked with tensions particular to his past. The connection between father, son, labour and land is positive until it is further extended to include the origins of this rhetoric in Nazi Germany. The historical implications are unavoidable, and Rhenisch seems to struggle at times to define his relationship to his

father and to the land in terms that validate his position that work and land are essential to human beings, while also mapping out a position that does not connect to the way in which these ideas played out in the Holocaust. Likewise, Rhenisch struggles to narrate the experiences of his mother in a world that seems—at least in his narratives—to be dominated by his father and the patriarchal agricultural society they belonged to. These struggles, tensions, and historical connections to race and gender oppression do not, however, invalidate the importance of the human connection to work, land, and place. To return to the words of Larsen quoted above, place-based identities have “‘geographical’ dimensions” whether they be “real, imagined or utopian” (947). Clearly, aspects of all three are present in Rhenisch. I believe that the connection he describes between human beings and the land is a fruitful one, and more, that we do depend for survival on this connection as well as on our recognition of what this connection means in terms of our *selves* and the agricultural communities of Canada. At the same time, there is a sense of the romanticised pastoral in the words of Rhenisch. At times he remembers seeking nothing but an escape from life on the farm. It is not a stretch to imagine that when *all* the energy of the family goes into the land, what remains is exhaustion and tension—labour, after all, is precisely that: physical or mental toil, work, and exertion. While it is easy to imagine being lost in one’s work, it is just as easy to imagine the difficulty and frustration of such work. The fact that these things may be imagined or utopian in nature does not, however, preclude the fact that they function. An identity shared by a family or a community, imagined or utopian or not, is still such a community in the minds and bodies of those who live it, of those who do the imagining. Perhaps the utopian vision is one where the identity that Rhenisch works so hard to establish through discourse, succeeds

in maintaining a hold against physical and cultural change; perhaps it is the vision where the parts are finally recognized publicly and officially as instrumental in understanding the whole.

## **Reflections on the Resource Economy**

The study of the creative non-fiction of Harold Rhenisch marks a departure from the study of Bertrand Sinclair's and Roderick Haig-Brown's fiction in chapter two. Yet, like Sinclair and Haig-Brown, Rhenisch is concerned with a particular facet of the British Columbia resource economy (agriculture) and provides comprehensive detail about its operation. Further, each author spends time detailing the politics of his respective industry from the union formation and blacklists of Sinclair and Haig-Brown to the politics of "one-desk selling" in the Okanagan. All three authors are expressly concerned with ideas, conceptions, and histories that are either absent from or suppressed in this province's official history—they are intent on marking out omissions from the official narrative. With Haig-Brown, it is the history of park labour and homoerotic relationships among other things, with Rhenisch it is the identity and culture of the rural agricultural communities of the Interior—particularly that of orchardists. As with Sinclair, Rhenisch is advocating an alternate economic model. With Sinclair, such a model was cooperative; in Rhenisch the model is one where labour and all of Wendell Berry's "givens" of agrarianism are seen as more valuable than and superior to the ideals of profit and production—yet his advocacy of this model is eclipsed at times by his limited vision. All authors are concerned with the viability of society's preoccupation with progress to the

degree that resource depletion and negligence becomes a danger and sustainability unlikely—this despite the fact that Sinclair and Haig-Brown represent resource extraction while Rhenisch represents resource production.

While colonialism often recedes into the background in Rhenisch, and the intersections of colonialism with his rhetoric are sometimes ignored, one major difference between his work and that of Sinclair and Haig-Brown is his basic awareness of the role that agricultural settlers played in the colonization of the Interior landscape. While the process of colonization is not the story he is telling, and one I have not touched on here, he often makes a point to remind his reader that the land he is connected to, the land he calls home, is also a land that was taken—often through deceit or force—from the First Nations inhabitants who have lived on it for thousands of years. Writing about the Cariboo, Rhenisch invokes the debate over who owns the trees. His answer is that the debate is

being fought over with Caterpillar skidders from the United States, Husqvarna chainsaws from Sweden, capital kissed by Hong Kong banks, stalled treaty talks in Victoria, legal judgments in Ottawa and corporate lobbyists in Washington, and, against all of them, by the Secwepemec and Wet'suwet'en and Tsilhqot'in, who are pretty clear that the trees belong to them. They do. (211-212)

One particularly fruitful avenue of further research would be to examine how Rhenisch, and by extension the immigrant communities of the Interior, embodies the tensions present in the landscape—how he occupies a site of inherent duality, of initial colonization further colonized by another wave of physical and cultural transformation.

A second question worth pursuing is the study of the role of the mother in the work of Rhenisch whose narratives, like those of Sinclair and Haig-Brown, are primarily masculinist. When these narratives foreground gender construction, it is primarily

masculinity and men's work on which they focus attention. In *Out of the Interior* Rhenisch states that "[f]or years it has disturbed me that my mother does not show up as large in these pages as my father. I used to dismiss this lack by accepting that she has chosen, or been given, the path of invisibility in this world, but that is a failure of perception: she is present in every page here . . ." (2). The presence of Rhenisch's mother is stronger in *The Wolves at Evelyn*. Here he writes about the time his mother went "on strike"; she left behind a "manifesto" where "one column of her balance sheet was headed 'Slave' and the other was headed 'Everyone Else'" (13). Tellingly, the "Slave's column was full to the bottom of the page . . . Everyone Else's column was empty" (13). This passage highlights the mother's position within the patriarchal agricultural community. While father and son are interacting with the land through work, and while their connection to the land is described as thriving, the labour of Rhenisch's mother is not recognized as such and is exploited. Her unpaid domestic labour is made visible in this passage, the labour and power division between mother or "slave" and "everyone else" made clear. While this passage is brief, it is evident that (as in Sinclair and Haig-Brown) the role of the farm-woman in the literature of British Columbia needs far more attention.

Among some of the larger generalizations that may be made about representations of the resource economy in British Columbia, the most significant one, to me, is the identification of the individual with an occupation. The characters in the novels of Sinclair and Haig-Brown are not part-time workers in the logging industry; they are loggers. The individuals in the work of Rhenisch are farmers, ranchers, and orchardists. Their occupation is not *what they do* but *who they are*. The distinction between individual

and occupation in both cases is collapsed or disregarded—a construction possibly implicated in ideas of pride. More importantly, I think, it has to do with the idea of labour itself. In both occupations, life is somewhat synonymous with labour. Life, including leisure activities, is lived through work; work is the primary category of organization, that which structures everything else. Furthermore, both industries were in operation prior to full-scale industrialization. Wendell Berry offers one possible reason when he states that “one of the primary principles of industrialism has always been to get the worker away from home. From the beginning it has been destructive of home employment and home economies.”<sup>13</sup> The office or the factory is the place for work. The economic function of the household has been increasingly the consumption of purchased goods” (25). Furthermore, [t]he industrial contempt for anything small, rural, or natural translates into contempt for uncentralized economic systems, any sort of local self-sufficiency in food or other necessities. The industrial solution for such systems is to increase the scale of work and trade” (25-6). Concerning industrialized logging, the industry is not at first recognizable as home employment. There is, however, an argument to be made. Initially, logging companies were run by families such as the Norquay’s in *The Inverted Pyramid*; in other cases, the industry employed whole families as in *On the Highest Hill* and *Timber*. There is also in logging the unique structure where large amounts of time are spent in logging camps, a home away from home as it were. The point is that the needs of logging families or of those who spent time in logging camps were few—since they were fed and sheltered, and the locale offered scant opportunity for leisure, the primary need was clothing. This seeming reduction in wants and needs runs contrary to the drive for consumption of large-scale industry; hence the scale of logging



operations increased. Self-identification as a logger or orchardist is possibly a symptom or function of the lack of division between home and work—a proposition even more clear in the example of Rhenisch whose family did indeed live on and run a family farm at times.

Then again, perhaps self-identification is simply an indication of a *career* rather than a simply a *job*, a signification that the work, and thus the label, does not end at a prescribed, predetermined time each day, but carries over into “leisure time,” as it would in so-called professions such as those of doctor, lawyer, or teacher. “Profession,” as early as the sixteenth century, described “any occupation by which a person regularly earns a living,” as well as “[a]n occupation in which a professed knowledge of some subject, field, or science is applied; a vocation or career, especially one that involves prolonged training and a formal qualification” (“Profession”). Hence, the continued identification of individual with orchardist is representative of the split in meaning within the term profession and the modern shift in usage. In this scenario, it would seem as if the orchardists, farmers, and ranchers, and are implicitly (and rightly) claiming a professionalism that society in general refuses to recognize by insisting on the division between white-collar and blue-collar labour, between work associated with those of the “upper classes” and that associated with the working class. Discursively, they are marking out a position of power that resists or contests the dominant categorization of their professions as hierarchically subordinate—a position which is essential if the authors are to succeed in bringing recognition to those aspects of their respective industries and histories that have hitherto been dismissed or ignored.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The boundaries of the Okanagan area are categorized in various ways: health boundaries, regional districts, regions, and so forth. In some instances, this region is referred to as the Thompson Okanagan and it stretches further north to include such cities as Kamloops and Salmon Arm. In other instances, the cities of Kamloops and Salmon Arm are listed under the heading South Central Interior. All of these areas are referred to as the Interior, located in Central British Columbia, stretching from the United States border in the South, Northward to the Cariboo region and encompassing cities such as Prince George and Smithers.

<sup>2</sup> Foucault defines positivity as “to describe a group of statements” as “an incomplete, fragmented figure” in “accordance with the dispersion of an exteriority” and to discover “the specific forms of an accumulation” (141). He then argues that to “analyze a discursive formation therefore is to deal with a group of verbal performances at the level of the statements and of the form of positivity that characterizes them” (141). Here I understand Foucault to be suggesting that rather than predetermined or commonly accepted unities such as “book” or “text,” there is a unity or unities to be found through the analysis of the disparate figures, exteriorities, and forms of accumulation within a particular group of statements. This group of statements, in terms of the positivity or unity found therein, is in some sense, then a discursive formation, which, in turn, is part of a larger category he terms the archive.

<sup>3</sup> While Foucault’s theory is generally thought to have shifted from the concept of archeology to that of genealogy, I have remained with the former concept and there seems to be no direct shift in Foucault from one to the other of the concepts. Critical consensus on the difference between the two differs. The best definition comes from Foucault’s question and answer session with the history department at Berkeley. Here he states that “genealogy is the aim of the analysis and the archaeology is the material and methodological framework” (Lecture n.p.). When asked the question “*You never stopped doing archaeology?*”, Foucault responds “No. And I never stopped doing genealogy. Genealogy defined the

target and aim of the work. Archaeology indicates the field in order to do genealogy” (Lecture n.p.). As it applies here, then, I am doing archeological research into the archive and dealing more in the archival range of discourses and suggesting a methodology or framework for the chapter that I am with a genealogical target or aim.

<sup>4</sup> Rhenisch goes further in his criticism when he writes:

According to Atwood, Canadian literature is a re-telling of the story of Windigo, the spirit of the Great Lakes and the Shield country . . . . It’s a great, wise story that cuts right to the heart, but one that just rings false in the mountains where the rivers flow down to a different sea. These might be the stories of Canada’s literary elites, but they’re not the ones of the people who actually live out on this earth and have created a unique land out of it—the farmers, the immigrants, the natives, and the poor. (Wolves 142)

<sup>5</sup> In his comparison of the process of gentrification to frontier imagery, Neil Smith states that “[j]ust as Turner [Frederick Jackson] recognized the existence of Native Americans but included them as part of his savage wilderness, contemporary urban frontier imagery treats the present inner city population as a natural element of their physical surroundings” (xiv). Analogously, contemporary tourism promotional imagery in the Interior treats the present rural and agricultural labouring population as a natural element of *their* physical surroundings. The people become reduced to a one dimensional space, part of the scenery and thus invisible in terms of this gentrification-colonization process—or at the very least marketable and consumable as commodities.

<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, the strategy paid out in the case of Mission Hill Winery. An article on [okanaganwine.ca](http://okanaganwine.ca) states that the structure “is a powerful marketing tool. Mr. von Mandl reports the 160,000 visitors expected this season are not just buying more wine after taking sold-out tours, but also are buying more expensive wines” (“Mission Hill Aims” n. pag).

<sup>7</sup> In “Sustainable Wine Tourism: The Host Community Perspective” (2006) Lisa Poitras and Donald Getz, under “Recommended Vision, Goals and Strategies for Sustainable, Community-based Wine Tourism,”

suggest the formulation of “a detailed wine tourism strategy” (441) in Oliver, the “Wine Capital of Canada.” Poitras and Getz further state that “while wineries will form the backbone of tourism in this area, other attractions must be developed to balance a tourists day, and lengthen the amount of time spent in Oliver” (441). By 2010, at least some of this strategy is in place in the Interior region. Through a “consortium” or cooperative marketing strategy, “many individual companies with common interests can join together for mutual benefit,” one of these benefits being “joint brochure publication” (Holloway 222). The plethora of activities and separate corporate advertisements in the *Thompson Okanagan Vacation Guide 2010* is testament to this strategy. The Oliver community section of the *Thompson Okanagan Vacation Guide 2010* lists the opportunity to “play golf in a canyon and on a mountainside” (56), as well as other activities such as kayaking, canoeing, bird-watching, hiking, biking, skiing, snowboarding, and scenic drives—perhaps a direct reflection of the development strategies similar to that outlined in 2006.

<sup>8</sup> McCulloch Orchard Greens Golf Club is not fictional; however, the source of Rhenisch’s quotation is unclear and his work is considered creative non-fiction. Thus, I have provided an additional example.

<sup>9</sup> Paul B. Thompson puts this problem nicely in *The Spirit of the Soil: Agriculture and Environmental Ethics*:

The sanctity of nature is a problem for virtually all philosophers who draw upon the European tradition. Those committed to secular language are embarrassed by the term ‘sacred,’ referring instead to speak simply of the intrinsic value of nature. Those committed to Judeo-Christian theological ethics must struggle with the problem of conferring a sacred status upon objects predominantly classified as profane. (9)

<sup>10</sup> Evident, and referred to here, is Edward Said’s *Orientalism*. Larsen here is borrowing the framework of one geographical location to create a narrative of and for another, as well as the resistances to this process.

<sup>11</sup> One such example is the following passage: “Pruning is taught as half art and half science . . . . Pruning is a religion, a secret knowledge passed from father to son” (*Out* 158).

<sup>12</sup> The camp referred to is a “preparatory camp for the younger boys” in Germany, a camp that Rhenisch distinguishes from the “*Hitler Jugend* [HJ or Hitler Youth] proper” (*Out* 50).

<sup>13</sup> It is also worth noting that industrialism resulted in the creation of home appliances that “freed” women, to some extent, from working in their own homes without pay.

#### 4. Literary Representations of White Collar Labour

The white-collar people slipped quietly into modern society . . . .

Yet it is to this white-collar world that one must look for much that is characteristic of twentieth-century experience.

—C. Wright Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes*, ix

Having been named by the Economist Intelligence Unit as the “world’s most livable city” from 2007 to 2011, and having hosted the 2010 Winter Olympics, Vancouver, and by extension, British Columbia, has become easily recognizable as a tourist destination in the twenty-first century.<sup>1</sup> Alongside British Columbia’s increasing reputation as a tourist destination is the growing recognition of its change in economic and class structure from that of a resource economy to a service and technology economy—a change that paradoxically began in the early twentieth century. I say paradoxically because the concept of British Columbia as a resource hinterland has persisted from the nineteenth century into the twenty-first. The concerns of forestry, fishing, mining, and agriculture are often taken as dominant when, in fact,

it is worth noting that as early as 1911 British Columbia’s three staple primary industries, fishing, logging, and mining, provided direct employment to less than a fifth of the provincial workforce; in the same year, nearly 30 per cent of Vancouver’s workforce was engaged in service-related activities. (Seager 13)

The persistent identification of British Columbia with resources and resource extraction is historical, political, and mythological in character. The exploration of the western Canadian landscape by European explorers was first of all for the extraction of

wealth in the form of furs and other natural resources. Politically, it is often the battles between resource extraction corporations, unions, politicians, laborers, and environmentalists that land on the front pages of provincial and national newspapers. Mythologically, accounts of early explorers encountering great tracts of trees and mountains capture the imagination. Emily Carr's haunting depictions of trees and forest command national and international attention and fascination. From the books of Sinclair and Haig-Brown to those of Hubert Evans, Ethel Wilson, Jack Hodgins, Mark Hume, Howard O'Hagan, and George Bowering, fictional narratives set in British Columbia depict this resource-driven landscape, whether characters are fishing a fast and wild river or carving out a home from the surrounding forest. In the words of Caren Irr, "thematics of geography and survival have often seemed more dominant in Canadian literature than those of class struggle" (142)—a tendency that is true in British Columbia when "geography" is interpreted in the context of resource rich sites such as forests, mines, oceans, and rivers. Yet, despite the tendency of the provincial, national, and international imagination to locate British Columbia within a wilderness landscape of resources and resource extraction, the actual population engaged in these activities does not support this configuration as anything other than nostalgia for the past, or as representing the controlling interests of a minority of wealthy individuals. In *The West Beyond the West* Jean Barman explains that

at the beginning of the twentieth century six in ten British Columbians had been producing goods. In 2005—or for that matter 1995—just two in ten British Columbians were doing so . . . . Their [those now providing services] range extended from health, educational, and social services to retail and wholesale trade and transportation to finance and administration. In 2005 just over 10 per cent of provincial revenues came from royalties on natural resources . . . . (367-8)

Barman locates an emerging service based economy in the early twentieth century that persists into the twenty-first. As in the American model of class and society studied and developed by C. Wright Mills, the white collar workforce “slipped quietly” into modern Canadian society. White collar labour eclipsed manual labour with regard to employment and thus it is “to this white-collar world” that Canadians must look for “much that is characteristic” of twentieth- and twenty-first century experience, despite any nostalgia for the past.

What, precisely, is white collar labour? In the most restricted sense of the phrase, it denotes people who hold a non-manual, professional job at the upper end of the socio-economic scale—doctors, lawyers, professors and so forth. In the least restricted sense of the phrase, “white collar” designates all non-manual labour. For my purposes, I initially follow both C. Mills Wright in *White Collar* and Christopher P Wilson in *White Collar Fictions* by designating “white collar” as “those nonmanual workers who exist[] principally as employees—not owner, master, or employer—or as office and sales workers” (Wilson 7). In his study of white collar fictions, Wilson addresses “a series of newly emergent twentieth-century situations” (3), in particular, “the expansion of the middle ranges of the social register; the diverse occupations (bank teller, saleswoman, lawyer, publicity writer, advertiser) that characterized these white collar ranks” (3). Likewise, it is representations of barber, clerk, video game developer, journalist, author, secretary, in addition to the unpaid domestic worker, I explore in this chapter—the arguably “new” middle ranges of white collar workers in British Columbia society. While their work seems to be white collar, it becomes equally clear that ideas of independence, economic wealth and privilege are most often not associated with these jobs. The phrase,



“white collar” thus becomes an analytical lens of sorts through which I examine some of the intricacies, exploitations and sources of agency in stratified labour.

I first examine Douglas Coupland’s *JPod*, and to do so, I return—in brief—to the theory of Bourdieu with regard to the field of class relations and the field of power.

White collar labour in Coupland’s novel exhibits a tension between positions of dominance and subordination, between negative and positive poles in Bourdieu’s fields. In the first instance, the identity of jPod employees is represented as disappearing into the corporate identity of the video game development corporation that employs them. Moreover, despite the experience and expertise that the jPod employees have in the area of video game development, their attempts at decision-making and input are ignored by the centralized decision-making structure of the company. What all of this translates into is a loss of agency and control within the work place. In tandem with the representation of centralized power and decision making, is the way in which Coupland represents the video game industry as an example of an artificial economy that manufactures both supply and demand. In doing so, he further represents the marketing of product difference and uniqueness as a way to appeal to different consumer groups (manufactured demand)—there is no difference in the form of the games; it is only the content that is modified. Finally, the jPod employees are used by Coupland to represent the many ways that white collar labourers resist their lack of agency in the work place. Specifically, the employees initiate an insider culture whereby they employ creative time-wasting strategies and acts of sabotage to attain greater power and determination over their workplace identity.

The next text I examine in this chapter is Robert Harlow's *Scann*. In approaching *Scann*, I draw upon the work of Andrew Hoberek in *The Twilight of the Middle Class*. Following Hoberek's biographical approach to texts, I use aspects of Harlow's biography to locate a particular stance or attitude toward white collar labour. In particular, I interpret Harlow's remarks about his work at the Canadian Broadcasting Company (CBC), as a teacher of creative writing at the University of British Columbia, and as a writer of fiction, to demonstrate a tension between salaried or wage labour and creative mental labour. With regard to labour as a journalist—how he views his work at the CBC—Harlow explains what he perceives as a lack of power and agency compared with the freedom he experiences in writing fiction. This stance toward white collar labour surfaces in *Scann* through the similarities between Harlow's biography and the world of *Scann*, in which Amory Scann's position as editor of the *Linden Chronicle* conflicts with his desire or compulsion to write fiction. Similar, to the attitude of Harlow, this conflict is one between the constraint on personal agency in journalism and the freedom of a fiction writer—a freedom that arises in part from Scann's conflation of the freedom of his characters with his own freedom. Moving away from biography, I also interpret Scann, as editor and author, to be oppressive to the women in the novel. Scann and his work position the women he encounters as objects that he reduces to use-value. His subjugation of his wife, Marion, and his secretary-mistress, Shirley, illustrate the overall patriarchal power and labour structure that is in place in *Scann*.

The final novel under consideration is Jen Sookfong Lee's *the end of east*, the story of the Chan family in British Columbia from 1913 to the late twentieth century. I read Lee's novel, in part, as an implicit commentary on the phrase "white collar" itself.

Writers such as C. Wright Mills, Christopher P. Wilson, and Andrew Hoberek broaden the meaning of *white collar*, an important step to including the clerical trades alongside those such as teacher or doctor. Yet, at the same time, I believe that the subtleties and complexities involved in the phrase *white collar* are often ignored. For example, in many ways it isn't possible for Chinese-Canadian labourers to be considered "white collar" given the racial prejudice so clearly at work in the novel and in British Columbia at the time. In other words if, as Mills suggests, it is to the "white-collar world that one must look for much that is characteristic of twentieth-century experience" (ix), then this self-examination must include the ways in which *white collar* fails to deal with historical gender, class, and race discrimination. Arguably, the phrase white collar could be expanded to include these problems and tensions, yet the connotations of the phrase would linger and, in my mind, continue to obscure the lived realities of gender, class and race. In some ways, labeling Lee's characters white collar negates the racialized and class-based labour structures they faced while also connoting a sense of privilege that was largely inaccessible to them regardless of vocation or position in society. At the same time, it is just as clear that the Chan family *is* privileged. They succeed in their chosen careers and become moderately wealthy. Furthermore, the story of the Chan family is the story of family survival based in historical circumstances, where such stories prove the exception to the rule. The cost of transportation from China to Canada, the Chinese Head Tax as well as other restrictive, race-based immigration policies created a bachelor society in the Chinese community. The inability of most male Chinese immigrant to bring their wives and children to Canada, in conjunction with the lack of marriageable Chinese women in British Columbia, makes the story of the Chan family and their success

somewhat remarkable. Nonetheless, their unique position seems to indicate a basic inadequacy in the phrase *white collar* to accurately deal with the Chinese-Canadian labour community and leads to the conclusion that it fails to properly address class and labour stratification within this community.

*the end of east* deals explicitly with the Chinese labour community in British Columbia and reveals the impact that labour at the upper stratum of this community can have on the family. Through three generations of the Chan family, Lee demonstrates how white collar labour can be a tool for oppression, freedom, familial connection, and power. Specifically, the labour of Chan Seid Quan, the eldest father, functions to create small freedoms and benefits for himself, his family, and his village in China. Simultaneously, his work as a barber in British Columbia is oppressive to his son—it does not allow him to become an individual in his own right. Nevertheless, it is Seid Quan’s work at the barbershop that unites both men in their old age. With regard to Shew Lin and her daughter-in-law Siu Sang, the labour of their husbands subordinates them and confines their role to that of unpaid domestic labourer in the home. However, within the home, their labour becomes a tool for power and control, and, in the case of Siu Sang, a means of holding onto her sanity.

### **Douglas Coupland’s *JPod***

In approaching the work of Douglas Coupland, I return briefly to the framework of Pierre Bourdieu. As I explained in chapter two, Bourdieu’s theory functions through the framing device of “fields” that are pictorially represented by a rectangle; each rectangle or field

has a positive or dominant pole as well as a negative or subordinate pole situated at each long end of the figure. Primary among these fields is that of class relations. Inside the rectangle or field of class relations is the field of power; it is located at the dominant pole of the field of class relations. I propose to add an additional field to this model: the field of white collar labour. Such a field would be located at the dominant pole of both the field of power and of class relations. In other words, white collar labour enjoys an economic and cultural status that situates it in a position of power within the field of class relations. Yet, the field of white collar labour itself has a dominant and a subordinate pole. Hence, white collar labour such as that of the Chan family in *the end of east* would be located in the negative, subordinate, range of this field; however, the position of barbershop owner Seid Quan would shift toward the positive range when compared with his earlier work in janitorial positions. Workers such as those of *JPod*, as well as editor-author Amory Scann in the next section of this chapter, would be in the positive, dominant range of this field. I use the term range here to indicate that there is a certain degree of fluidity within the field as positions can change. Furthermore, other occupations such as those of doctor, lawyer, business owner, or corporate executive officer, either do not appear in this chapter or function only to represent dominance over others—in this case over the *jPod* employees.

While Bourdieu's work is not the focus of this chapter, his theory of fields and power forms its underlying framework. His theory is a clear choice here because of the commonality among representations of white collar labour in each of *the end of east*, Coupland novel and Harlow's *Scann* is power—the assertion of it, rebellion against it, and methods to attain more of it. This does not make the employees in *JPod* power-

seeking Machiavellians; simply put, they are in a position of subordination within their workplace and, by various creative means, seek to exert resistance, independence and authority.

*JPod*, like most of Coupland's fiction, has been both lauded and criticized. It is a financial and popular success, but has met with little attention in academia or serious literary criticism. Andrew Tate's *Douglas Coupland* (2007), "the first full-length study of Coupland's writing" (1), contains a chapter on *JPod*—the novel Tate remarks is "the writer's most playfully surreal, exuberantly decadent and morally unsettling piece of fiction to date" (162). In his review of *JPod* for *Canadian Literature*, Brett Josef Grubisic declares that "*JPod* is steadfast in its refusal of earnest or in-depth examination of social conditions or evolution of character consciousness," and that, ultimately, "Coupland's big novel is stuffed with amusing lines and zany scenes, but cannot hold attention as well when it grows serious, aiming to become an anatomy of 'contemporary life'" (Grubisic n.p.). In the *Literary Review of Canada*, Ian Hacking remarks that while "the collage of emails, web browsings and picaresque incidents that comprise the book does not quite come off," the opening set piece is "absolutely hilarious" (12). Brian Fawcett in *Books in Canada* writes that "like *Generation X*, the book is a literary tour-de-force, and is loaded with Coupland's signature one-liners," but he criticizes Coupland for the way that the "five hundred pages" is "cluttered with marginalia that is usually more distracting than illuminating, including a 17-page enumeration of the prime numbers between 10, 000 and 100, 000" (3). As Fawcett wryly notes, "[d]igital lard, it seems to me, is as unpalatable as the semi-organic stuff that comes in five-gallon buckets" (3).

Despite its shortcomings, *JPod* does represent a view of the white collar, technological workplace in the twenty-first century. The jPod of *JPod* is so named because the last name of each of the six employees who work there begins with the letter “J.” While the point of view does shift from time to time, it is primarily that of Ethan Jarlewski. Structurally, the narrative itself is straightforward, but is interspersed with marginalia such as interviews, mathematical concepts, and cartoon caricatures—an idiosyncratic visual structure reminiscent of the newspaper headlines in *Ulysses* or the blank pages in *Tristram Shandy*. The plot of the novel is twofold. First, there is the story of the jPod employees. Most of the narrative revolves around their daily work routines and the activities or pranks they perform while there. The employees are working on a skateboarding video game called BoardX. Conflict occurs when, at the direction of the head of marketing, Steve, they must add a turtle character to the game. Conflict increases when Alistair, Steve’s replacement, declares that the skateboard game is to be reworked into an anime (Japanese style animation) game called SpriteQuest. Dismayed by the destruction of the skateboard game, the jPod employees choose to alter SpriteQuest by programming a violent caricature of Ronald McDonald into what is otherwise a non-violent game. Eventually, the game is shelved or destroyed, all jPod employees quit, and all decide to work for Doug Coupland who has created a new technology company. The second plot revolves around Ethan’s family: his mother who runs a marijuana growing operation, his father who works as a movie extra, and his brother Greg who is successful in real estate but who is also involved with Kam Fong, a local Asian crime boss. Ethan’s mother becomes involved with his boss Steve. Steve, then becomes bothersome to Ethan’s mother and is sent by Kam Fong to China to work in a sweatshop where he

becomes addicted to heroin. Steve eventually returns to Canada and forms a new company. The plot is somewhat convoluted and makes no attempt to be realistic. Rather, Coupland seems more interested in particular situations between characters and in portraying aspects of the world in which they live—such as the rise of Google, exploited overseas labour, ecological footprint, white-collar labour scenarios—than in a consistent, logical plot structure. Again, what is most compelling is his representation of the white collar technology industry and how it operates with regard to positions of power, dominance, and resistance.

One of the first power struggles occurs in the tension between individual identity and corporate identity. Christopher P. Wilson's work is helpful in illuminating this tension. In his study of O. Henry (William Sydney Porter), Wilson explains that O. Henry “worked along the border of sales and employee relations, toying with the tensions about dependence, ‘loyalty,’ and identity that are created within the store or office or across the counter—to use his word, within their ‘curriculum’” (27-8). Wilson's notion of dependence is crucial to understanding the issues at play here for “‘dependence’ could mean not simply a loss of entrepreneurial energy or a putative freedom to act, but something that went to the core of cultural justifications for character, loyalty, even selfhood itself” (29). Furthermore, “[i]t could mean disappearing into a corporation's identity at the expense of one's own; it could mean a threat to the borders between what was legitimately inside work and outside of it; it could signify identification with the corporation, loyalty to the commodity, at the expense of other loyalties to family or community” (29).



The idea of maintaining a “selfhood” in contrast to “disappearing into a corporation’s identity” is a central problem in *JPod*. Immediately in the novel the reader is treated to a rich description of the physical structure of the building in which jPod exists:

The main corridor’s muted plasma TVs blipped out the news and sports, while co-workers in long-sleeved blue and black T-shirts oompah-loomphaed in and out of laminate-access doors, elevated walkways, staircases and elevators, their missions inscrutable and squirrelly. (15)

The architecture is expensive but sterile. There is no reference to colour, texture, smell, or decoration in the description of corridors, walkways, staircases or elevators—all is cold and barren. The televisions are on, but no one is watching the news or sports casts; they provide background noise. Security is evident from the implied pass cards needed to enter the various “laminate-access” areas. The blue and black T-shirt uniforms gesture toward creativity, toward a casual atmosphere, but this gesture is undercut by their very uniformity. The description of the workers as Oompa Loompas, the uniformly coloured workers from Roald Dahl’s *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, renders the workers devoid of individuality or personality as they go about their daily tasks. The activity in the scene, at least from an observer’s standpoint, is purposeless: the movements and actions of the employees are inscrutable. Nevertheless, since these actions are “squirrelly” they are also furtive and industrious. The picture here is of secretive activity, but activity that seems to be without reason. In short, this scene represents the essence of Wilson’s notion of dependence whereby the identity or selfhood of the employee disappears into the corporation’s identity. These employees are not individuals but Oompa Loompas—small, uniform cogs in a larger system. From the physical structure of the building, to security-access cards, to the apparel worn, the corporation asserts a

position of dominance over its employees despite the semblance of greater freedom in the form of casual dress.

While Wilson states that dependence does not mean “simply a loss of entrepreneurial energy or a putative freedom to act” (29), in some cases, it means precisely that. As Wilson explains, “[f]or Mills, even salesmanship had been reified by incorporation; modern businesses had standardized and centralized sales techniques into pat, rationalized ‘presentations’ and distributed this diluted form to lower-echelon employees” (170-1). Furthermore, “[s]ales executives therefore ‘authorized’ a second-remove expertise that to Mills only reinforced the self-alienated state of their dependant white collar employees” (Wilson 171). In the video game world of jPod, “rationalized presentations” are staff meetings called to put forward development presentations. Yet, these meetings are less input-oriented than they are dictatorial. As Ethan recalls, “during today’s marketing meeting we learned we now have to retroactively insert a charismatic cuddly turtle character into our skateboard game” (16). Despite the fact that Steve, their new head of marketing, says that he appreciates “open dialogue” (17) and encourages “vigorous debate and the exchange of ideas—who wouldn’t? It’s what democracy is based on” (73), it is Steve who decrees that “a charismatic turtle is going to be in the game” (74). Signified by the phrase “we learned” is the fact that this meeting is one-directional; it serves the purpose of conveying direction rather than discussing possibilities. While the jPod employees have the expertise, experience, and knowledge in the area of video game design, as well as their shared history with the project, Steve easily overrides their concern about inserting a turtle character into the skateboard game. The argument could be made that Steve is an expert in marketing; however, Steve is new

to the company and his only qualifications seem to be that he is “the guy who turned Toblerone around in two years” (72). The implication here is that Steve is an external hire with little or no experience in the video game industry, but nevertheless is the head of the decision making process. Hence, despite the expertise of the game developers, and their reluctance to incorporate such a character, the turtle character becomes mandatory, a further symbol of the centralized decision-making process that reinforces the “second-remove expertise” of jPod employees as well as their “self-alienated dependency.” Their expertise, or “entrepreneurial energy” and “putative freedom,” is only ever taken as “second,” if it is considered at all, to the unilateral decisions of the executives.

In the case of *JPod*, however, all is parody and satire, and the centralized power structure of the so-called rationalized development presentations comes undone. It is the presentation, the inclusion of the turtle character, that is revealed to be “second-remove expertise” and out of touch with the target market. In the meeting, we learn that the primary reason for the turtle character is that Steve’s son Carter “likes turtles” and, therefore, “every kid in the world is going to like turtles” (74). Again, the expertise of Steve is not expertise at all but personal whim—a fact that makes the restriction of freedom and negation of expertise all the more difficult to tolerate. Steve later explains that “marketers like to believe that their skills are fully translatable into any other product group [and] [g]aming seemed like a natural challenge” (355). Steve’s statement is Coupland’s wry commentary on the false-economy of upper echelon management where executive officers move from one company to the next with “translatable” skills that prove to be anything but. As the case with Steve implies, it is likely that the type of individual who moves from “turning around” Toblerone to managing video game

development is also the type of individual who is able to build a reputation on the skills, successes, and expertise of their employees rather than on their own.

Yet, Steve's decision to include a turtle character can be also interpreted more seriously as signifying and revealing that the market for video games is being created along predetermined lines—not according to what is in demand, but according to what is being marketed and sold. The sales item (BoardX), by virtue of its existence compared to a non-existent, “better,” product or game, becomes the commodity-in-demand and is aided by a vast sales, advertising, and marketing apparatus. It is an economy of artifice, operating through manipulation with no meaningful relationship to the actual wants or needs of individual consumers—as demonstrated by the loathing that the jPodders demonstrate toward the game they must produce. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno make this process clear in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* when they suggest that there is an “agreement, or at least the common determination, of the executive powers to produce or let pass nothing which does not conform to their tables, to their concept of the consumer, or, above all, to themselves” (96). Furthermore, “the power of the culture industry lies in its unity with fabricated need” (109). Hence the jPodders technical and practical conclusion that the turtle character will be disastrous to the formal integrity of the otherwise realistic skateboarding game. This fact makes little difference to the marketplace where both supply and demand are manufactured according to what is produced—for what, in this case, would be a fabricated need (and hence market) for a turtle in a skateboard game. In short, the agency and authority of the jPod employees is not only contained or negated within a corporate structure, but within a fabricated market structure—a fact that makes their loss of control over the game particularly infuriating.

A similar process occurs when Alistair takes over as Steve's replacement and announces their new "mandate" for BoardX: "'Its new title is SpriteQuest. SpriteQuest is a warm, heartfelt journey into magical and fantastic lands, where our hero, Prince Amulon, allows children to rediscover life's joys as he teaches us all to laugh and dream again'" (231). Predictably, the response of the iPod employees, represented through Ethan, is that, "[s]omething inside us died as we heard this proclamation" (231). Yet, again, this example does more than simply demonstrate the dominant, centralized power structure in place at iPod, that the entrepreneurial energy and expertise of the employee is superfluous or redundant. It also serves to make visible the illusion of product differentiation. As Horkheimer and Adorno explain, the difference between two like products, A or B, "do[es] not so much reflect real differences as assist in the classification, organization, and identification of consumers. Something is provided for everyone so that no one can escape; differences are hammered home and propagated" (97).

To extend this situation to the metamorphoses of BoardX to first include a turtle and then become the anime-style game of SpriteQuest, it seems that there is, in fact, not much actual difference in form between the two products—at least as Coupland represents them. As Alistair explains, they will "convert the skateboard into Prince Amulon's magic carpet"; Jeff the turtle will be "repurpose[d] into Prince Amulon," and "with just a few extra polygons" they "ought to be able to convert BoardX's inner-city environment frameworks into dungeons. Ditto the rest of the game" (232). Considering the way in which one game can be altered and transformed into another, it indeed seems as though there is little difference between them. As Horkheimer and Adorno remark, it is

with “good reason the interest of countless consumers is focused on the technology, not on the rigidly repeated, threadbare and half-abandoned content” (108). While Coupland does not provide significant detail regarding game-play in BoardX, I conjecture that it would involve a particular character or group of characters on skateboards who perform various skateboard maneuvers and can play through a number of various levels with increasing challenges. Possibly, there would be a game player/computer player contest or conflict as well. Such content is strikingly similar to that of SpriteQuest—both would involve using an avatar (turtle or Prince Amulon) on a platform (skateboard or carpet) to move around in a specified environment (inner city or dungeons). Further, there is a unity of purpose in both games—entertainment. Neither game suggests training of any sort or any social benefit. Even SpriteQuest’s purported “rediscovery” of life’s joys is persistently vague; the most reasonable conclusion is that both games are primarily for entertainment. When it comes to actual difference between the games, the focus must be the technology. Whereas BoardX is designed to mimic reality, SpriteQuest uses anime.<sup>2</sup>

In virtually all aspects of their labour, the people of jPod are faced with a disappearing selfhood and a lack of agency. Their input into decisions is ignored and ostensibly “democratic” meetings turn out to be forums for the passing down of managerial decrees. Furthermore, the products that are produced are developed at the behest of individuals with no experience in the industry. These same products are devoid of meaningful content and purpose and suggest an artificial economy or supply and demand. In the context of agency, the employees of jPod are forced into a situation where their labour, lacking power and identity, is directed toward the creation and support of these redundant video games and an artificial economy, whether they will it or not. It is

therefore, no surprise that these employees develop an insider culture within the workplace that is driven by various methods of resistance to their position of subordination within the white collar work place.

### **Tactics of Resistance**

One of the central problems Coupland reveals in the white collar workplace of the technology industry is the tension or opposition between the expertise, experience, and identity of the employees and the constraint or negation of these qualities by management or company executives. In other words, with regard to daily routines, attire, and game development, the iPod employees are not able to use their expertise or experience and they are not able to assert their identity or agency within their place of work. Their position is one of subordination within what I have suggested in my modification of Bourdieu is the field of white collar labour. Yet, part of using Bourdieu to frame white collar labour includes the idea that within a given field, there are particular resources that are contested—in this case the ability to assert expertise, experience, identity and agency. For every method whereby Coupland's employees are subordinated, there is a method of resistance as the iPodders attempt to gain some measure of control over the resources of the field.<sup>3</sup> Hence, in *IPod*, creative self-definition geared toward visibility, authority, agency, resistance, and bonding with one another is a central theme. A type of solidarity manifests itself similar to that which fosters union formation and bargaining power, but which, lacking these structures and any true power, generates a creative insider world inaccessible to the employer and thus signifies a source of power and control, however small it may be.

One way of approaching the means by which employees assert control within their work environment comes from Tom Wayman:

we know that at each job our fellow employees will have won some rights and privileges, whether sanctioned by union contract or not, that attempt to restore to us a measure of the humanity that selling our time, our hands, our brains takes away from us. (66)

The key phrase here is “whether sanctioned by union contract or not.” The implication is that some rights and privileges in the workplace are not sanctioned and are taken against any existing regulatory body whether this body is in the form of union or management.

Wayman makes this even clearer when he explains that in response to the world of work there is

what we *initiate* ourselves, to try to make tolerable and to humanize the workplace and the working life. This is the part of the industrial culture where we have the potential to be creative and self-defining. How and where to get hired; how to conduct yourself toward your fellow employees, toward the foreman; whether the crew drinks together after work or disperses; attitudes toward production and/or the company. (66)

The locus of activity is not the employer or management, but the employees. Creative and self-defining acts are initiated by workers outside of any official policy or regulation. In other words, these (mostly oral) acts form “[t]he part of the industrial culture we originate—for instance, the extent to which we organize the job despite the intentions of the boss and his experts, or the names for people and things we invent” (68). Once again, the emphasis is on actions that establish particular rights, privileges, or culture that are located outside of authority, that are contrary to “the boss and his experts.”

One form these actions take is non-work activities within the work place. As Ethan reports in his “Living Cartoon Profile” under the question “Does he enjoy his job?”: “the biggest challenge is to have a job without actually doing work, which is very hard to pull off in a company where workspace productivity is measured with just about



every conceivable form of metrics” (38). Immediately, it is clear that to Ethan, there is a dichotomy in the workplace between workspace productivity as measured by the company and the lack of work done by the employees as a resistance to such measurement. Here is the scientific rationalization of the workplace: employees are broken down into statistics and measurements to determine how much labour they are producing, should be producing, and are capable of producing. They are not individuals, but items seen through the lens of workspace productivity, and there seems to be, at least in Ethan’s mind, a direct connection between these metrics or measurements and the intention to avoid doing work. This connection is made clear by the very juxtaposition of the two sentiments. The implication is that by “not actually doing work” there is some measure of rebellion and agency involved in resisting the systematic measurement of workspace productivity. In fact, if the employees are successful in reducing their productivity in this way without attracting the notice of the employer, then the statistics gathered represent a false report of what the employees are doing and capable of. In turn, expectations are altered based on these false statistics and the employees may be granted a reduced work-load—and hence a greater measure of freedom to perpetuate the cycle of resistance to work and consequently even greater freedom.

The cartoon profiles themselves, meant to be “a standardized list that itemizes everything that’s special and unique about all” (31-2) of the iPod employees, therefore represent a tactic of resistance. While Ethan’s creation of these profiles does not quite constitute Wayman’s “whether or not the crew drink together after work,” it is a creative, self-defining act that is initiated at the level of the employee and is not authorized by management. In his profile for employee Casper Jespersen, Ethan lists “Cancer Cowboy,

or simply Cowboy” under the “Name people actually use” category (33). Surely this coincides with Wayman’s conception of the orally transmitted culture that originates with the employees—to use his words, the “names for people and things we invent” (68). As untrue or comical as they may be, these profiles signify the culture and bonding of the iPod employees. The fact that they are created and discussed within the work environment renders them tools for resisting the dominance of the management. Furthermore, they are attempts at establishing authority over their own stories. Casper Jespersen is no longer an object of productivity metrics, he is someone who, though “not suicidal . . . really enjoys thinking about death”; he is someone who eats “Skittles, with the green ones removed” (33). Likewise, we discover Ethan lives “in fear of karaoke” and that the food group “most prevalent within the work cubicle” is “Kettle Chips with cracked pepper and lime” (38). In the latter description of Ethan’s favored food it is clear that the cartoon profile is a reaction against authority in the form of a sterile environment—the Kettle Chips with cracked pepper and lime imply taste, texture, colour, and human personality in contrast to the antiseptic phrase “work cubicle.” Again, each unique detail provided indicates an attempt to imbue the work space with a sense of personal identity. In Wayman’s words, they are attempting to “restore to us a measure of the humanity that selling our time, our hands, our brains takes away from us,” as well as trying “to make tolerable and to humanize the workplace and the working life” (66).

The example of cartoon profiles is only one of many. Coupland’s narrative is full of resistance tactics, from having all the iPod employees “write to Ronald [McDonald] to explain why each of us is his ideal mate” (52), to finding the “rogue digit” within the “first hundred thousand digits of pi” (383). These games are ostensibly without meaning

or purpose; yet, within the white collar world, where every conceivable metric is used to measure employee productivity, these otherwise ridiculous games can be interpreted as the means by which people are able to assert agency, selfhood, power, and authority within their place of work. These games represent an insider world of games and bonding between employees that remains inaccessible to the management and employer. Reading Coupland in this way suggests that these games are not a waste of time at all.

It is a work place, after all, where the expertise of the technological expert is ignored by the head(s) of marketing in the development of BoardX and then SpriteQuest. As the employee Alec declares, “‘it’s all about authorship. We work so hard on these games, but it’s like our voices don’t matter’” (244). One response in the novel to this lack of authorship is the creation of narratives that run contrary to those imposed from above. Christopher Wilson is helpful in explaining this scenario in regard to Sinclair Lewis. Wilson explains that, for Lewis, the word “job” signifies a “subjugation to routine, to boredom, to time discipline—all veiled threats of permanent subordination” (214). At the same time, Wilson suggests that “Lewis felt some residual attachment to a ‘backstairs’ or subterranean world of ‘small’ employees” (214) To extend these ideas, I suggest that the confining world of iPod employment creates a need for alternate methods of expression and authorship—a subterranean world; in particular, it drives employees to generate sub- or counter-narratives (sometimes represented as games and practical jokes) in reaction to the dominant narrative of the workplace.

To return to the comment made by Alec about authorship, it is directly after this lament that Ethan explains that “[o]n the spot, I renewed my earlier vow to sabotage the game” (244). The “sabotage” consists of creating a character named Ronald and covertly

inserting Ronald into the SpriteQuest game. With the entry of a secret password, a user can transition from the world of SpriteQuest to “Ronald’s Lair of Death, releasing him on a spree of carnage and terror within the SpriteQuest realm” (269). The sabotage of SpriteQuest is a reaction to the “veiled threats of permanent subordination” (Wilson 214). Moreover, it is an attempt to assert true authorship over the product. Where the iPod employees were powerless to stop the turtle character or the transition from BoardX to SpriteQuest, they regain power through the sabotage. Ronald, named after Ronald McDonald, is by extension, McDonald’s restaurant, or what the iPod employees refer to as “the taint” (50). For the iPodders, McDonald’s represents the essence of an endlessly repeatable commodity devoid of content. It represents substance without sustenance as well as dominance over a market segment. McDonald’s is like the “category killer” “\$8.95 white plastic stacking chairs from Wall-Mart” that, like anime, have “slaughtered every other chair [or game type] on the market” (242). The choice of Ronald as a tool for subversion and destruction in the game is, therefore, no accident. The people of iPod use Ronald, the symbol of their subordination, to gain authority and control over the game and, more importantly, over the storyline of Ronald. As Ethan explains, “part of my job in subverting SpriteQuest is to provide Ronald’s creation myth” (271). It is not enough to simply create havoc in the world of SpriteQuest. Instead, there is a deliberate and methodical attempt to tell the *story* of Ronald, to be the *author* of the product. If in Bourdieu’s framework, the resources being contested are in part authority, agency, and control, then the iPodders seize control of these resources by creating a subterranean world and storyline within SpriteQuest while simultaneously creating a subterranean insider world within iPod that revolves around the discussion and development of the

Ronald story-line. In short, it is through this alternate storyline in *SpriteQuest* that the *jPod* employees are able to finally achieve authorship of the product they are producing and thus create a more humanized white collar work place in which they can enjoy some semblance of power.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the capacity for agency, self-authorship, and power I see in the work of Coupland, there is a tension between this agency and how it actually functions in the society Coupland depicts.<sup>5</sup> The areas where Coupland's characters hold or recover agency can be summarized as follows:

1. Participation in non-work activities.
2. The completion of less work than is expected or demanded by company metrics.
3. The purchase of decorative and food items to personalize the workplace.
4. Authorship over a video-game narrative.
5. Participation in bonding, friendship, and community in the workplace.

While I do believe that the agency characters hold in these areas is significant, it is just as clear that, to some extent, this agency is somewhat unproductive and perhaps a symptom or necessary component of the capitalist structures of consumption at play in the novel. After all, the free time earned by challenging company metrics is not used to organize workers, fight for gender equality in the workplace, or to redress exploitative work schedules; instead, it is often spent consuming food or playing video games. The question Coupland poses yet doesn't answer is: "How can freedom be differentiated from leisure activities that entail the consumption of products?" Whatever other significance leisure activities may hold in the workplace, they are also necessary to capitalist consumption. As Tate explains, "Coupland's work displays a genuine ambivalence about consumerism and the pursuit of wealth in the Western imagination" (75). Furthermore, Coupland's novels, and specifically *JPod* in my opinion, "cannot conceal a distinct sense of thrill at

some of the novelties and enticements such a way of life [commodity culture] might generate; the narratives also seem to endorse a tactile appreciation for made things” (Tate 75). Thus, while Ethan is dismissive of the rich items Kam Fong covertly uses to furnish his apartment, and he makes no attempt at fashionable or new styles of dress, he is just as excited by the prospects of new computer games and new technology.

In this reading, the workers at jPod do not achieve a full sense of agency, but are ironically “allowed” to achieve only that amount of agency that facilitates consumer consumption. The *sense* of agency that the above list of activities generates functions to create the illusion of *actual* agency. In many ways, the world that Coupland represents is thus inescapably capitalist—the characters are unable to break free from the illusions under which they operate, despite their attempts to challenge the prevailing work structures. Perhaps, as Tate suggests, “the jPodders have few illusions about the possibility of escape” (163) from their rigidly controlled lives. Or perhaps, Coupland is expressing the deeply ambivalent attitude individuals have adopted when faced with a world that is seemingly out of their control or influence: a world where Kaitlin’s “calm deconstruction of vacuous late capitalist existence” is “met with an equally casual shrug of indifference” (Tate 165). In this scenario, Coupland is taking the theory of Horkheimer and Adorno’s “Enlightenment as Mass Deception” to its logical conclusion. The employees have either been deceived about the possibility of agency through the workings of the market, or have recognized this deception and entered into a state of utter ambivalence and powerlessness. A more positive reading of *JPod* might suggest that however much Coupland’s characters lack agency or the tools for socio-political change, the bonds of community, friendship, and the insider world at jPod always indicate the

*potential* for change. Yet, there are no easy answers in Coupland's work. His narrative and his characters seem unable to represent or see a world beyond the twenty-first century moment of their existence. As Tate notes, Evil Mark proclaims that their world is set in "the Wretched Decade" (228) and perhaps the question we are left with is: "Does Coupland view the first decade of the twenty-first century as a failed vision of the future?" (Tate 167).

Douglas Coupland is both loved and disliked for his propensity to locate his narratives in the contemporary, frenetic world of twenty-first-century technology, artifice, cliché, popular culture, and kitsch. Nevertheless, I read novels such as *JPod* as "having a finger on the pulse" of twenty-first-century white collar labour. In this chapter I have not touched on many of the labour concerns Coupland brings up in his narrative. There is, for example, the issue of Ethan's mother's marijuana operation. Arguments can be made for the way in which home is constructed as isolating and separate from work—especially in the case when home is gendered female and work as male. In this framework, Ethan's mother, possibly presented with a lack of employment opportunities near the home, has decided on an illegal occupation—one over which she has complete control and authority. While it seems certain that a marijuana growing operation isn't what they had in mind, Susan Hanson and Geraldine Pratt explain how "women living in an area of British Columbia with poor local employment opportunities in the formal sector have created their own paid employment within the neighborhood" (307). It is unclear precisely what the situation is with regard to Ethan's mother other than the fact she is

represented as at home while her husband and sons are out working. Yet, it is precisely these circumstances that implicate larger labour patterns.

In addition to the labour of Ethan's mother, there is also the issue of time in white collar labour. Specifically, the new technology sector has a popular reputation for being more flexible and free concerning the hours of work in contrast to the stereotypical nine-to-five job. On one occasion Ethan remarks that it wasn't until "around nine at night I finally got down to work" (44). At first glance, a non-traditional time structure seems appealing—especially to people who feel more comfortable or productive working late into the night. On closer inspection, however, as Kaitlin explains, "you live and die by the development cycle . . . with the company regulating your life cycles at whim. If it isn't a budget-driven eighteen month game production schedule, it's a five year hardware obsolescence schedule" (115). Indeed, Ethan later comments that "[i]t was time to go home—eight o'clock—the earliest I'd left since the last game shipped" (147). While the open-ended time structure at first seems well-suited to the technology-loving night-owl who sleeps through the day, in conjunction with the production cycle described here, it is as oppressive as a traditional schedule. The overriding concern identified by Kaitlin is the production cycle, and no matter when the work gets done within a twenty-four hour period, it must be done according to production deadlines. If anything, the open-ended time structure is exploitative in that there are theoretically "more hours in the day" during which a given employee may be required to work with regard to a particular product cycle.

Among all the ideas Coupland touches on, workplace obsolescence is what I find the most intriguing. He steps outside of the dominant/subordinate model to examine one



of the fundamental anxieties felt by the white collar technological worker. It is Kaitlin, rather than Ethan, who drives this idea home through her outburst at the iPod crew:

‘You spend your life feeling as if you’re perpetually on the brink of being obsolete—whether its labour market obsolescence or cultural unhipness . . . Every five years you have to throw away everything you know and learn a whole new set of hardware and software specs, relegating what was once critical to our lives to the cosmic slag heap.’ (115)

What Kaitlin is speaking about is the social dynamic of the new technology industry.

When Ethan catches John playing the canonical, so-called “vanilla” (135), video game *Sim City*, it does not represent wasting time at work inasmuch as it is a compelling reaction against both market obsolescence—the game is a “proven hit” (136)—and cultural obsolescence; it is clear that John is keeping up-to-date with regard to the sales of video games. The frequent or continuous immersion of iPod employees in popular culture via Google, McDonald’s satire, and video-game research, is not only a reaction to the stultifying lack of agency or the antiseptic environment at iPod, but is also symptomatic of a chronic anxiety that as they age and culture and technology rapidly develop, they will be rendered obsolete, impotent. It is a pressing concern given that the primary market for their product is youth. Indeed, if the workers at iPod do manage to keep pace with developing culture and technology, they will face a question of whether or not their skill-sets will still be competitive in a system that is producing young graduates with a closer connection to both the youth market and emerging technology—and who would arguably earn a lower, entry-level wage.

Yet, the cycle of education and technological development is not the only issue at play here. There is an economic concern (money spent on education and training), a temporal concern (time spent on education and on the job), an emotional concern (the invested interest in this sector), an educational concern (knowledge learned), and a social

concern (shared experiences and relationships). All of these concerns are implicated in the cycle of obsolescence described above. For the jPodders, a particular generation of technology, and the shared experience of the technology through the temporal, monetary, emotional, educational, and social commitments devoted to it, has come to be “critical” to their lives. For example, emotional attachments have formed around the experiences with and learning of a technology, and there is an economic reliance on particular technologies for employment and career advancement. In the five-year cycle mentioned above, all of this is relegated to the “slag heap”: the detritus remaining after all value has been extracted. While there is a certain carry-over in terms of the skills, knowledge, and experiences from one generation of technology and culture to another, the central idea here is that with the relegation of a technology to the slag heap, all the other economic, social, emotional, temporal, and educational components end up in the slag heap as well.

For these reasons, and Coupland represents the contemporary white collar work place from a multitude of perspectives, his work is essential in understanding the conflicts and situations of the white collar labourer. While statistics may measure productivity, records of employment, or the number of employees in a given region or sector, Coupland exposes the meaning that these statistics and measurements hold for the labouring individual. He helps us understand what lies beneath a seemingly artificial culture obsessed with gaming, Google, information, and technology.

### **Robert Harlow’s *Scann***

*Scann* is Robert Harlow’s most recognized and critically acclaimed novel. The narrative is told from the point of view of Amory Scann, editor of the *Linden Chronicle*

newspaper, and follows his compulsive desire to write fiction. At times, a narrative voice intrudes into the plot to make various criticisms of Scann and describe what he is doing in the third-person. While Robert Diotte (no relation) suggests that it is this “intrusive narrator” who is “the real strength of the book” and functions as “the cement which holds the book together” (72), the narrative voice “may be seen with equal force as Scann’s own constant, characteristic, and arch self-dramatization” (MacKendrick 72). The present narrative of 1968 takes place over the four-day Easter weekend and focuses on Scann’s interactions with the dentist George, his secretary Shirley, and the maid Mary Major; the setting is primarily that of the Linden Hotel where Scann has confined himself in order to write. It is Scann’s fictions that comprise the rest of the novel. Ranging in time from 1909 to 1968, these stories can be divided into three primary, interrelated sections. The first story is that of trapper Linden and the settler Thrain (senior), two of the founders of the town. Both are larger-than-life individuals who trek through the wilderness of Northern British Columbia along Linden’s trapline. Mutually antagonistic, the two men need to rely on one another for survival when they encounter misfortune and near death due to exposure, starvation, and wolverine attack. In parallel to the survival narrative of Thrain and Linden is the brief chronicle of Thrain’s wife Erica, their son David, Linden’s son Ro, and their trials during an influenza epidemic. While the Thrain-Linden narrative occurs first in *Scann*, it makes periodic reappearances and is returned to at the close of the novel. The second of Scann’s fictions is delivered orally to Mary Major, and is the story of the Morton family; more specifically, it is a sexually charged narrative of Thrain senior’s encounter with mother Phillipa Morton and her two daughters Phillipa and Amantha—Amantha later becomes Thrain’s second wife and David Thrain’s stepmother.

The story involves the inherited estate of Zed Morton, a patriarch who ran a plantation that operated with slave labour. The narrative is darkly reminiscent of the prose of writers like Faulkner, and involves violence, rape, and the gelding of males as they copulate with Phillipa Morton. The frank sexual energy of the narrative is used by Scann in his efforts to seduce Mary Major. The third of Scann's fictions is that of his first encounter with David Thrain during World War Two. In the war novella, Scann is a war journalist with Thrain a fighter pilot and "everyone's idea of the basic war hero" (Diotte 73). The ironic voice of the narrator in *Scann* remarks that Scann's "war novel *But Frail Clay* . . . chronicles those years during which he views himself as a kind of hero-whoremaster, but in truth he is a lecher at play while the real heroes are away winning the war" (204). Indeed, *But Frail Clay* documents Scann's failure to obtain the feature he was sent to write, his failed attempt at a relationship with Stephanie after their initial sexual encounter, and his cowardice during the fight with David Thrain.

While the content of the various sub-narratives of *Scann* has little to do with white collar labour, it is Scann's position as editor of the *Linden Chronicle* and his need to write fiction, to be the *author* of a narrative, that connects all stories in the novel. Indeed, I suggest that the conflict between journalism and authorship is one of the central themes of the novel, one which arises in part from Harlow's own background, and one where the constraints of journalism cause Scann's need to write fiction. The second aspect of white collar labour that appears in *Scann* is how it is gendered according to particular conceptions of home and work. Here, Amory Scann represents the patriarchal labour structure whereby the value of male labour external to the home is privileged over unpaid domestic labour. Furthermore, the women who do appear in the white collar workforce

are also subjugated. Though this pattern of subjugation takes place in regard to Scann's relationship with all women in the novel, it plays out most forcefully with Shirley. For Scann, women are reduced to objects of value when he can use them for his own particular ends and means: his wife Marion for domestic labour and child-rearing, his secretary Shirley for sex and unpaid secretarial labour, and the maid Mary for confidence through sexual conquest—though in the case of Mary, Scann is left impotent and insecure.

In a 1975 interview with Geoff Hancock, Robert Harlow remarks that “there are very few bits of autobiography in any of the books or any story I wrote” (55). But, like Harlow, Scann is involved in journalism and like David Thrain in *But Frail Clay*, Harlow was a Bomber Command Pilot in the RCAF from 1943-45. Furthermore, in creating the fictional town of Linden, Harlow used “the town in which [he] lived and grew up, Prince George . . .” (Harlow 52). Most importantly, Scann lies to his wife and employer in order to lock himself away in the Linden hotel to write his narrative. While there is no indication Harlow was deceitful, he too locked himself away to write *A Gift of Echoes*. Harlow himself explains:

*Echoes* was not fun. There was a large hiatus in the middle of it. I had to go away, sort of leave my family. I remember my wife thought I had a mistress. She simply wouldn't believe I would go to an apartment in order to finish the book . . . I wrote until I dropped, literally dropped . . . The lady who ran the apartment house said I was nuts and I was. (Harlow 53)

Where Harlow's wife thought he had a mistress, Amory Scann does have one; the lady who “ran the apartment” is similar to Mary Major who implies that Scann is mentally unstable; and Scann often writes until the point of exhaustion. This is not to say that Amory Scann is Robert Harlow, but simply that numerous parallels exist between what

Harlow has said about himself and certain aspects of the novel. Of these, it is Harlow's position as journalist and author, as well as his attitudes toward these occupations that I see as the strongest connection between his life and the world of *Scann*.

Harlow's remark that there are not many autobiographical "bits" in his work is either ironic or deliberately misleading. Certainly, there is a wealth of parallels, especially, in my mind, regarding Harlow's engagement with white collar labour and, in particular, with issues surrounding creative labour in the form of writing fiction.

Harlow's stance with regard to post-World War Two white collar labour is indicated in part by what he identifies as a crisis in Canadian literature during the 1950s:

during the fifties, nobody could get published. People like Earle Birney were having difficulty. Dorothy Livesay wasn't published for five years during the fifties. She couldn't make it. There were no little magazines. Publishers weren't interested in anything except importing American books and selling them. (Harlow 41)<sup>6</sup>

Later on in the same interview with Hancock, Harlow explains that

It wasn't until 1967 with the influx of a good deal of money from the government that new publishing houses came along to publish people who deserved to be published, but hadn't been because they were marginal in terms of big commercial operations, that we suddenly had a variety of literature which will allow us to be something other than pedestrian. (69)

Harlow's words are interesting both for his choice of authors Birney and Livesay as well as for his allocation of responsibility to publishers and big commercial operations.

Of course, my writing in 2011, rather than 1975, provides me with the great benefit of hindsight, but another possible reason for Livesay's and Birney's lack of commercial success may be due to their association with left-wing politics during the 1930s and beyond. James Doyle states that "Livesay joined the Progressive Arts Club in 1932 and the Young Communist League in 1933, became a full-fledged member of the CPC in 1934, and remained in the Party through the 1930s" (109).<sup>7</sup> Concerning Birney,

Doyle reports that he had “flirted with the CPC during the 1930s, but rejected Stalinism in favour of the political and cultural ideas of Leon Trotsky” (233); furthermore, at the time of *Down the Long Table*—published in 1955—Doyle remarks that Birney was “a Marxist-Leninist radical” (233). In fact, there are a number of good reasons for what Roy MacSkimming calls the “harsh environment” of Canadian publishing: the fact that “English Canadians share the mother tongue of the world’s two largest book-producing nations” (the United States and Britain), that “we keep our borders open to books and ideas from abroad,” that “American and British books are much cheaper to produce thanks to economies of scale,” and that there are the “constraints of a small population,” which forced Canadian publishers to “underprice their books to compete” (4). While Harlow may simply be describing the hostile publishing environment in a manner similar to what MacSkimming is suggesting, it is equally possible that his words represent a fundamental divide and opposition between the white collar occupations of publisher and author. The essence of the literary author is agency and a lack of constraint by commercial or supervisory interests. As Tom Wayman suggests, “this is the work that writers have *chosen* to do under conditions they ordinarily establish *themselves*” (20). In the Hancock interview, these conditions conflict with the prescribed conditions of the publishing industry. Despite the fact that certain authors “deserved” to be published, that they had the requisite talent, they were not published because they provided a product, their writing, that could not be marketed and sold. The publishing industry, at least during this time period, is constrained by “commercial operations” that operate for profit and must, therefore, be concerned primarily with “importing American books and selling them” if this is what the market dictates.

Harlow's stance here echoes what Andrew Hoberek describes as the "way in which postwar fiction equates the agency of characters with the agency of authors" (17)—a point which will become clearer in my later examination of *Scann*—and further, that "this move bears the traces of the transformation of the middle class insofar as postwar commentators understood white-collar work as a system for constraining the autonomy of mental laborers" (Hoberek 17). Again, there is a divide here between the occupation of author as autonomous and that of other white collar work that constrains the mental labour of an author. A case in point is the occupation of the journalist. According to Wayman "[j]ournalism and entertainment writing are closely controlled by, or in the interests of, the business corporations. These are organizations whose primary goal is not to improve the life of the human race, but to make money" (18). Likewise, C. Mills Wright states that "[i]f the intellectual becomes the hired man of an information industry, his general aims must, of course, be set by the decisions of others rather than by his own integrity" (150). Wright further explains that "[e]ven the editor of the mass magazine, the director of the radio drama, has not escaped the depersonalization of publicity and entertainment; he is also the employee of a business enterprise, not a personality in his own right" (150). In other words, despite the seeming autonomy of journalistic writing, such writing is, in fact, constrained by the interests of others such as editors, publishers, advertisers, sponsors, supervisors, corporate executive officers, target audiences and so forth; all interests are overridden by the primary goal of the publication or corporation to make a profit. Whatever integrity or personality the journalist brings to their piece, whatever lens they bring to bear on their particular subject, is always under the threat of being overridden and removed. Eventually, such writers may begin to write



in the interests of others rather than through their own personality or integrity (see Noam Chomsky's *Manufacturing Consent* for an account of this process).

One site of collision between creative writing and journalism is the fact that the two occupations are closely linked, and that literary authors may be otherwise employed in occupations such as journalist. As Hoberek suggests, "whereas the modernists worked various jobs to pay the bills while they did their *real* work—as Wallace Stevens wrote to his fiancée in 1909, 'I certainly do not exist from nine to six, when I am at the office'—the postwar generation found employment *as* artists and intellectuals" (21). Nevertheless, in one sense, postwar intellectuals found "their employment symbolizing the ultimate degradation of creative mental labor within the white-collar workplace" (Hoberek 21). Compare the preceding anecdote about Wallace Stevens to the following excerpt from an interview between Alan Twigg and Harlow:

Twigg: 'Why do you feel journalism is bad for writers?' (119)

Harlow: 'When I said journalism, I meant the whole media thing. Journalism is just too close to real writing. It saps your energies. You have to save that energy for yourself if you're a writer . . . . When I was doing what amounted to journalism for the CBC, I didn't really write. These were nine years when I kidded myself I was doing it. Now I save my best brains for when I write in the mornings from six until nine or ten. Then I go out to the university and use my second best brains for teaching.' (120)

As with Wallace Stevens, Harlow cannot be said to exist in his work at the CBC or in his teaching at the University of British Columbia, but rather from six to ten each morning when he is using his "best brains" to write. Employment as a journalist and as a teacher seems incommensurate with "real writing" or what Hoberek calls "creative mental labor" and there is certainly a sense or echo in Harlow's words that paid employment symbolizes "the ultimate degradation of creative mental labour within the white-collar workplace." Indeed, this is precisely why Harlow must use his "best brains" to write in

the morning.<sup>8</sup> The issue in both examples, the publishing industry and journalism, is one of agency. If the agency of the character is equated with that of the author, it is also this agency which the author incessantly seeks out and sees as necessary to being a writer. It is a position that connects to romanticism and the view of the author as a genius who writes in isolation. For Harlow, the agency of the author is fundamentally circumscribed or degraded within the white collar workforce. Harlow's position regarding white collar labour in terms of authorship, journalism, agency, and constraint, is one which bleeds into and informs the novel *Scann*. It is partly Harlow's implied stance toward white collar labour that allows us to read *Scann* as representative of white-collar labour even if this subject does not constitute the explicit plot of the novel.

The first way in which *Scann* explores a tension within white collar labour is through its style. The novel often seems to be told in a stream-of consciousness style; paragraph breaks are only occasional and there are no chapter breaks. At times, the narrative moves through the present day world of Scann into memory, delusion, fantasy, or other narratives, seemingly at whim. Some episodes, such as the orgiastic sexual encounter between Shirley and Scann, are imagistic: "Her face is lined with surprise, even outrage. Scabbard, sword, hilt, hitting, sheath sheathing, a god belly-dancing. Chaos. Beneath their tree a small echo . . ." (29)—and then turn out to be fictional jottings in Scann's notebook. Diotte notes that in the Easter cycle of the novel, "[d]ay two does not fit into the clock of that weekend" and that "neither cyclical nor linear, the dynamics of the novel reside instead in the progressive accumulation of events, what might be referred to as a chordal representation of the narrative" (72). MacKendrick explains that Scann "investigated Harlow's growing understanding of time as '*individual*

*moments of consciousness*” (21). At all times, Harlow’s style eschews rigidity and tradition. Typical novelistic techniques such as linearity, discrete paragraphs, and chapter divisions are limited or absent.

One explanation for Harlow’s choice of style comes from the work of Hoberek, who, in a slightly different context, writes about the “writer’s efforts to transcend the constraining effects of language as a social system” (23), an assertion that I see as connected to his suggestion that Saul Bellow’s work “understands preexisting literary forms as institutional constraints upon individual creativity and autonomy and thus—however insistently disguised—as versions of the white-collar workplace” (24). To extend Hoberek’s assertions to the work of Harlow, it seems clear that his dreamlike, stream-of-consciousness style—combined with the lack of traditional narrative and novelistic structures—can be read as his effort to transcend preexisting literary forms that signify institutional constraints upon individual creativity and autonomy. This move simultaneously allows us to read these constraints as metaphorical versions of the white collar workplace, or at least as connected to the white collar workplace—restrictions that perhaps carried over from Harlow’s journalistic work with the CBC as well as his work at UBC where such creative autonomy was denigrated or controlled. In the case of UBC, Harlow transcended these constraints by relegating such work to his “second best brains” (Harlow 120).

At the heart of white collar labour in *Scann* is Amory Scann’s position as editor of the *Linden Chronicle*. Presiding over the fiftieth anniversary edition of the paper, Scann finds himself “studying himself studying this issue of his paper” while being “plagued by hope and damned with new and grander designs” (9). The hope and “new and grander

designs” could refer to Scann’s basic desire for a better and bolder life. Yet, in the context of studying the newspaper in his office, it is more likely that his words are directed toward the creation of this particular issue and the publication of the *Chronicle* in general. The word “designs” in particular implies a sense of planning, of selection, arrangement, and implementation, that resonates with having control over the production of the *Chronicle*. In Scann’s case, however, these hopes and designs are what plague and damn him; the implication is that his hopes and designs are frustrated, that they plague him because they can never come to fruition, that they damn him because they persist in the face of his inability to implement them. There is, in other words, a conflict between what he wants to do and what he is able to do, between his desire and what constrains it. His plan for the paper was for it to be “[a] work of art. He dreamed its exhibition in distant places, festooned with ribbons of merit. He wrote it, designed it, chose the fonts of type that printed it. But it is neither biography, *aide memoire* nor journalism” (10). Scann’s dream, in short, is to be the *author* of the paper. Yet, not being journalism, the implication here is that what Scann is truly wanting to do is write fiction and receive recognition. He wants to produce something over which he has complete control and authority from content to font—the essence of his stance toward the meaning of creative or mental labour in the white collar workforce.

Scann’s dreams of writing fiction are not possible in the world of journalism. He is an editor, not a publisher or an owner. His creative labour is, therefore, regulated by others, restricted. The restrictive nature of Scann’s place as editor is clear from his schedule as he goes

out to attend a Board of Trade luncheon. It is Monday. Tuesday, Rotary; Wednesday, Lions; Thursday, Kiwanis; Friday, Gyro. Advertisers are

important to an editor, even more important to his publisher; the birthday issue of the *Chronicle* is important to the advertisers. (15)

Scann's rigid schedule is far from any conception of artistic freedom and economic independence. As Wayman notes, "[m]ost creative writers can set their own hours; most do not feel the constant pressure of direction from a supervisor; all can leave the place of work on a whim; most do not depend on their creative work for their economic survival" (20). In contrast, Scann cannot set his own hours; he cannot even set his own lunch schedule. Rather than leaving his workplace at whim, he is required to use time he might spend freely taking a lunch break soliciting advertising and pleasing the sponsors of the *Chronicle*. Scann's remark that advertisers are "even more important to his publisher" occurs immediately after the assertion that they are important to an advertiser. The structure of the clause supports this hierarchy; the second phrase is added to and superimposed on the first. The suggestion is that the reason advertisers are important to editor Scann is precisely because they are important to his publisher—if Scann fails to please or solicit advertisers his position as editor is in jeopardy. Being economically dependant on his publisher for employment, Scann is also dependant on the advertisers. To follow the structure of the passage further, the hierarchically most important phrase is that the "birthday issue of the *Chronicle* is important to the advertisers." The audience reached by an anniversary issue is greater than a regular issue and thus advertisers are keen to place their advertisements in this particular edition. Since the ultimate economic success of the paper is at least partly dependant on advertising revenue, both the publisher and the editor must acquiesce to the needs of the advertising executives—and any content or news restriction that may come into play as a result. Far from being the author of the paper then, Scann is in actuality, at the bottom of the hierarchy. Of all three

parties of editor, publisher, advertiser, Scann is the most constrained but nevertheless depends on this creative labour for his economic survival.

The position of editor of the *Chronicle* is not the only journalistic work Scann has done. He was also a feature writer in a Bomber squadron during World War II. It is this position that I see as the origin of Scann's feeling of impotence and constraint within the white collar world. Despite having a letter of authorization for his role as a writer on the base, Adjutant Geddings, a superior officer, denies Scann permission to report on a crash that had just occurred and which Scann had witnessed. To Geddings' questions, Scann states: "I took pictures of the crash . . . I've seen a P.O. named Simms. He gave me the cut lines for my pictures" (181). Geddings responds with, "[y]ou won't use the pictures or the cut lines . . . You might as well give them to me now" (181). There is no compromise or negotiation; Geddings is able to order Scann to turn over his materials despite any objections or claim to ownership Scann may have. The calm of his manner notwithstanding, the encounter makes Scann feel "alone, foolish, scared and in the middle of the war" (182). His role has been denied him, the products of his labour seized. When he refuses to give up his pictures, it is the newly arrived David Thrain who, with "his large hand, reaches out and tugs very hard and the camera's strap breaks" (182). Scann is physically and emotionally dominated. At the bottom of the military hierarchy, Scann is under the control and orders of Thrain. Later, Scann considers that "he was not sent for a story. He is a feature writer. Bomber squadron. A feature about how boys are fighting the war. Red white and blue journalism" (183); in the words of Thrain, he is limited to taking "pictures of WAAFs [Women's Auxiliary Air Force] at the Valentine's Day dance" (182). In other words, the role of reporter is eviscerated. Any and all stories,

photographs, knowledge, or personality Scann may wish to work on or include in a publication are subject to military censorship and the notions of David Thrain. The only possible avenue of publication is to report on a Valentine's Day dance—an occasion without connection to the life-and-death stakes of the war or to information that could benefit the general public. This is the essence of “red white and blue journalism”—to report only those items that are in the interests of those controlling and promoting the war. To use the words of Hoberek, surely Scann's employment in the war represents “the ultimate degradation of creative mental labor within the white-collar workplace” (21)

The degradation of creative mental labour in Scann's white collar occupations as war reporter and editor of the *Chronicle* leads to his compulsion for authorship. Having left his office for the Linden hotel, Scann sits in the “House lounge” and

takes out his traveling notebook, the one filled with scenes, sketches, prose line drawings, and sits, as all creators think they must, at the centre of his vision. It is a web. There are strands of time, planes of space. And there he is himself, manufacturing it all and seeing it all at once. (27)

As author, Scann is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent; he is god-like in his presence in the design and in his creation of it. The jottings in his notebook form the centre of his universe and imbue him with total control and authority over the worlds he may seek to manufacture. Indeed, when Scann confines himself to a room in the Linden hotel in order to begin writing, the narrator, possibly Scann himself, declares this day to be “THE FIRST DAY OF CREATION” (32). Scann is at the centre of his universe; he sees himself as literally creating a world one day at a time, and in doing so, achieving full autonomy over his life and labour.

If Harlow equates the agency of the character with the agency of the author, then so too does Scann equate the agency of characters such as Thrain and Linden with his

own. As MacKendrick observes, “. . . Scann becomes the observer of and vicarious participant in the possibilities of his own fictions” (23). Like Thrain, Scann wants to be bold, dynamic, and heroic. Indeed, the narrator comments that Scann “feels a certain kinship with Thrain as well as a common insight” (35). Ensconced in his hotel room, Scann “looks down into Fourth Avenue . . . . From here he could shoot five of the *Chronicle’s* advertisers in the next twenty seconds” (37). This is more than simple hostility toward the advertisers who constrain his agency at the newspaper. It is a fantasy of power and control where Scann envisions having the god-like ability to kill the people below. Yet Scann has no rifle. It is Linden who holds a rifle and Linden who holds the power of life and death in his hands as he shoots and kills a cougar that threatens him and Thrain on their journey to his cabin. The freedom of space in the wilderness, the freedom to hunt and kill, and the bold actions of Linden and Thrain, are inaccessible to Scann. The dominant form of vigorous, courageous, heterosexual masculinity he sees these men as embodying emasculates himself in his own eyes. Yet through his position as author, Scann can equate their freedom with his own, their boldness with his. This is why Scann is so desperate to be a novelist: “he is afraid of remaining a journalist or only becoming a scholar” (Harlow 36) because neither of these labours fulfills his drive toward creation. As Robert Diotte reminds us, “the key to Amory Scann” is that “he is a man whose little life is rounded with a sleep, a complacency, an unwillingness to confront his own responsibilities. He prefers instead the life of his fancies” (77)—in other words, his imagined life as an author.

What is absent from Scann’s fantasy is any semblance of responsibility. In fact, “[h]is wife thinks he’s in Banff at a conference [and] the owner of the paper, his



publisher, thinks he's on holiday" (Harlow 33). Scann's need for power, control, and agency is part of his larger, patriarchal vision whereby he privileges his labour at the expense of the labours of the women in his life. Indeed, while we learn that he has a wife named Marion and two children, virtually no mention of them or their role in his life is represented in Scann's notebook, jottings, reflections, or considerations. Aside from receiving an obscene phone call from her husband, Marion plays no role in Scann's world. He has abdicated all responsibilities other than that of his fiction writing. As the narrator wryly notes: "[t]he script is Scann's who draws pay from the *Chronicle* but no longer edits it, who is married and has three daughters but no longer lives at home, who is the lover of Shirley who may or may not know where he is" (32). Part of what Harlow is doing here is representing the way in which home and work are gendered within white collar labour professions. Sue Hanson and Geraldine Pratt comment that "it is now commonplace to point out that home and work have been viewed not only as separate but also as gendered, with the workplace epitomizing the male realm and the residence, the female" (300), and further, that "[a] more fundamental gender bias exists in what is taken to constitute work, namely paid employment" (302). Often this means that for men, the home experience is "filtered" through their work experiences and women's work experiences are filtered through the home (Hanson and Pratt 300). Hence, the home often becomes the male haven from work but the women's workplace. In *Scann*, however, Amory Scann refuses the idea of home and/or haven. For him the home is a site of responsibility, and, like the office, must be fled from in order for him to devote time to his creative impulse. In other words, the nature of his work, in conjunction with his need for control and his lack of responsibility, creates a situation where home is constructed as

hostile, a place of limitation, and where his wife is concerned, subjugation and degradation.

This home-work structure is symptomatic of the patriarchal labour structure and ideology in place in the novel. In the world of Amory Scann, women are used as means toward a particular end. The narrator tells us that, leaving the office, Scann “goes out past his receptionist-secretary-coffeebrewer-etc” (27), and, we might add, mistress. According to Scann, Shirley is employed in order to be used as he sees fit. In his view, her work is not the clerical work of a secretary per se, but rather to do whatever he asks and demands. What this means, for Scann, is she must do everything from preparing coffee to having sexual intercourse with him. Unable to derive any sense of agency at the *Chronicle*, Scann seeks control over the women in his life and, in doing so, denigrates their labour and belittles their persons. In Scann’s world, male labour is dominant and women are seen as instruments to serve his personal goals and power: for seduction, information and self-confidence in the case of Mary Major, sex and clerical labour in the case of Shirley, and childrearing and unpaid domestic labour in the case of Marion, his wife. In all cases, the labours of the women are denigrated and subordinated by the hegemonic power structure—yet another manifestation of Scann’s desire for control in an otherwise impotent life.

Scann’s oppression of women by appropriating their labour goes further than subjecting them to menial tasks and using them for his own purposes. His need for power is so consuming that he attempts to *author*, or create the women around him according to his own fantasies and desires. What he “loves the most about” Shirley is “that she is his own discovery. He believes he came upon her suddenly one afternoon . . .” (28). In

Scann's delusion, Shirley is not a person, not an individual woman in her own right, but an object that can be "discovered." His so-called discovery is betrayed by the narrator's use of the word "believes." However much Scann may believe that Shirley is his discovery, he is wrong. All that Scann sees in Shirley is his own false illusion: his fiction of their meeting and their orgiastic sexual encounter did not, in fact, occur in the way he has imagined or remembered it—these are fictions or inventions of his mind. During a heated argument over the phone, Shirley exclaims, "'I'm trying to tell you something. Me. Shirley. A Person. Can you hear?'" (167), but Scann cannot see or hear her, only the fictionalized caricature, or character, of Shirley that exists in his mind. Responding to Shirley's accusation that Scann is a "sniggerer" he declares "'Sniggerers don't run newspapers. They don't write books'" (167). The implication is not only that he sees himself as overly important, but that his work is superior to hers. The fact that he does not run a newspaper and hasn't written a book is simply part of his overall fantasy of power and control. In actuality, it is Shirley who is closest to running the newspaper and who has laboured to make his writing possible. She unerringly asks "'who got you the room? . . . Who told the lie to Marion? Who's keeping up the fiction around here that you're in Banff? And who's going to have to type up whatever you've done when you get back?'" (168). All the extra work needed to complete Scann's authorial and editorial labour is accomplished by Shirley. Yet, neither her work at the *Chronicle* nor the demeaning personal tasks she completes for Scann penetrate his narcissism. Shirley's retort to Scann's threat to hire a typist is that he should also hire a lover since she has "'done it and paid for it with fifty hours a week slave labour'" (168). The argument explicitly reveals how Shirley's role as Scann's mistress has placed her in a subordinate

position at work. She is used by Scann, under the promise of a relationship, for labour at work. Shirley has directly equated her having “done it,” been Scann’s lover, with working as “slave labour.” It is clear that Scann is obsessed with fictional inventions whether they constitute the world of Linden and Thrain or the women who surround him. In the words of the narrator, “there is startling evidence that Scann lives almost totally in an insecure and ambivalent dreamworld” (167) where relationships such as the one with Stephanie in the war novel are revealed in his notebook entries to be nothing more than “fantasies of superpotency and sexual gymnastics” (205). The lesson that Scann refuses to learn here, to my mind, is that his attempt to fictionalize women according to male fantasy is a morally bankrupt action that ultimately fails when his fantasies collide with reality. Scann’s fantasies end up foregrounding his impotence and incompetence as the so-called “author” of such fictions.

What is Harlow telling us about white collar labour? In essence, Harlow portrays white collar labour as a site of tension between constraint and authorship. At the same time, he uses the representation of Scann’s labour to reveal a patriarchal labour structure. In both cases, the power of the novel is that this labour is made visible. The jobs of editor, author, or secretary are neither plot devices through which Scann’s fictions can operate, nor random occupations or convenient choices that Harlow has made to facilitate narrative flow or coherence. Rather, they are implicated in larger patterns in society. They provide a glimpse into how and why stories are told, how the position of editor can be debilitating

to creative energies, how the labour of women is exploited by men, and how all of these are connected in the white collar world of labour.

### **Jen Sookfong Lee's *the end of east***

One of the most interesting manifestations of labour stratification and the way it impacts the family occurs in the Chinese communities of British Columbia. Fred Wah's *Diamond Grill* is perhaps the most nationally recognized book along with Sky Lee's *Disappearing Moon Cafe*. Both texts revolve around the family restaurant and how various family members interact through the work that takes place there. In Sky Lee's novel, for example, Mui Lan, the family matriarch, uses her position as head of the family to exert power over her daughter-in-law Fong Mei as well as her son's concubine, Song Ang. Similarly, Denise Chong's memoir *The Concubine's Children* represents labour through the character of May-Ying who works at tea houses such as the Pekin tea house and Canton House. More recently, Jen Sookfong Lee's *the end of east* depicts the work of Chan Seid Quan at a barber shop, his son Pon Man's work at a restaurant and in accounting, and the unpaid domestic labour of Shew Lin and her daughter-in-law Siu Sang. The location of the Chinese Canadian worker in the labour economy of Canada is impossible to separate from either the patriarchal political and labour structure or the racist politics and labour policies that were in place in Canada at various times and in various manifestations during the twentieth century.<sup>9</sup>

Within the patriarchal labour structure of British Columbia, many low-paying, so called white collar jobs were held by women. As Jean Barman explains, "service and

other jobs rose from one-quarter of the work force in 1911 to two-thirds of all jobs in the province by 1981. A majority were held by women, many of them being poorly paid” (West 324). Moreover, the “administrative revolution” that occurred during the 1890s in the United States was also felt in Canada; the result was a “rise of the clerical trades” in the 1920s (Phillips and Phillips 24). A “second merger wave” in the late 1920s “furthered the rise of corporate capitalism with its application of scientific management, [and] job stratification”; Phillips and Phillips quote a student of this process of merger waves as stating “the result . . . ‘was a highly rationalized office in which deskilled jobs were defined as suitable women’s work’” (28). In another context, Phillips and Phillips refer to the oppression of women in the Canadian work force as “the ghettoization of women not only in a small range of occupation areas but also in the low wage jobs within these areas” (58). The gender inequality in the labour economy of Canada implicitly creates a job and wage hierarchy whereby certain jobs are valued and gendered as male jobs while others are devalued, gendered as female jobs, and pay minimal wages. In particular, it is the white collar service and clerical jobs that “shifted from a traditional male domain to a female one” (Phillips and Phillips 26) in the early twentieth century.<sup>10</sup>

It is this so-called female domain, this sector of denigrated and low paying labour, that some Asian Canadian workers come to inhabit when racism is combined with the patriarchal power structure—precisely the reason why the phrase *white collar* cannot readily be applied to such work regardless of the vocation in play. As authors such as Peter Ward and Patricia Roy make clear, the racist economics, politics, and social attitudes of Canadian society actively constructed the racialized bodies of Asian people as “other.” As Rita Wong explains, “constructing these racialized bodies as ‘other’ and

‘foreign,’ this social context [of racialized policy] effectively devalued the physical labour of Asian people in areas including but not limited to railroad construction, farming, fishing, cannery work, restaurants, laundries, and so on” (40). Indeed, Wong suggests “[i]t can be argued that female menial labour has come to be stereotypical of immigrant labour” (49). Thus it is that Seid Quan in *the end of east* “discovers that several businesses in Chinatown have hired him to clean their offices and front rooms after they close. They dare not hire white cleaning women, so it is Seid Quan who begins sweeping up the loose threads at the tailor’s shop . . . women’s work, he thinks” (17). The thoughts of Seid Quan are problematic. He is actively engaged in the gendering of a particular form of labour as “women’s work”; his utterance here locates the act of sweeping up at the tailor’s office in a hierarchy where such a job, as “women’s work,” is beneath him and less valuable than work that he may consider to be more valuable, male employment. Yet, to borrow a phrase from Rita Wong, it is also clear that Seid Quan is participating in an activity *already* constructed as *feminized labour*—a so-called deskilled, low-paying, menial labour job. The devalued nature of the employment, in conjunction with the unlikelihood that white women would work for a Chinese employer, makes this job open to Seid Quan. In an example like this, Lee captures the connection between the racist and the patriarchal power structures of the British Columbia labour economy.

The arguments that locate and explore Asian Canadian labour in the context of both patriarchal and racist power structures are evident in both *the end of east* and novels like Sky Lee’s *Disappearing Moon Cafe*. Indeed, the latter opens with Wong Gwei Chang’s search for the remains of exploited Chinese workers who perished during the

construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway. However, many of these issues have been excellently and successfully explored elsewhere—notably in Rita Wong’s dissertation *Provisional Mobilities: Rethinking Labour through Asian Racialization in Literature* and Huai-Yang Lim’s dissertation *Representations of Class Identity in Chinese Canadian Literature*. Rather than continue along these lines of argument, what I find compelling is the representation of labour *within* the Chinese community, particularly in *the end of east*, especially the various ways Lee shows how labour divides, connects, oppresses and liberates individuals within a family and community. Lee’s narrative deals explicitly with the way that labour functions within the household and between family members.

*the end of east* is the story of the Chan family beginning with Chan Seid Quan’s arrival in British Columbia. The novel chronicles Seid Quan’s labour as a barber in Vancouver’s Chinatown, and moves through the generations from Seid Quan and his wife Shew Lin to the life of their son, Pon Man, who marries Siu Sang, and lastly, to their five daughters, Wendy, Daisy, Jackie, Penny, and Samantha. While there are glimpses of Seid Quan’s other children, Yun Wo and Min Lai, and brief mentions of the four eldest daughters of Pon Man and Siu Sang, the focus is on the stories of the other characters filtered through the narrative voice of Samantha or Sammy Chan. It is through Sammy that the reader learns of the history of the Chan family, beginning in 1913, and the historical events that surrounded them. The conflict between China and Japan, World War II, and the racist policies of Canada all inform the backdrop of the story, yet the focus is more on the relationships within the family than on historical events. The novel revolves around cyclical patterns of turmoil and strife between Seid Quan and Pon Man, Siu Sang and Shew Lin, and the five Chan girls and their mother.



In *the end of east*, Seid Quan occupies a bifurcated position between freedom and oppression. The labour of Seid Quan represents freedom insofar as he is able to leave the insecure economic conditions of his village in China and is able to help his village financially. In a conversation with his great-uncle, Seid Quan learns that his mother “has been able to buy a lot more things since [Seid Quan] left. She’s started dowries for [his] sisters already” (30). The money that Seid Quan is able to send back to China has resulted in direct benefits to his sisters. While his actions operate within a patriarchal framework, by increasing their dowries he has increased their chances for a higher socio-economic position through marriage. In short, Seid Quan’s immediate family has been able to experience a greater degree of financial and social freedom as a result of his work in British Columbia. Seid Quan’s uncle further reports that their “village has waited a long time to be healthy” but that there is now a “new water pump in the square” and “the village owes a lot to its young men overseas” (30). This nexus of individual, family, community, and labour functions in several ways. First, it locates the labour of Seid Quan in British Columbia as part of an exploitative international labour market where he must leave his home country to earn an acceptable wage to support his family and village.<sup>11</sup> Second, it represents the ability of the individual to achieve certain financial and physical freedoms through overseas labour—Seid Quan is able to leave the conditions of his village to earn more money abroad and, in doing so, he is able to assist his family and his community in achieving such things as health benefits in the form of a new water pump.

Yet the location of Seid Quan in this international labour market is also oppressive. He is caught between repaying the debt he owes his village and the poor wages he receives in Canada. Soon after his arrival in British Columbia, Seid Quan thinks

*“How will I ever pay back the village?”* (27); it is the village that has raised and provided the money to send him abroad. Seid Quan’s thoughts of repayment are never far from his mind. Desiring to embark on a career as a barber, he “calculates how much money he will be able to save working as a barber and how much he will need to buy the [barber] shop” (27); subsequently he thinks *“I will have to keep on cleaning at night as well, for as long as it takes”* (27). The financial burden of paying back the village puts Seid Quan’s desire to own the barbershop at risk. His upward mobility, in addition to being hampered by racist attitudes and policies, is restricted by his financial obligation to the village. Physically, socially, and economically, he is obligated to work cleaning offices and cutting hair until the debt is paid. The tension between the financial benefits to the family and village in China and the oppressive weight of his debt is evident later in the novel when Seid Quan ponders the fact that it took him *“seven years, working day and night, to pay back the village”*; the word *“slave”* occurs to him, but he is quick to dismiss it and insists, *“I can’t be that way, always a victim, always being put upon”* (232). In other words, Seid Quan’s position as wage-labourer causes him to see himself as a slave. Despite his optimism, it is clear that the burden of repaying his village, and the years spent labouring toward this end rather than toward greater financial independence or personal fulfillment, weighs heavily on his mind.

Financial obligations notwithstanding, Seid Quan does become the owner of the barbershop, a position that creates both conflict and unity with his son. The arrival of Pon Man in British Columbia is a much anticipated and longed for moment. When Seid Quan “spots his son immediately” in the crowd of men at the docks, the narrator declares “he is desperate to touch him” (56). Pon Man’s reaction however is one of fear, “as if his

fifteen-year-old self is completely unable to cope with his father's tangible and enormous emotional need" (56). The gulf between father and son becomes even greater at work because the barber shop is a site of conflict and anger. Where Seid Quan views his work as a means to support his family and village, Pon Man resents the labour that is demanded of him toward those same ends. For Pon Man, barbershop work does not allow him to be an individual in his own right. Pon Man's reaction to labour at the barbershop is visceral: he "gagged whenever he had to touch the wet clumps of hair that gathered in the corners of the shop and collected in the sinks" (75). In contrast to the success that barbershop ownership signifies to Seid Quan, Pon Man feels only disgust and resentment at having to labour in such conditions. On one hand, labour in the upper stratum of potential vocations available to Chinese Canadians, represented by owning and operating a barbershop rather than working at one, is represented by Lee as a family undertaking necessary to the financial independence of the family members and the village in China. Moreover, it is also a way of raising enough money to pay for those who remain in China—Seid Quan's wife Shew Lin—to come to Canada. Simultaneously, barbershop labour is oppressive in that it signifies financial burden and also a source of generational conflict between father and son.

Despite the conflict between Seid Quan and Pon Man that takes place over work at the barbershop, it is precisely this labour that unites them physically and emotionally. In the first instance, it is labour at the barbershop that allows Pon Man to join Seid Quan in Canada by placing them in the same physical environment. Second, the physical routines and practices of the barbershop become imprinted on the minds and bodies of both men, their attitudes toward these practices notwithstanding; the routines of labour

are habitual and as such become a physical and emotional means of connecting the two men. Early on in *the end of east*, Samantha Chan describes a scene between her grandfather and father:

my grandfather slowly lines the kitchen floor with a blue plastic tarp and arranges his small broom, scissors and shaver on the table. My father brings up the bar stool from the basement, and my grandfather, his hands trembling just slightly, goes to work, the silence between them an invisible, unbroken wall. (8)

The scene is clearly marked as a site of labour. The tools of the grandfather's trade as a barber are laid out meticulously as he places each tool beside the other. While he is now retired, the procedure implies great familiarity, a sense of unbroken habit. Pon Man too has his role; communication is unnecessary. Pon Man knows to bring up the bar stool as much as he knows the careful system of his father's process—the unspoken procedure signifies the inescapably habitual nature of the relationship the father and son have with one another. While Pon Man always hated to work with his father in the barber shop, the habit remains and connects the two men mentally, emotionally, and bodily—even in their unbroken wall of silence. It is the physical contact of hand with head and hair that is important to their connection. The slight tremble of Seid Quan's fingers betrays his old age, or perhaps signals a tremor of anticipation and care as he begins to cut his son's hair—a scene that recalls his earlier desperation to reach out and touch his young son at the docks after such a long separation. Pon Man's explicit decision to continue having his father cut his hair is the token of an affection that he has not otherwise been able to show.

## Power and Oppression Within the Family

In *the end of east*, labour is often represented as a tool for oppression and a source of power within the family dynamic, and making visible this labour and its function is one of the central strengths of the novel. Specifically, it is the labour of Pon Man that regulates the life of his wife Siu Sang. At the same time, the unpaid domestic labour of the household becomes a weapon of power and control in the relationship between Shew Lin and Siu Sang. Ultimately, Siu Sang uses labour as a means to achieve and maintain control over her home, family, and sanity.

Lee's description of Pon Man's labour schedule makes it abundantly clear that not only is his life regulated by work, but so too is the life of his new wife, Siu Sang. During the first week of their marriage, Siu Sang "slept in her husband's arms, her body curved into his like a baby's" (131). The intimacy of the newlywed couple is unmistakable; their bodies are described as if they are intertwined, mutually supporting, and united in their marriage bed—each body symmetrically curved into the other. Yet in the second week of their marriage, things change dramatically. Now,

Pon Man awoke at five o'clock, put on his cook's uniform and left . . . .  
When he came home, he opened up his accounting textbooks and studied until dinnertime . . . . After dinner, at exactly six thirty, he boarded another bus to attend his classes at the college . . . . He arrived home at ten thirty, walked straight into the bathroom and climbed into bed at eleven. (131-2)

From five in the morning until eleven o'clock at night, Pon Man follows a tightly regulated schedule. Intimacy is absent from the description, as are all human contact and conversation between wife and husband. Despite the fact that Pon Man's work, pursuit of education, and further employment is directed at the future success of his family, it is nevertheless these same pursuits of education and work that become a barrier to intimacy

and the source of distance within the marriage. The labour of Pon Man in the restaurant, and his dedication to his studies, creates a hierarchical power structure whereby his daily activities are prioritized over the activities and concerns of his wife, as well as over the development and intimacy of their marriage. In contrast to the tightly regulated schedule of Pon Man are the activities of Siu Sang. While he moves through his daily schedule, she watches “him dress with one eye open, sleep still weighing down her body” (131), or “float[s] about, afraid of disturbing him but wanting to touch him” (131); in the afternoon, Siu Sang stays “in her bedroom, reading her novel or rearranging her jewelry” (132). In short, not having been in Canada long enough to become acculturated or to learn much of the language, Siu Sang is trapped in the physical confines of her home. In their introduction to *Feminism, Domesticity and Popular Culture*, Stacy Gillis and Joanne Hollows explain how “the confinement of women to the home rendered them isolated, powerless and, crucially, lacking a sense of identity derived from their own labour” (6). This is the situation of Siu Sang—confinement which has rendered her isolated, powerless, and without a sense of identity. Her hovering presence in the company of Pon Man signals the way in which her daily schedule and physical location within the house come to be regulated by his work, while also serving to indicate her desire to be near him despite her inability to breach the gulf created by his schedule. Again, there is an implicit power structure in place whereby Siu Sang “floats about” when her husband is at home but remains in her bedroom when he is absent. It is this absence both at home and at work that seems to oppress her. She is placed in a marriage and household where her physical presence is mediated by the routines of her husband; she does not seem to be valued or have any purpose or identity in comparison with her husband.

In the words of Gills and Hollows,

The private sphere was imagined as feminine—the ‘proper’ place for women—while the public sphere was imagined as masculine. In the process, women became economically dependant on men as they were excluded from the public sphere of paid labour. Women’s lives were thus solely defined by their responsibilities as wives and mothers. (4)

Siu Sang’s “proper” role in the marriage and household as “wife” quickly becomes clear when, after being “married for two months” she views herself as “completely useless” (133). It is with regard to household labour that Siu Sang feels incompetent—a feeling reinforced by her mother-in-law Shew Lin who Siu Sang hears muttering “useless girl” (133). Siu Sang takes to cowering in her bedroom and lurking around the house as “she listens for the sounds of her mother-in-law in the kitchen, the sounds that mean she has returned to chopping and stirring, all those chores Siu Sang cannot do” (133). Here Shew Lin’s knowledge and ability to perform household labour situates her in a position of power over Siu Sang. The chopping, stirring, household cleaning, and maintenance work that Shew Lin performs indicate control. By cooking, Shew Lin controls the kitchen; by cleaning she controls each room of the house; Shew Lin is the authority of all matters of food preparation, food consumption, and daily household tasks. She is also the one able to obtain the money from her husband or son to pursue these tasks. While her place in the home may be interpreted as subordinate to Seid Quan or Pon Man, in the domestic realm of the home she is in control. Siu Sang, relegated to the home in part by Pon Man’s labour, is wholly under the purview and whim of Shew Lin. During her first pregnancy, Siu Sang’s thoughts portray the extent of Shew Lin’s control: “*I can only eat when she says I can*” (137). Shew Lin’s labour in the kitchen, her authority over groceries and cooking extends to bodily control over Siu Sang. Good intentions notwithstanding, Shew Lin literally controls the food intake of her daughter-in-law—even during pregnancy.

Eventually, Siu Sang uses the skills of Shew Lin as tools for resistance to the prevailing familial power structure. On the advice of her friend Susie, Siu Sang quietly observes the tasks involved in Shew Lin's routine; she is determined to learn and complete "*one thing at a time*" (149). As Siu Sang's knowledge increases, "little by little, Shew Lin's work is whittled away. One task. A second. Soon enough, entire sections of the house are Siu Sang's to manage" (151). The growing proficiency in household labour indicates the transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next. More importantly, Siu Sang's escalating participation in the household economy signals a gradual shift in power. As she becomes the daughter Shew Lin ostensibly wished for, she attains control over the home and authority over Shew Lin. It is Shew Lin who is now uncertain of her place in the home as her thoughts turn to the subject of Siu Sang: "*She's useful now, but does that mean that I am not?*" (159). The worry here is the subtle displacement of power. If Siu Sang is competent and self-reliant in the home, what place is there for Shew Lin? And Siu Sang has indeed become proficient. Her schedule, far from consisting of "floating about" or rearranging her jewelry" is now tightly regimented:

Siu sang wakes up at six o'clock, has the children clothed and fed by seven thirty, and begins cleaning at eight. Mondays it's the living room and hall, Tuesdays, the kitchen, bathrooms and closets. If she finishes before the week is over, she starts all over again, scrubbing invisible dirt, battling away invisible dust. (159)

The shift in power is complete. Through her labour, Siu Sang has authority over every room in the house. The role of Shew Lin has vanished entirely; Siu Sang, Pon Man and Seid Quan subsequently decide to separate the two households and Shew Lin suffers "the loss of her home, of her family dream" (167). Symbolically, Shew Lin has been expelled from the family home through the shift in power dynamic that resulted from Siu Sang's assumption of all domestic labour. Siu Sang's furiously regulated schedule is a mirror of



Pon Man's earlier schedule. Both are rigid and inflexible, and neither leaves room for intimacy or personal development; they consist of moving relentlessly from one task to the next in an oppressive, cyclical pattern. The power of the above excerpt is that it makes the domestic labour of both Shew Lin and Siu Sang visible while also signifying the agency Siu Sang is able to attain within the home.

A further strength of Lee's novel is how it represents Siu Sang's labour in the home as implicated in her developing psychological distress. As Gills and Hollows explain,

investing in domesticity did women an immense amount of psychological harm: the drudgery involved in doing Sisyphean housework produced fatigue and breakdown and, because women were encouraged to see themselves only as wives and mothers, they lost any sense of their own identity. (6)

The fact that Siu Sang had little in the way of an identity other than her role as a housewife is already clear. Initially, she had no identity outside of "wife," no role in the home whatsoever other than intermittent couplings with her husband. Later, despite a few infrequent visits with friends, her life consists solely of performing the chores and duties necessary to running a household. Shortly after the birth of her first daughter, and suffering from postpartum depression, the words "*my wife is insane*" (142) appear in her mind as she considers what Pon Man must see when he gazes into her face. Just having given birth, Siu Sang gazes at her body, "pale and deflated under the [bath] water, lifeless" (139). She "traces the white stretch marks with her finger, the dark brown line that runs from her breasts to her pelvis. *I look used up*, she thinks" (139). The psychological toil of domestic work and the mental and physical toil of being *in labour*—the markings of the stretched skin and the caesarean section—are unmistakable in this scene and have clearly created fatigue, if not pushed her toward breakdown.

The psychological harm Siu Sang experiences is even more evident through the eyes of Shew Lin who can “see the swirl of children and house and expectations . . . , and knows that the tasks Siu Sang sets for herself are the only things standing between her and utter madness” (163). Here, Lee uses the grammar of the sentence to mimic the semantics; the absence of pauses in the list of expectations increases the speed of the line as the swirl and pressure of duties builds until it cannot be contained. The tasks Siu Sang sets for herself are a double-edged sword. They create pressure because they are implicated in the swirl of “house and expectations,” while also forming a mental barrier against the threatening psychological chaos. It is the regimented nature of the schedule itself that keeps the madness at bay despite the fact that it is the enormity of tasks and the accompanying loss of individuality that causes the madness. Toward the end of the novel, Pon Man “rummages through the old boxes in the garage” (197) and discovers “a romance novel with a picture of a young, open-faced girl on the cover” (197). Pon Man realizes the book symbolizes “the promise of the perfect life that Siu Sang lives for—a life of martinis and glamour and perfectly behaved, beautiful children. The kind of life this fictional girl on the cover of a book fully expects” (197). While Siu Sang was indeed naïve when she first thought about her marriage to Pon Man—“imagin[ing] them dancing in one of those supper clubs Yen Mei keeps talking about” (116)—Pon Man does not accurately grasp the way in which Siu Sang’s life has unfolded. It is not the failure of romance to materialize that has led her toward madness, but the inability to create any sort of identity beyond the confines of her home, and any semblance of independence in her financially dependant world.

In “‘I Am Not a Housewife, but . . .’: Postfeminism and the Revival of Domesticity,” Stéphanie Genz recalls the “oppressor/oppressed model” of Susan Bordo where “‘women are the *done to*, not the *doers*’” (51). It is difficult not to see this model as applicable to Shew Lin and Siu Sang. Both women were chosen to be wives by their parents and parents-to-be; both came to Canada by arrangement rather than free choice. In both generations, the employment of the men, among other things, led to or fed into the private/public divide whereby the women were confined to the home and the role of housewife, as well as to positions subordinate to the needs and labours of the husband. To some extent this situation is the result of the patriarchal structure of the household, but it is also the result of the same patriarchal structures in Chinese society. One of the problems of the done to/doer binary is the lack of agency assigned to women. Yet, both Shew Lin and Siu Sang assert agency in situations within their roles as wives, mothers, and mothers-in-law. The strength of the novel lies, in my opinion, in the way Lee makes these complex roles and the intricacies of domestic labour visible. She foregrounds the way in which labour operates within a family whether it be between father and son or mother and daughter-in-law. The physical and psychological connections between work and person are laid bare. In examining labour in this manner, Lee makes it impossible to separate out *work* as an individual subject of study. All labour has emotional, familial, and physical dimensions and ramifications which often persist from generation to generation.

## Reflections on White Collar Labour

The interesting insight into labour that this chapter reveals is how similar white collar labour is to blue collar labour, despite the fact that these two categories have been traditionally represented as mutually exclusive and sometimes hostile to one another. While Coupland and Harlow seem to be operating at the level of the individual and questioning the ability of individuals to define and control their own narratives, with Sinclair and Haig-Brown the motivation is to tell untold stories and narratives about alternate economic models, resource destruction, park labour, and homosexual relationships within male logging communities. In all of the authors studied, I find an overriding sense that these stories *must* be told, and that not telling them is a form of subordination. Also similar to the white collar labour of Coupland and Harlow is the creative non-fiction of Harold Rhenisch. One of the primary concerns of Rhenisch with regard to his position as an orchardist in the agricultural industry is the ability to have control and power over his own story and his own history. There is a drive in Rhenisch to make space for the voices of those whose agency is often subordinated, however much he himself is at times guilty of silencing voices—namely those of women in the farming communities.

At first, *the end of east* seems not to fit the overall pattern of labour writing in British Columbia. Perhaps her story links upper stratum labour positions to the survival of the Chinese family in British Columbia. Like Lee, however, one indispensable notion to each of Sinclair, Haig-Brown, and Rhenisch is the importance of community, family, and friendship. The loyalty of the Norquay family and Rod Norquay's connection to

community of workers is paramount to understanding *The Inverted Pyramid* as is the father-son relationship in *On the Highest Hill* and the friendship between Johnny and Alec in *Timber*. It is no mistake that Rhenisch works in the vernacular when telling his stories; moreover, it is not possible to open the pages of his books and not stumble across an anecdote about the individuals who form his community in the Interior. In all cases, the implication is that labour, whether blue collar or white collar, cannot be studied in isolation from the social and familial contexts in which it occurs.

While none of the novels studied in this chapter details the explicit politics of white collar labour—union formation, benefits, job stability, and so forth—each represents the tension between a given position of dominance and one of subordination whether with regard to gender, family, or employee/employer relationships. Lee, Coupland, and Harlow, therefore, like Sinclair, Haig-Brown, and Rhenisch, have a vested interest in how the individual experiences labour on a day-to-day basis, in how the individual labourer interprets his or her position within larger structures and ideologies. Particularly compelling is the fact that despite the ostensible superiority and greater freedom of white collar employment over blue collar employment, employees seem to feel and experience a similar degree of subordination or alienation. While the preparation of meals by Siu Sang, the game development of Ethan Jarlewski, and the writing of Scann are not as physically demanding as logging or farming, these positions are all exploitative. Certainly, the denial of bodily control concerning cleanliness and grooming standards in logging camps is far harsher than Scann's restrained ability to express himself. Yet, the denial of bodily control in the logging camps *is* similar to Shew Lin's control over Siu Sang's food consumption, and the physical toll on the body of the logger

or farmer resembles the toll extracted of Siu Sang's body through work and reproduction. It is fruitful to compare how these authors represent the degree to which workers are exploited. In this way, it matters not that logging is physically more demanding than developing video games, but that within each separate labour activity the individuals involved are tightly controlled, managed, and exploited to a comparable degree (especially as they perceive it) and that they all create various methods of resistance to this dominance. The importance of this insight, that white collar and blue collar labourers occupy comparably subordinated positions, is that it breaks down the dichotomy between the two labour categories. If each can understand the exploitation of the other, then a possibility emerges for contingent political alliances to form. Considering the public perception of loggers as uneducated and working class compared to the perceived upper stratum of employment represented by educated video game developers, could these groups find common ground to resist the capitalist model that exploits them? Could the attempts of agricultural workers to take control over their own stories and histories ever align with other attempts for self-articulation and control? Perhaps the question this analysis generates is whether or not individuals can overcome the gender, race, and class injustices and conditions that they face in their work in order to advocate for others.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See “Vancouver named *world's* most *livable city*; Being able to sustain ranking given by The Economist magazine will be 'a constant watch'” by Jeff Lee in *The Vancouver Sun*, 22 February 2011, A4.

<sup>2</sup> As versions of the same product, these two games are not in direct competition with one another.

However, they do represent two distinct possible games to be developed and released to the public. As such, I believe the argument holds that they signify the actual lack of product differentiation in the gaming market—as represented by Coupland.

<sup>3</sup> Though not a part of my analysis, it should also be noted that resources such as job security and capital are a part of this framework. Ethan, for example, performs menial labour such as buying food for upper management in order to attain a better position within the company. In this example, Ethan is trying to further his ambitions in all of wages, job security, expertise and agency.

<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that as the game approached completion, the success of the game becomes dependant on whether or not Ethan is able to use his brother's real estate connection to obtain a particular property for one of the executive managers of the project. This does not happen, and the game is ultimately scrapped. This does not, however, defeat the attempt to obtain authorship and agency through the act of sabotage.

<sup>5</sup> I am indebted to Professor Chris Lee for this line of reasoning.

<sup>6</sup> Harlow is mistaken about the literary journals in the 1950s. By this time there were academic journals such as *Queens Quarterly* (1893) and the *Dalhousie Review* (1920), as well as literary journals such as *Canadian Bookman* (1919), the *McGill Fortnightly Review* (1925-27), *Preview* (1942-5), *First Statement* (1942-5) and *Contemporary Verse* (1941-52).

<sup>7</sup> It is also possible, as Caren Irr suggests, that Livesay suffered from a “masculinist and prose-centered critical environment” (214).

<sup>8</sup> A distinction should be made here between the attitude toward the white collar workplace as it conflicts with writing and other components of the workplace such as job satisfaction and enjoyment. It is not the case that the degradation of creative mental labour in the white collar workplace precludes job satisfaction and enjoyment.

<sup>9</sup> As early as 1863, policies were put forward to restrict the freedom of Chinese people. Ward reports that “the first formal anti-Chinese measure” was “the cancellation of all votes cast by Chinese in the Cariboo during the election of 1863” (30). While these early racist policies were not always successful they set a precedent for later actions such as the 1872 bill “which excluded all Chinese from the provincial franchise. Henceforth they were to enjoy no political power in British Columbia” (32). There are also those policies which are more commonly known about such as the Chinese Head Tax (1885 to 1923), the Chinese Exclusion Act (1923-47), and the Women and Girls Protection Act of 1923.

<sup>10</sup> Evident here is that, like the failure of the phrase “white collar” to grapple with or indicate the complexities of the way that race and labour intersect, the phrase seems equally inapplicable to situations where gender and labour intersect. To use *white collar* for a low-paying clerical job may be a positive move in shifting toward a more inclusive definition, but it is also negative because it glosses over the lived realities of those underpaid women in those jobs (of the “female domain”) by implying they are better off than they actually are.

<sup>11</sup> While the wage Seid Quan receives in British Columbia is acceptable in that it allows him to both earn a living and send money to China, it is important to note that within the context of the British Columbia labour market, the wages he receives are not equal to those he would receive as a white, male laborer. Thus, he is oppressed in China by being denied the ability to earn a living wage and exploited in Canada as inexpensive labour by receiving substandard, race-based wages.



## 5. Conclusion: Refractions through Daphne Marlatt's *Ana Historic*

fiction theory: a corrective lens which helps us see *through* the fiction we've been conditioned to take for the real, fictions which have not only constructed woman's 'place' in patriarchal society but have constructed the very 'nature' of woman (always that which has been). fiction *theory* deconstructs these fictions while the *fiction* theory, conscious of itself as fiction, offers a new angle on the 'real' . . . .

—Daphne Marlatt, "Theorizing Fiction Theory," *Tessera*, 9.

It seems to me that a preoccupation with 'story' within a feminist investigation of framing and narratology, of how that story got to be 'the' story, is one of the arenas of fiction-theory, moving back and forth between prose (which tends to focus in larger areas of telling like 'plot,' 'character,' 'structure') and poetry (which zooms in on language and what language, on the micro-level, is saying) seems to be indicative of what we're after for this issue.

—Daphne Marlatt, "Theorizing Fiction Theory," *Tessera*, 10.

Taken from the collaborative article “Theorizing Fiction Theory” by Barbara Godard, Daphne Marlatt, Kathy Mezei and Gail Scott, the above epigraphs, in conjunction with Marlatt’s *Ana Historic*, form a productive way to reflect on or view my work of chapters two through four. In other words, the *work* I see Marlatt doing in *Ana Historic* functions as a “corrective lens which helps us see through the fiction”—the works of Bertrand Sinclair, Roderick Haig-Brown, Harold Rhenisch, Jen Sookfong Lee, Douglas Coupland, and Robert Harlow—that to some extent we have been “conditioned to take for the real” (9). Marlatt’s use of “fiction” to refer to both genre and that which is untrue or fictive—the fiction—is central to bringing together the work of these authors since they range from realist literature to creative non-fiction. Unlike the work of the other authors, that of Rhenisch is not fiction *per se*, yet similarly there are elements of *the* fiction of history-making, of that which we have been conditioned to take for “the real,” present in his work. It is questions of “the real,” of representing reality in narrative, of realism, of narrative framing, of how history is constructed through narrative, and of the construction of women’s “place” in narrative that *Ana Historic* takes up. I see Marlatt as explicitly directing her narrative gaze toward the types of fiction and discourse I have analyzed in this dissertation. In particular, Marlatt’s incorporation of the resource extraction narrative *Woodsmen of the West* by Grainger into *Ana Historic* is a move that makes her critical narrative applicable and relevant to other such historical narratives—especially considering the fact that these narratives, these *stories*, are implicated to some extent in the process of becoming *the* story, the process Marlatt expressly seeks to deconstruct. In short, *Ana Historic*, like Marlatt’s fiction theory, “offers a new angle on the ‘real’” (9)

supposedly represented by the narratives examined in chapters two through four, and this new angle can be used to interrogate these *fictions*.

*Ana Historic* is a multi-layered narrative set in British Columbia. The narrative through-line, the story of the narrator Annie, begins in Vancouver during the 1950s when she is a young girl. Like all of the narratives in *Ana Historic*, Annie's story is episodic and is revealed as the novel progresses. Her childhood revolves around experiences with her sisters, her father, Harald, and most important to Annie's development, her mother, Ina. As Annie's narrative moves into the present, her husband Richard is introduced as an ordinary university professor, but one whose naturalized, perhaps unwitting, patriarchal oppression of Annie as subordinate to him is quite evident. Interlayered with the narrative of Annie is the story of Mrs. Richards, a historical figure in British Columbia during the 1870s about whom nothing is known other than she is "a widow" (Marlatt 15). Marlatt often incorporates various historical and fictional documents. Usually set off in the text by italics, these excerpts are placed within the fragmented narratives of Annie and Mrs. Richards, either as a form of commentary on these narratives or as a target for Annie's critical voice. Marlatt portrays the narrative of Mrs. Richards as a means of reclaiming a place for her in a history that has constructed the "place" of women as either an absence, or within a patriarchal framework that designates women by their last names, as nothing more than the property of husbands and fathers. Annie names Mrs. Richards Ana and narrates her experiences in the masculine world of 1870s British Columbia. The "Ana" of Ana Richards can be broken into the indefinite articles "an" and "a" to indicate a sense of ambiguity or non-recognition. Moreover, as many critics note, both the "an" and the "a" can be appended as a prefix of negation to words such as "historic" to create

“ahistoric”—an indicator of a location outside of or separate from history. The narrative closes with the “monstrous leap of imagination” (Marlatt 135) of a lesbian relationship between Mrs. Richards and character Birdie Stewart. Parallel to the movement of Ana Richards is Annie’s eventual movement beyond the patriarchal hegemony signified by Richard when she leaves him to form a friendship and then a lesbian relationship with Zoe. This relationship is the culmination of the novel and the point at which Annie names herself Annie Torrent; the blank final page of the novel suggests possibility and openness, as well as stories and histories yet to be written.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Ana Historic: A New Angle on the Logging Narrative***

One of the foundational concepts of this dissertation is that labour narratives have something to *say* about the place of British Columbia, that, as a social relationship, labour tells us about people and about the social relationships that work involves. I believe that labour and labour narratives are implicated in the creation of the province through Harold Innis’s theories on one hand and Benedict Anderson’s notion of “imagined communities” on the other. All labour narratives studied here, from Bertrand Sinclair to Robert Harlow, involve a high degree of historical background and detail, whether this detail is comprised of the workings of the one-desk sales policy in the Interior agricultural industry, or of day-to-day existence in a work-cubicle in the technology industry. My point is that all of these narratives are concerned, either explicitly or implicitly, with history—the making of it, the portraying of it, the conception of it, what is left out and what is included. This nexus of story and history is one which is fundamental to *Ana*

*Historic* and one which Marlatt is deeply invested in. Specifically, she argues that stories or narratives, despite their status as fiction or non-fiction, condition real-world actions, responses and circumstances.

Two examples serve to illustrate this point. The first occurs as a flashback to when Annie was a young girl in Vancouver during the 1950s. Annie had been left alone in the home to watch over her younger sisters. It is night, she has awoken to the sound of her own voice asking “who’s there” of the darkness around her, and she “steal[s] . . . into the basement with a carving knife toward those wardrobes at the bottom of the staircase” (9).<sup>2</sup> As she tiptoes “after those suspicious noises” (10) that she has heard in the darkness and approaches the forbidding wardrobes, she asks herself, “what if he were hungry, starved even, and so desperately from outside he would kill to get what he wanted” (10); she listens in fear to “that other breathing on the other side of the door she could almost hear . . .” only to find the wardrobe “empty” as it “always was” (10).

Optimistically, the gendering of the imagined “other” as male through the pronoun “he” reverses the patriarchal gender paradigm and constructs Annie as the norm opposed to the male other. Another reading suggests that even as a child, Annie is positioned, constructed, or even conditioned as a victim of the potential for male violence to be committed against the female body. A third reading, one which I find to be the most productive, is that Annie’s childhood encounter with the unknown darkness at the bottom of the stairs represents the power that story has to condition real-world actions and circumstances. Consider the advice Annie receives from her mother Ina on the subject of men: ““if a man talks to you on the street, don’t answer him”” (18). Annie’s response ““but what if he wants directions? what if he wants a dime?”” elicits the statement ““just

keep walking’” from Ina (19). Annie’s present-day reflection that “skid row was a name we learned. rape was a word that was hidden from us” is followed by a remembered exchange between daughter and mother: “‘but what would he do?’ ‘bad things you wouldn’t like’” (19). In other words, the stories Annie hears about men from her mother revolve around fear, around men “doing things” to her—like sex, violence or rape—that she “wouldn’t like.” Ina’s words come in the form of a warning, a cautionary, anecdotal bit of advice. Yet, with regard to the opening scene where Annie is confronted by a fear of an unknown presence in the darkness, it is likely that Annie has been conditioned by Ina’s stories to specifically gender this frightening presence as male. While Annie can be read as taking on the male role of protector, she can also be interpreted as embodying the maternal role of protector. In each case, the imagined man on the other side of the wardrobe door is “desperate,” possibly willing to do “bad things” to “get what he wanted,” and who “if he were there at all he meant to do them harm” (10). It is a brief example in the novel, and my point is not whether or not Ina’s advice is correct, but simply that there is an explicit connection between the stories told to Annie and a real-world series of expectations and actions.

The second example that illustrates this point occurs in the Mrs. Richard’s plotline. On an afternoon walk, Mrs. Richards encounters “two Siwash in white men’s clothes” (41). Instead of greeting them “Good Day” she “froze on the path as they approached, sick with the stories she had heard” (41). Paralyzed with fear of the two Siwash,<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Richards recollects Mrs. Patterson’s statement “‘They go crazy when they drink’” (41); she remembers the story of “Stackeye axing Perry in his sleep” and “Mrs. Sullivan menaced with a knife” (41-2). Hence, she remains silent and frozen on the path

and feels the “sickness of fear” (42). The scene culminates with the shame-filled reflection that “they had merely passed a white woman in the woods while she, she was sure to be killed” (42). The connection between real-world action (albeit imagined by Annie) and story is even more explicit in this example. Marlatt is making a direct connection between the physical reaction of Mrs. Richards to the Siwash and the stories she has heard about “them.” Both the gender of the Siwash as men and First Nations ethnicity is important here. Mrs. Richards freezes concurrently with the approach of the men and the remembrance of the stories; all three events occurring in the same sentence. While there is no omniscient narrator to provide the thoughts of the Siwash, Mrs. Richards interprets their action as having simply passed a white woman on the path in contrast to how the stories she knew conditioned her to feel physically ill, to literally become immobile, and to fear for her life.<sup>4</sup>

The crucial idea behind these examples is the connection being made between *story* and human actions. Marlatt is demanding that *story* be recognized as conditioning reality and history, and that history, as narrative, also be recognized in this way. Working from this proposition, *Ana Historic*, through its inclusion of excerpts from fictional and non-fictional sources, suggests that the realist novel, and for my purposes creative non-fiction, arises out of the same powerful discourse that oppresses women because it conforms with a particular “great man” theory of history in which women are either absent or commodified. In other words, *if* historical narratives are taken to be *the* story, then this story—fictional though it is—functions to facilitate, maintain, or generate certain paradigms such as patriarchy.

Commenting on Marlatt's use of *Woodsmen of the West*, Catherine Rosenthal notes that Marlatt "explores how realist narratives, like photographs, function as gender frames" (93). In contrast, Rosenthal also cites Misao Dean's "The Construction of Masculinity in Martin Allerdale Grainger's *Woodsmen of the West*" to make the point that "although Marlatt is right in seeing masculinity at the heart of *Woodsmen*, she fails to acknowledge that in his narrative Grainger himself inserts doubt into this omnipotent and coherent masculinity" (93). This occurs most powerfully in my mind when British forms of masculinity—represented by the British character "Mart"—come into conflict with Canadian forms—already at play in the British Columbia woods. According to Rosenthal, the problem Dean faces is that she critiques Marlatt for "using the novel as a historical document of masculinity and of an exploitative economy" thereby unifying "masculinity [and] do[ing] injustice to the text's double perspective" (93). This is the problem I too face: can Marlatt's critique of the historical-realist novel with regard to patriarchy be sustained when these novels make similar critiques themselves? Are these novelists simply representing a historical moment that is in fact a patriarchal one? This impasse need not be an impasse, however. It seems clear that novels such as those of Grainger, Sinclair, and Haig-Brown do incorporate doubt insofar as the construction of gender and history are concerned. Nevertheless, the conception of history *primarily* evident in their novels is a linear, patriarchal one. In addition, certain forms of masculinity, predominantly hegemonic forms, are certainly celebrated in the work of all three authors and are seen as instrumental to the success of the men who employ these constructions most effectively. Finally, the glaring omission of active, mobile women and non-white minority individuals is historically false (see *Makúk* by Lutz or the work of



Peter Ward for example); any representation that claims historical accuracy but focuses on an all-white, all-male society, is incomplete. Despite any doubt or criticism built into these resource extraction narratives, women, and men and women of colour, are nevertheless marginalized and heterosexuality remains the norm.

This is why the critiques that *Ana Historic* makes are so instructive. As Manina Jones suggests, “Marlatt’s own poetic refiguring of language used ‘prosaically’ in documentary citations provokes . . . a strategic rereading of that language” (151), and further, that “while the Grainger citation . . . seems to construct the kind of ‘joined story’ Robert Kroetsch associates with historical claims to ‘authenticity’ . . . , its citation in the novel unjoins it from its narrative context” (152). I read Jones as directing readers to the way in which Marlatt’s novel functions as *literary criticism*. The troubling questions of authentic representation become problems for literary criticism and *rereading* the narratives in question becomes the important task. In *Ana Historic*, therefore, Marlatt seeks to challenge certain labour narratives and, in doing so, to undermine the paradigms they seem to support. In the words of Gabriele Helms, “a reading of the documents in *Ana Historic* shows that their discourses, which have supported official history and thereby silenced and objectified women, are not fixed; placed in a new context, they can be challenged and exposed as constructions” (80). One of the “new contexts” Helms writes about can easily be interpreted as the context of literary criticism. Elsewhere I suggest that the authors I have studied focus on revealing accurate historical conditions and foreground historical moments that have been omitted from official history—and I believe this to be true. Nevertheless, by interrogating these works, by *rereading* them, it is equally clear that to some extent they perform the precise function identified by Marlatt

and Helms: these narratives contribute to the construction of a linear, official history insofar as they represent a patriarchal ideology which silences and objectifies women—and in some cases non-white Aboriginal and minority populations as well.

One method whereby Marlatt critiques the patriarchal ideology supported by narrative is through the concept of history. Annie remarks:

I learned that history is the real story the city fathers tell of the only important events in the world. a tale of their exploits hacked out against a silent backdrop of trees. so many claims to fame. so many ordinary men turned into heroes. (where are the city mothers?). (Marlatt 28)

In an interview with Marlatt, Kevin McGuirk asks “What is Annie’s search” (76); Marlatt responds by directing him to this very passage: “Well, she wants what is left out of history, because she realizes when she starts looking into the history of the city of Vancouver, that in fact it’s very androcentric, and so then she starts to ask, ‘well, where are the city mothers?’” (1994 76). There are two lines of criticism present in Marlatt’s words and my quotation from *Ana Historic*. The first concerns a particular conception of history that is comprised of “important events,” where the *only* events deemed important are androcentric in nature and judged *to be important* by male society. Implicit in this idea of history that proceeds from one male event to another is a sense of linearity—a line drawn through time from important event to important event.

With these words in mind, consider my suggestion in chapter two that Bertrand uses the realist mode of representation to accurately portray the history of British Columbia from the fur trade to the establishment of financial corporations—all occurring in the same Norquay family and headed by the male Norquay offspring. Ostensibly this is all correct. Beginning in 1792 with the first Norquay arrival in what would become British Columbia, Sinclair represents the unfolding of a capitalist framework that

originates with the fur trade (the first Norquay's voyages) and culminates in the timber industry (the Norquay timber business) as well as the financial speculation industry (the Norquay Trust). Norquay Senior gives primary control of the Norquay wealth to his eldest son Grove and control of the timber business to the second-eldest, Phil. While Rod Norquay uses the wealth and position of his family to avoid any particular job title, the action of the novel revolves around him. Rod is free to move through various positions in the logging industry and, after the loss of Phil to the war and Grove to suicide, it is Rod who controls the Norquay wealth and it is Rod who acts to "save the day" after the collapse of the Norquay Trust. Embedded in the narrative, then, is the movement from one important event or moment in a man's life to another, a linear, *historical*, progression of the life of one city father to another. The final line of the novel, "'There's one thing to be said for shirt sleeves. They give a man room to swing his arms'" (332), may signify mobility and hope for Rod Norquay, but it equally signifies the patriarchal ideology that is the foundation for the man-to-man idea of history that his words represent while awaiting his next opportunity to participate in history, in another self-determined "important event."

Marlatt's critique of the embedded narrative of history in works such as Sinclair's is that it only represents one particular, incomplete, reality. Sinclair's representation of the Norquay family timber dynasty signifies a particular construction, conception or perhaps ideology of history that is masked by attention to a selection of supposedly objective historical detail. The connection in Sinclair between artisanal producer and merchant-trader to the industrial entrepreneurial capitalist is precisely the historical connection that Marlatt is engaging with when she follows an excerpt from *Woodsmen of*

*the West* with the ironic comment: “history the story, Carter’s and all the others,’ of dominance. mastery. the bold line of it” (25). History here is connected not just to historiography, the writing of history, but to literary narrative. In some ways, Marlatt is collapsing the distinction between literature (story) and historiography to suggest that story *is* a form of historiography. It is these patriarchal *stories* of mastery and dominance, of the linear progression of capitalism, that Marlatt sees as “the bold line of it”—a sentiment un-coincidentally similar to “the bold lie of it.” For Marlatt, a lie is exactly what such a linear progression of history is—a construction that omits the experiences of women and deems the events that involve women to be of no importance.

This critique is more than a simple issue of narrative representation. Recall Marlatt’s insistence on the movement from narrative to real-world actions and expectations. Thinking of Ina, Annie reflects, “holes. there were holes in the story you had inherited. holes in the image. Canada: romance of the wilds . . .” (26). Crucially, Annie does not state here that there are holes in the history, but instead insists on the word “story.” The story functions as history in that it is “inherited,” in that it is a source of knowledge, and that it is “history the story” (25). In conjunction with Annie’s knowledge that she “learned that history is the real story the city fathers tell” (28), it seems clear that Marlatt is deconstructing the difference between history and narrative. Furthermore, like “the story” (26) Ina was told, Annie has learned about “the real story” (28).

Together, these excerpts point to Marlatt’s central problem with narratives such as Sinclair’s. It is not a matter of representation, but a matter of that particular representation—a linear, incomplete, patriarchal construction of history with “holes”—

becoming “the story” or “the real story,” thus leaving women, like Annie, in the real world without history and, therefore, searching for “what is left out of history” (Marlatt 1994 76)—namely themselves: the absent women and mothers. In other words, if a narrative such as Sinclair’s is taken to be *the story*, then this story participates in the real-world situation where women are absent from their own history. As Steenman-Marcusse states, “[the narrator in *Ana Historic*] speculates that women may be cut off from history, precisely because there are no records which describe their stories” (144). Similarly, Rosenthal describes how “Marlatt shows that reality is always discursively constructed and that language can never represent *a* reality but always encodes *somebody’s* reality while excluding other” (69). Resource extraction narratives, such as the ones studied here, encode a male reality and type of history that excludes the reality and history of women.

Marlatt identifies a patriarchal conception of history that does appear to be present in *The Inverted Pyramid*. The second half of Marlatt’s critique comes in the form of Annie’s and Marlatt’s question “where are the city mothers?” (28), or more simply put, “where are the mothers?” The question is a simple one, but also one with a range of possible answers. In the case of Rod’s mother and ancestors, the women are absent because they are dead. While showing Laska Wall the family graveyard, Rod surveys the inscription of the first Roderick Sylvester Norquay. The text of the name inscribed on the gravestone has been offset from the main body of paragraphs and appears as it would on a gravestone in bold-faced capital letters. Beneath the name are the birth and death dates of Norquay followed by the italicized words “*His eye was not dim / Nor his natural force abated*” (15). Unlike Rod’s female ancestors, the first Roderick Sylvester Norquay

maintains a presence in the narrative as a founding father and the namesake for generations of Norquay men. In contrast, and incorporated into the paragraph following the gravestone inscription, is Rod's declaration " 'This was his wife . . . .The first white woman to live on the Pacific coast north of California" (15). Two passages from *Ana Historic* are immediately relevant. First is the description of Mrs. Richards that "[n]o one knows when she came or how long she had been there . . . or even whose widow she was" (39). In the case of the first Mrs. Norquay, we do know whose widow she was and that on one of his trading voyages, Old Norquay "made off with the daughter of a country gentleman of Northumberland" (18). Nevertheless, the historical (un)importance of the two women, Mrs. Norquay and Mrs. Richards, is similar and hard to ignore. Neither is given a first name; both are framed by their label as "wife" or by their last name as the property of fathers and husbands; nothing of the life of either is known. While the male history of the Norquay dynasty is made clear, the impact that the various wives and mothers had on this history and on these men is missing. There is some importance attributed to the wife of Norquay as being the "first white woman to live on the Pacific coast north of California"—likely *because* she was white—yet the in-text space and font allocated to her gravestone inscription belie this importance. Structurally, her presence in the narrative occurs beneath that of her husband, her birth and death dates are not given, and her memory is of little importance in comparison.

A second passage of interest from *Ana Historic* concerns a photograph of Hastings Mill—the dwelling of R.H. and Jeannie Alexander. The narrator states that

the only extant photograph of the Alexanders' first house is dated 1890 . . . .running down the length of the house in front is an open porch with five men wearing business suits and posing on or by the railing . . . .the caption reads: 'Hastings Sawmill. First Dwelling of R.H. Alexander, afterwards

manager. Later occupied by office men as bachelors hall . . .’ followed by a list of their names. and where is Jeannie Alexander in all this? (120)

A few pages later, the narrator concludes that “the caption could have read: ‘Hastings Sawmill. House of Jeanie Alexander, first white mother.’ but there were other mothers there, Susan Patterson for one . . .” (126). Interestingly, Mrs. Norquay *has* been recognized in similar terms; as mentioned, she was apparently the first white woman to live on the Pacific coast at that time. Yet, her name, unlike that of the first Roderick Sylvester Norquay, does not adorn the “cornerstone of the first course of masonry above ground, of the first wing” of the Norquay home—it only adorns her gravesite and no name is given in the narrative other than “wife.” In addition, the “other mothers” remain absent. Rod’s description of the graveyard moves from the name of Roderick Sylvester Norquay to “grandfather’s wife,” “daughter,” and “my mother’s grave” (16). While no male names are given either, the grandfather is a character in the story whose presence further consolidated patriarchal structures. Conversationally, the graveside dialogue does make some sense, yet in terms of the story being told, all Norquay mothers, sisters, and daughters are nameless and appear to be insignificant in or irrelevant to the history of the Norquay family. Once again, if we are to take Sinclair’s narrative as participating in the creation of *the story*, then there are clearly “holes” in the story being represented—holes which, when taken together, signify a patriarchal version of history that leave women, like Annie, ahistoric, or, without history.

Doesn’t Sinclair, however, like Grainger, insert doubt into the same patriarchal conception of history he seemingly represents? Mary Thorn is the most forceful and articulated female presence in the novel. She initially resists the sexual and marital advances of Rod Norquay, she “cut a year in high school and entered U.B.C” (56) to

further her post-secondary education, and she ultimately succeeds in writing a successful novel—a task Rod fails to accomplish. In these ways, she operates outside of patriarchal structures by achieving a certain degree of mobility and agency. Thus, following Dean's work on Grainger, I do see Sinclair as inserting some doubt and critique into the patriarchal ideology he represents. Yet, at the same time, the actions of Mary Thorn, despite the mobility they suggest, are represented as inconsequential to the narrative as a whole. Absent are scenes where her talent and labour as a writer are described in detail and foregrounded, and no scenes exist where her work as a wife and mother are placed on an equal footing with the heroic actions of her husband in saving the finances of Norquay investors.

While female characters do appear frequently in the novel, they also seem to be reduced to functional objects instead of dynamic individuals. Laska Wall functions as an object of rivalry between Phil and Grove Norquay (See Sedgwick's *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*), as a domesticating and socializing force for Grove Norquay, and as a means of achieving and stabilizing class status through marriage. Mary Thorne, despite her agency and education, functions as an object of conflict and rivalry between Rod Norquay and the interests of Grove and his father, as well as a stabilizing influence on Rod's character. If in *Ana Historic* the "other realities or *imagined possibilities* she [Marlatt] makes visible are not truer, better, or more coherent but are what has been suppressed in a language governed by patriarchal images and structures" (Rosenthal 69), then I suggest that Sinclair's novel is a narrative that is ultimately *governed* by patriarchal images and structures.



I have used Sinclair's novel here as representative of the type of narrative framing and patriarchal structures also present in Roderick Haig-Brown, and perhaps this is, to some extent, unfair. More than Sinclair, Haig-Brown does question the legitimacy of a hegemonic conception of patriarchy, especially in his examination of the eroticized homosocial or potential homosexual (as distinguished through Sedgwick above) relationship between Johnny and Alec in *Timber*.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the story of Johnny and Alec as men is the story being told. Furthermore, as I note in chapter two, the struggle of Martha Ensley to provide for the family could be more forcefully represented and a clear argument can be made that it is she who is literally used up mentally and bodily in order for her family to survive. Nevertheless, despite her centrality to the survival of the family, Martha's role in the novel is insignificant when compared with that of Colin, and the details of her existence are largely absent. The plot of Colin, from farm-boy to war-time youth to adult labourer, is the primary historical trajectory present in the novel.

Likewise, in *Timber*, the same basic conception of history as a progression from one important male event to another structures the plot. Yet, in *Timber*, Julie Holt's character is significantly more developed than Mary Thorn's in *The Inverted Pyramid*. Prior to marrying Johnny, Julie works in the office of a department store. Her concerns, worries and personality are described by the omniscient narrator, with specific attention paid to her state of mind during the crisis when Johnny is blacklisted for his involvement with union politics. Nevertheless, with regard to specific detail, Johnny's various occupations in the logging industry are given a vastly higher proportion of narrative space than the brief mentions of Julie's office work. In fact, it is difficult to determine precisely what Julie's work-tasks are, aside from something to do with "orders" (183) at a

department store. The most forceful feminist critique of *Timber* focuses on the change that occurs after the marriage of Julie to Johnny. Here, Marlatt again provides insight through Annie's school day imaginings of the activities of housewives and mothers:

I wondered what you did in the empty house alone, one in a row of houses settled in the sunlight, dreaming. all the housewives absent . . . tendrils of quiet crept in their windows, hours of nothing slipped through their doors. bathrobe sleeping beauties gone in a thrice, a trance, embalmed, waiting for a kiss to wake them when their kids, their men would finally come home . . . a woman's place, safe. suspended out of the swift race of the world. (24)

In Annie's daydream, all of the women left at home during the working day are left in stasis. They are immobile, absent until awoken by their husbands and children. The image of housewives literally immobile for hours and hours, days and days, is symptomatic of the narrative holes in the stories Annie has been told. Without the stories and histories of the day-to-day lives of these women, the child Annie has no choice but to assume their world consists of waiting for the "life-giving" presence of men and children. Likewise, after Julie Holt marries Johnny, her world disappears. She moves into his world of the logging camp and nothing more is learned about her daily life.

The first mention of their new home occurs when Alec comes to visit. The narrator describes how "[t]he door opened as Alec started up the stairs and Julie was standing there" (223). Clearly, activities are going on inside the house, yet the image is one where the arrival of Alec signals the movement and activity of Julie's greeting. Furthermore, while the reader learns of the "bright curtains and things painted white" (225)—activities Julie presumably assisted with or completed—there is no description of her daily activities in the home. Julie, like the women in Annie's vision, is relegated to a type of stasis; her activities in the logging-camp home are only noted in connection to the moments when the men arrive home with a "kiss to wake her." In short, her office job

now gone and her daily activities a mystery (possibly to the authors themselves), Julie occupies “a woman’s place, safe. suspended out of the swift race of the world” (Marlatt 24)—in this case Johnny’s world of logging. Despite the attention Haig-Brown devotes to the overall development of Julie, much of her history and story are absent. The information we do learn of her is eclipsed by the importance of Johnny’s work in the logging industry and his search for work once blacklisted.<sup>6</sup> Like *The Inverted Pyramid*, *Timber* relies on a conception of history underpinned by a patriarchal ideology.

Common to all three of the narratives that I have discussed as resource extraction stories is the basic idea that the history of British Columbia is the history of resource extraction industries and the largely male population involved in these industries. Despite the historical paradigm informing their work (and reproduced by it), the fact that Sinclair and Haig-Brown have devoted their novels to one particular aspect of life is not in itself the central problem. More troubling is the naturalization of this basic premise that the history of industry is the history of British Columbia, and that in combination with other “official” historical records, the history that Sinclair and Haig-Brown represent has been received as *the history* and *the story*. It is this basic premise that Marlatt finds false and a “bold lie.” If the history of British Columbia were to consist solely of the resource extraction *narrative*, then women, Aboriginal people, and non-white minority populations would be absent because they are not represented or identified—and this is statistically not the case. What Marlatt demands is that these narratives not be seen as *the story* but be recognized as the limited constructions that they are. When she uses Annie to ask “what is fact? (f) act. the f stop act. a still photo in the ongoing cinerama” (31), Marlatt is positing both a conception of history as incomplete and constantly unfolding (ongoing),

as well as insisting that any photograph or narrative snapshot of history or story inherently involves selection, composition and incompleteness. As Rosenthal explains,

[i]n the pun, ‘what is fact? (f) act. the f stop act. a still photo in the ongoing cinerama,’ Marlatt relates facts as components of (historiography and other) discourses to still photos as elements of documentation to show how both capture just one moment in an ongoing story” but that this one moment “however, becomes authoritative because it is taken to represent the whole story (81).

To return to the opening epigraph about fiction theory, the “corrective lens” (in Godard 9) Marlatt’s *Ana Historic* provides us with is one which reveals the patriarchal structures and images sanctioned in the narratives of Sinclair and Haig-Brown.

### **Daphne Marlatt, Harold Rhenisch and the Inscription of History**

Like Marlatt, as well as Sinclair and Haig-Brown, Harold Rhenisch is deeply invested in ideas of history and historical representation. In terms reminiscent of Annie’s remarks about *the story* and *the real history*, Rhenisch explicitly invokes the idea of history in the prologue to *Out of the Interior* when he writes that “[o]pposed to the “abandoned country” of the Interior that is “being re-colonized” is the “real Okanagan, as it has evolved out of its own history and its own forms” (1). Here he seems to suggest that a particular construction of history, one which is re-colonizing the Okanagan, is excluding and alienating the “real” history, a male history which he sees as that of “Jake van Westen in Naramata . . . . Hugh Dendy in East Kelowna . . . [and] Bill Embrey in Vancouver, who left for university twenty years ago and who can only visit now as a foreigner . . .” (*Out* 1). The basic thrust of my reading of Rhenisch in chapter three is that he uses the stories of these individuals to develop a place-based identity in response to a

growing sense of isolation and alienation from national discourses about what it means to be Canadian on one hand and to the disappearing rural-agricultural way of life on the other. He makes it clear the life he leads fails to match the conception of Canada which he interprets cultural icons such as Margaret Atwood as making. Aside from his hyperbole in criticising Atwood, Rhenisch, of course, is correct. The population, landscape, and way of life in the Interior have changed over the years; the Interior seems to suffer from a fundamental lack of recognition with regard to agriculture and rural identity. Marlatt might agree. Certainly, she too proposes that conceptions of history be challenged to discover those stories that have been repressed, oppressed, or simply omitted from the dominant discourse.

*Ana Historic* is just such a challenge to history—Annie tells the story of Mrs. Richards to create a history for women whose stories have otherwise been repressed, forgotten, or excised from popular history and narrative. As Marlene Goldman explains, “mapping is typically associated with the plotting of spatial co-ordinates; however, for individuals who have been virtually effaced from history, mapping the temporal dimension—recovering or, barring that, tracing a history—remains a crucial step in the construction of the self as language” (102). These words are also applicable to Rhenisch. He too is attempting to use discourse and story, like Annie, to map a construction of identity and self in language. The central problem with his task is that, like the realist narratives of Sinclair and Haig-Brown, there are “holes in the story” (Marlatt 26), and history for Rhenisch seems to be “the real story the city fathers tell of the only important events in the world” (Marlatt 28). Instead of these events being “hacked out against a silent backdrop of trees” (28), they are planted in a colonial landscape. In short, a close

examination of the place-based identity Rhenisch is both nostalgic for, and seeks to maintain, reveals this identity to be part of a system of patriarchal structures and images. While his work on the importance of agriculture, labour, and a rural place-identity is successful in some respects, the history he wants to create, and the identity he wants to maintain, is a history and identity that largely ignores the history and stories of women and non-white minority populations. In other words, he is clinging to an “outmoded” discourse which has failed to shift with the changing physical, economic, and political landscape.

The opening line of *Out of The Interior* is “My father had small hands” (7). Immediately, the focus of the narrative is on the father. The following pages are devoted to poetic descriptions of the work that those hands did and the knowledge they passed on to his son, Harold. The majority of the volume is devoted to his father, so much so that in the prologue he even laments the absence of his mother, despite his contention that she “exists in the landscape, the actual, physical perception and articulation of sun and air and leaf and soil and flower . . .” (2). For Rhenisch, these words may literally be true in the way that the presence of a loved one can be felt ethereally and timelessly. Reading these lines through the lens of literary criticism, however, it is just as clear that the mother-figure in the narrative has been reduced to the physical landscape and in that way dismissed with regard to an actual, physical presence on the page. She “exists in every page here” (2) precisely because she is largely absent.

Often, the activities of the mother are, as in Annie’s daydream of the immobile housewives, unknowable. At one point, Rhenisch explains that

While my mother was in the house, beneath that attic of loose shavings  
and between the skittering, mice-filled walls, fighting to provide some

centre of care and gentleness to the totally random rhythms of despair and elation that are the life of a farm . . . my father was out trying to build on this soil a country he could live in. (*Out* 50)

Two images are prevalent in this passage. The first is that the activities of the mother are not actually described. She is in the house and she is fighting; she is providing care and gentleness; yet, precisely what this entails is unspecified. The second idea is the overpowering image of the father. While the precise actions of the father are also not explicitly described, he is seen as building a country, building a life. Whether or not the mother could be interpreted as ensuring the family's survival, birthing family heirs, or building a family legacy, is unknown here, left out. In comparison to the details provided for the mother, the nation-building activities of the father appear superior. This image strongly resonates with the conception of history that Annie invokes with regard to the history of important events according to "the city fathers" (Marlatt 28).

To suggest that female figures are entirely absent in the work of Rhenisch would be misleading. All the same, it is clear that the narratives of the father and the labours of father and son dominate *Out of the Interior*. The level of detail ascribed to the activities and lives of the father and son eclipses that of the mother. In contrast, the father-figure plays a significantly smaller role in *Tom Thomson's Shack*. Here, Rhenisch relates the "true history" of the Interior primarily through the anecdotes of people who live in the region. While Rhenisch does, on occasion, relate the story of a woman such as rancher Gail Morrison (21), the people whose stories he incorporates into his book are predominantly male: the stories of Tom Godin (13), of Peter who works for the Ministry of Lands in Kamloops (18), of Gus who "ranches at Horse Lake and is the Cariboo representative on the Agricultural Land Reserve board" (27), of retired army major Don Robertson (33) friend Wayne Still (37), and of his brother and vineyard owner Brian

Mennell to name a few. While *The Wolves at Evelyn* does a considerably better job of representing women within the Rhenisch family history, the most important, 'larger than life' historical anecdotes chiefly concern the men.

The character of Ina in *Ana Historic* represents one possible reason for the patriarchal structures present in Rhenisch. Like the Rhenisch family, Annie's family immigrated to Canada. Goldman suggests that Annie inherited a sense of self-definition according to the patriarchal values instilled in and by her mother Ina. Goldman further contends that

It is at this point that the discourses of colonialism and patriarchy intersect. Musing over her mother's life, Annie concludes that her mother reached an impasse because she mistakenly transposed her English background with its phallocentric, imperialist ideology 'onto a Salish mountainside, and never questioned its terms. 'lady. ' never questioned its values.' (109)

While Goldman clearly makes this statement in a different context, her comment is also pertinent to Rhenisch. In the prologue to *Out of the Interior*, Rhenisch explains that his "own sense of history in the Okanagan and [his] perceptual sense of its land forms are bound intimately with the dreams and visions that [his] father imported from Europe" (1), and that his "Canada is . . . a unique world, part Okanagan, part Germany, and part transcendent vision" (2). Indeed, virtually the entire text of *The Wolves at Evelyn* is dedicated to relating his German background and enmeshing it with his life in the Interior in such a way that his history in the Interior is one with his German history. While Rhenisch does specify that his Canada is "not the Canada of [his] friends, who lived on orchards just a few hundred yards down the road" (2), this disclaimer conflicts with the numerous occasions where he implies his conception of history is the "real" or authentic version.



The disclaimer also conflicts with his attempts to both unearth or map the “true” history of the Interior while generating a place-based identity. If the Okanagan is being re-colonized, and it is “only through words and a reshaping of perception” that we can enter into a more meaningful relationship with the land, then surely there must be an attempt or gesture toward a sense of history that is inclusive, and surely he is alluding to some prior moment before the “re-colonization,” when there was a shared sense of place. In his insistence on a single, albeit multi-layered, multi-dimensional, heterogeneous history Rhenisch brings his Germanic background to the forefront of his narrative and thereby suggests that the history of the British Columbia Interior is also the history of Germany—and to an extent he is correct. Yet, like the colonial, imported aristocratic dreams of plantation-style land and orchard ownership that Rhenisch criticizes, and like Ina’s transposition of her phallogentric English background, he himself is guilty of transposing the “phallogentric” and “imperialist” aspects of his German background, the idea of manly labour in the soil (the doctrine of *Blut und Boden* or blood and soil) into the Interior countryside.

There is no evidence of racist ideology in the work of Rhenisch, yet his reliance on the patriarchal paradigm that lies behind this ethos of labour and soil is clear. This ethos is derived from ideas that circulated widely in German philosophical thought and, in part, in Walther Darré’s ideas of *Blut und Boden*. Hitler’s purpose in approaching Walther Darré in 1930 was to ask that he “organize the farmers for the support of the party” (279). It was also in 1930 that Darré published *Neuadel aus Blut und Boden* (*A New Nobility [or Aristocracy] of Blood and Soil*). According to Clifford R. Lovin, Darré’s ideas are not unique but originate in a wide spectrum of German thought. Darré’s

importance for this discourse is the clarity with which he presents his ideas of racial purity connected to the importance of agriculture. Lovin (quoting from *Neuadel aus Blut und Boden*) sums up one aspect of Darré philosophy as follows:

If one sentence can be found to express Darré's basic conception of the meaning of agriculture, it will be his declaration that 'the German soul with its warmth is rooted in its agriculture and in a real sense always grew out of it.' Darré believed and fervently avowed that the farmer was the basis of German society and the backbone of the Nordic race. His principal means of emphasizing the importance of the farmer was equation of the terms meaning 'farmer' and 'noble.' (282)

While it is worth restating that Rhenisch separates himself from the racism of this ideology, it is just as clear that he valorizes the farmer or orchardist in terms similar to the glorification of farmer, land, and agriculture in German thought. It is this transposition of his German heritage onto the Interior countryside that I see as blinding him to the potentially negative side of his criticism—to remain within the particular agricultural ideology he represents and proposes is to remain within a patriarchal imperialist (and racist) ideology under which it operates. Hence, while his valorization of the farmer and the farming community is an essential and necessary counterpoint to the growing marginalization of agriculture in the dominant discourse, the particular version of farming culture he is nostalgic for and seems to be presenting is a version complicit in an androcentric conception of history and a patriarchal system of oppression.

An example of his blindness to the negative side of his discourse is his condemnation of the tourism industry. As I argued in chapter three, the tourism industry is complicit in excising labour and agriculture from the history and discourses of the Interior. In Rhenisch's terms, tourism produces a re-colonizing of the Interior landscape. Rhenisch's critique of this process is a much needed corrective, yet it fails to concede the possible benefits of this industry. Recall the following quotations from *Out of the*

*Interior*: “By ripping out all its orchards for retirement homes and motels, Penticton has destroyed the dream that brought people here. But Penticton is just pain, a cancer . . .” (69), and this from *Tom Thomson’s Shack*: “the Okanagan and Similkameen have become an article in a travel magazine” (107). What Rhenisch neglects to discuss is the opportunities for many women (and men) to find employment off the farm in retirement communities, real estate, motels, and tourism bureaus, as well as the many tourism and travel related businesses. A case in point comes from the anecdote about Rhenisch’s mother when she goes on strike and leaves behind a “manifesto” where “[o]ne column of her balance sheet was headed ‘Slave.’ [and] [t]he other was headed ‘Everyone Else’” with the “Slave” column being full in contrast to the empty column beneath “Everyone Else” (*Wolves* 13). It is no stretch of the imagination that work in the tourism and real estate industries might represent a haven for young women seeking escape from such a life on the farm.

One symptom of the way in which Rhenisch’s transposition of his German heritage onto the Interior countryside masks the patriarchal structures such a move entails is the failure of his narrative to imagine a way in which his ethos of labour and agricultural place-identity can operate in terms of a gender-balanced discourse or imagine the lives of farm women. The omission of women from the constructed story of Interior agricultural history renders them invisible in the historical narrative. This is one reason why Marlatt’s novel is so valuable: she uses Annie to generate a history for the absent Mrs. Richards on one hand while emphasizing the general absence of women and women’s stories in the surviving and popular documentary record on the other. In order to learn the story of farm women, we must either “read between the lines” or turn to

fiction such as Andrea MacPherson's *When She Was Electric* (2003)—the story of Fran Petrie's successful farm bordering an Indian Reserve near Merritt in the Interior. While this story is more about the daughters Min and Nellie and grandchildren Min and Theo, the activities of life on the successful Petrie farm are ever-present in the background of the narrative. Novels such as MacPherson's, and to a lesser extent the fiction of Gail Anderson-Dargatz, represent an important counter-narrative to the male-dominated fiction and non-fiction of Sinclair, Haig-Brown, and Rhenisch.

By questioning the meaningful inclusion or absence of women in historical-realist narratives, Marlatt exposes the historical-realist mode of representation, at least as deployed by Sinclair, Haig-Brown, and Rhenisch, as failing to come to grips with history.<sup>7</sup> Her work allows us to ask the question: "why are women absent from these narratives?" One answer is that the realist modes of representation used by Sinclair, Haig-Brown, and Rhenisch (when these modes are in play) are necessarily implicated in larger systems of patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity. Steenman-Marcusse suggests that in *Ana Historic*,

linear structures . . . are deconstructed to give way to interruptions, silences, side steps, etymological explanations and multiple answers to one question. All these digressions serve the purpose of drawing attention to Marlatt's overriding concern with a new version of womanhood released from colonial, and by implication patriarchal, bondage. (141-2)

Sinclair and Haig-Brown, who were close participants in and observers of the logging industry and history of the early twentieth century, were unable to imagine or see beyond their own historical moment—beyond their own raced, classed, and gendered perspective—to achieve a critical point of view concerning the lives of women in the

history unfolding around them. The same might be said about Rhenisch who seems unable to imagine a world outside the paradigms that surround him in the orchard industry. Yet, the more powerful argument to my mind is one alluded to by Steenman-Marcusse's use of the phrase "colonial, and by implication patriarchal." Here I see Steenman-Marcusse as obliquely suggesting that it is not simply the historical and fictional documentary record that Marlatt is challenging, but the foundational master-narrative of British Columbia's colonial and patriarchal settlement and history that underpins these narratives.

### ***Ana Historic and White Collar Labour***

Unsurprisingly, Marlatt has less of a "new angle" to offer in regard to the representations of white collar labour studied in this dissertation. Marlatt's novel, written in 1988, ultimately challenges the history of 1870s British Columbia and 1950s Vancouver. By contrast, Jen Sookfong Lee's novel, despite its historical range, seems more interested in the Chinese-Canadian family dynamic and the Chinese labour community than in the exclusion of women from European labour history in British Columbia. Coupland's novel appeared in 2007 and is set in the early twenty-first century; his representation of white collar labour in the technology industry would be foreign to both Marlatt and her characters. Unlike *JPod* and *the end of east*, Harlow's embedded narrative of Thrain and Linden in *Scann* fits precisely into the "city father" conception of history challenged by Marlatt's Annie. Furthermore, while the white-collar world of journalism ostensibly has little in common with the world of Annie or Mrs. Richardson, it is the role of Scann as

journalist that is responsible for reporting and transmitting the bold line of Linden's history. *JPod* and *the end of east*, on one hand, have not moved beyond the realist mode of representation, but have done away with depicting history as a linear, closed system. *Scann*, on the other hand, especially with regard to the ambitions of Amory Scann, does grapple with the attempt to impose structure and linearity onto a given historical narrative.

One of the reasons that *Ana Historic* is less of a challenge to *the end of east* is that Lee's novel narrates the stories and history of several generations of women—the project Annie is so intent on pursuing for Mrs. Richards. Where the novels of Sinclair, Haig-Brown, and Harlow, as well as the creative non-fiction of Rhenisch, represent predominantly male characters and narrators, *the end of east* is the complete opposite. While there are family secrets, there is no elusive figure like Mrs. Richards in *the end of east*—here all of the “Mrs. Richards” are given a story, a history alongside that of men. On one hand, Lee's work demonstrates an excellent awareness of gender equality in the history and stories it represents. On the other hand, this representation is something of an anomaly for the dominant historical conception of labour. It is not that the women of these stories have no history, but rather that the narrative of a successful Chinese family originating in the first half of the twentieth century would be a statistically low occurrence. Racist policies such as the Chinese Exclusion Act (1923-47) and the Chinese Head Tax (1885-1923), as well as other restrictive immigration policies, produced a Chinese population in British Columbia that was predominantly male. Women and family members were frequently prevented from coming to Canada. The story of the Chinese labourer in British Columbia is often the story of being worked to death while building

the railroad, or of bachelor men who were unable to find wives or have families. Nevertheless, it is the narratives of women and families that have been told—possibly because the authors themselves are members of families who survived in contrast to those stories that died with the death of the bachelor men generation. Possibly, stories such as Lee’s represent the imagined better existence many of these men might have had. Lee’s novel is an interesting counterpoint to the stories of white European women—also in the minority during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—that have been forgotten. In this way, Lee and authors like her seemingly take up the challenge Marlatt’s produces in *Ana Historic*.

The family narrative of *the end of east*—like other Chinese-Canadian narratives such as Wason Choy’s *The Jade Peony*, Sky Lee’s *Disappearing Moon Cafe*, and Denise Chong’s *The Concubine’s Children*—expands rather than reproduces traditional definitions of white collar labour. In many ways Marlatt and Jen Sookfong Lee are writing in parallel. Both share concerns about the impact domestic life has on the women who become trapped in such a life. In chapter four I suggest that Siu Sang’s life is regulated by the work routines of her husband, and, as a result, it is difficult for her to feel valued or establish a sense of personal identity within the family. Siu Sang seems to exist outside the sphere of her husband’s labour, a situation reminiscent of Annie’s childhood daydream of all the immobile housewives, the daydream where she wonders what her mother and the other housewives “did in the empty house alone . . . waiting for a kiss to wake them when their kids, their men would finally come home” (Marlatt 24). The psychological harm that Siu Sang experiences from the pressure of domestic responsibilities is best recalled by the words of her mother-in-law Shew Lin, who, having

had the same experience could “see the swirl of children and house and expectations . . . , and knows that the tasks Siu Sang sets for herself are the only things standing between her and utter madness” (163). Similarly, Annie speculates about the reasons behind her mother’s depression and eventual commitment to a hospital “for treatment that would erase the thoughts that tormented” (144) her. In Annie’s mind, part of the problem is that her mother

never lived alone until you came here and found yourself suddenly placed with empty days on your hands, weeks and months of days alone in a house with all its chores crying out for you to do. the voices came from inside now, the way you whipped yourself into a frenzy of activity in the face of nothing. ‘getting things done.’ (137)

This pressure of “getting things done” echoes the way in which Siu Sang drives herself mercilessly to clean and re-clean the house in a repetitious flurry of activity.

Similarly, Annie imagines that for Ina, “time like the wind drove you, all the things you had to do, and he was so slow, so careful not to hurt. now I know the pressure that drove you against the balance of his approach, sagacious, carefully reasoned . . .” (136). Both women appear to share their home with generous, kind, and reasonable men.

Nevertheless, there is a pressure in both cases that stems from the inability of these men to recognize the labours involved in the “swirl of children and house and expectations” or the “frenzy of activity” required for “getting things done.” It is this pressure that seems to lead, in both cases, to a form of depression and breakdown. While Marlatt may not have a new angle through which to view *the end of east*, I suggest that together these two novels share the strength of making the domestic labour of women visible, of highlighting how the dreams these women may have had were crushed by the weight of domestic and familial responsibility and sacrifices, and of underscoring how the failure to recognize and validate these labours can result in depression and mental turmoil.



Marlatt's insistence that the stories of women matter is less of an issue in Coupland's *JPod*. Coupland's narrative seems well-balanced in terms of gender, despite the real-world gender imbalances and wage inequalities found in the white collar labour world. In some ways, Coupland's female characters are the least constrained and oppressed of all female characters in the narratives studied here. The most significant example is the story of Ethan's mother who manages a marijuana growing operation from the Jarlewski family home. She refuses the moniker of "stay-at-home" mother and challenges the stasis and immobility represented by the housewives in *Ana Historic* by being the character with the most agency and mobility in *JPod*. By running a "grow-op" Ethan's mother has the almost total freedom of action, and, when crisis strikes in the form of an extortionist biker, she casually walks him into a booby-trap where he is electrocuted. Unlike Mrs. Richards the teacher, Annie the research assistant, or Annie the wife, Ethan's mother has ultimate authority over her life and her business—especially since she is (quite comically but also literally) prepared to kill to protect her grow-op. Her work activities are described, despite the fact that they do not comprise the major narrative thrust of the novel, and she is not restrained or regulated by the life or work schedules of her husband or children.

Unlike *JPod*, Harlow's work more easily slides under the corrective lens of *Ana Historic*.<sup>8</sup> As with the works of Sinclair, Haig-Brown, and Rhenisch, the conception of history represented in Scann is a patriarchal one. Yet, in contrast to the above authors, Harlow seems to insert more doubt as to the validity of a patriarchal, linear version of history. Ultimately, Scann's drive to write *the fiction* of Linden takes over his life and he locks himself into a hotel room to do precisely this. I italicize the phrase the fiction here

to recall the words of Marlatt in the epigraph of her fiction theory. Indeed, Scann's history is a fiction in every sense of the term. He makes it clear that much of his work is pure invention—at times created for the purposes of seducing the maid, Mary Major. Yet, Scann's work is also fiction because his attempts to recreate the history of Linden relies on the so-called city fathers David Thrain and Trapper Linden—this is the history Scann tries to relate: the history of important male moments in the creation of Linden.

Despite his disclaimer that there can be no beginnings and endings, Scann spends his time precisely constructing them. The reason I suggest that Harlow's work differs from Sinclair's, Haig-Brown's, and Rhenisch's is that through the character of Scann, Harlow puts his authorial voice at a critical distance from the representation of history in the novel. This distance is accentuated through the nature of Scann's character as an unmistakably flawed and sexist individual who is ultimately revealed to be somewhat impotent in both his attempts at writing and his attempts at seduction. Flawed though he may be, even Scann resists the urge to create a specific beginning and ending for history, though this runs contrary to his self-styling as a deity and creator. The history Scann attempts to represent through the embedded narratives in the novel quickly spills out of his control and he is unable to contain them in any semblance of structure or order.

Perhaps this is Harlow's point, the lesson that Scann fails to learn. To an extent, using Marlatt's *Ana Historic* as a corrective lens through which to review authors like Sinclair and Haig-Brown, positions these authors in the subject-location of Amory Scann. The attempts these authors make to contain history, the gestures they make toward structure and linearity, ultimately fall apart, and they are left with Scann's final ironic words:

“[t]here are no beginnings and endings, Thrain . . . [b]ut there are responsibilities” (306).

## Concluding Remarks

I offer you this book. I offer you only a sketch, a rough and incomplete sketch, of certain obscurer aspects of life in one of the finest countries of the world, a country for which I have as much hope as I have affection. I have not tried to put the Pacific Slope into a pannikin. To cram British Columbia into a volume is as easy as trying to empty Superior with a spoon . . . . I had as partners, as tilikums, men from the Land of Everywhere: not a quarter, hardly a country, of the round world but was represented in the great Parliament of the Pick and Shovel and Axe the decreed the Road, the Great Road, the Great Road of all! I have seen many countries, as you know, but none can be to me what B.C. was when I worked there. It fizzed and fumed and boiled and surged. It was in a roar: it hummed: it was like the Cañon when the grey Fraser from the North comes down to Lytton and smothers the blue Thompson in its flood. We lived in those days: we worked in those days . . . .

—Morley Roberts to Archer Baker, “Preface,” *The Prey of the Strongest*, 1906, vi-vii.

I feel a certain affinity for the words Roberts wrote to Archer Baker, European manager of the Canadian Pacific Railroad, in his preface to *The Prey of the Strongest*. Yet,

certainly these men saw British Columbia and its population in a far different manner than I. The racism Roberts demonstrates when describing how “Siwashes will be Siwashes, especially when ‘pahtlum,’ or drunk” (viii), is unmistakable. There is all of the excitement of the colonial process—a new land to explore, a new source of wealth to exploit—but little awareness of the damage and destruction it caused. Despite the inclusion of workers from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, the characters Roberts describes are more often caricatures than characters. They are divorced from the international labour and colonial structures that caused them to be in British Columbia, and there is no effort to explain their position in the context of colonial British Columbia. Yet, the excitement of Roberts is contagious, as is his vision of a worldwide partnership of workers, labouring toward a common goal. I also see British Columbia as a place of work, created through work, and one which fizzes, fumes and boils. For me, the writing of this place hums, surges, roars, and transcends its own boundaries, whether physical or imagined. It cannot be contained in a pannikin—it can only be represented in fragments. Like Roberts, then, I offer a fragment, an “incomplete sketch” of labour in one of the most vibrant places in the world, a place for which I too have as much hope as I have affection.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The debates about *Ana Historic* often center around whether or not Marlatt is proposing an explicitly female mode of representation or an explicitly female language—in short, does she ascribe to an essentialist view of gender and origins? One example of this debate is the interplay between Pamela Banting's chapter "Unlimited Inc.orporation" in *Body, Inc. A Theory of Translation Poetics* and Lola Lemire Tostevin's article "Daphne Marlatt: Writing In The Space That Is Her Mother's Face." Notable sources on *Ana Historic* with which I do not engage include Sherry Booth's chapter "Falling Off the Edge of the World: History and Gender in Daphne Marlatt's *Ana Historic*" in Heilmann and Llewellyn's *Metafiction and Metahistory in Contemporary Women's Writing* (2007), Owen Percy's "Imagining Vancouvers: *Burning Water*, *Ana Historic*, and the Literary (Un)Settling of the Pacific Coast" in Grubisic's *National Plots: Historical Fiction and Changing Ideas of Canada* (2010), Frank Davey's "The Country of Her Own Body: *Ana Historic* in his *Post National Arguments* (1993), Stan Dragland's "Out of the Blank: *Ana Historic*" in his *Bees of the Invisible* (1991) and George Bowering's 1979 interview in *Open Letter*.

<sup>2</sup> It is the utterance "who's there" in the night that triggers Annie's flashback and echoes into it.

<sup>3</sup> Once used in Chinook jargon to indicate "a native Indian of the northwest," the term is not used derogatorially to mean a "shiftless [or] lazy person" or something "'done in Indian fashion'" ("Siwash," Parkin 125-26)

<sup>4</sup> Imaginably, the Siwash men may have been just as willing to ignore Mrs. Richards for fear of violence or reprisals to them from white settlers as a consequence of their interactions with a white woman.

<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, the possibility that Mildred in *On the Highest Hill* may be lesbian is a more difficult argument to make even though, as Ricou describes, the correspondence of Haig-Brown with his editor, Richard W. Erickson, indicates that "female homosexuality" (xxii) may be a part of the narrative. It seems

as if Haig-Brown's "female homosexuality" in *On the Highest Hill* represents Marlatt's "monstrous leap of imagination" (135) to a greater extent than the more obvious male potential for homosexuality in *Timber*.

<sup>6</sup> Haig-Brown does provide detail of some of Julie's life and worries during the time Johnny is blacklisted and they are forced to live in a rooming house. Yet, this detail is provided after they have a child who is always present in these descriptions. It seems, therefore, that as a woman and a mother, the basic daily life of Julie is still absent, her work remains undescribed, and her character eclipsed by that of Johnny.

<sup>7</sup> I read the descriptions and images of agricultural labour in Rhenisch's creative non-fiction as realist in nature, and in my mind they attempt to portray an accurate historical rendering of such activities no matter how poetically they are represented.

<sup>8</sup> An equally viable comparison would be to examine Marlatt's critique of the way that women are constructed as "proper ladies" and how a particular type of femininity and sexuality is constructed through the male gaze. This is quite evident in the way that Scann treats, visualized, and imagines the women he encounters, especially his secretary Shirley whom he claims to have invented. His words are unmistakable: "'You weren't even shaving your legs when I found you. It wasn't a case of making you, I had to *invent* you'" (168).

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