

METAPHOR AND MEMORY: COGNITIVE POETICS AND THE LEGACY OF AL PURDY

by

Andrew William French

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Examining Committee:

Professor Barbara Dancygier, English Language and Literatures

Co-Supervisor

Professor Laura Moss, English Language and Literatures

Co-Supervisor

ABSTRACT

The work of Canadian poet Al Purdy has often been dismissed because of its informal nature, while others see Purdy's down-to-earth poetics as part of what draws readers to his writing. I use a cognitive poetic analysis of one of Purdy's most anthologized poems, "Transient," to contend that the late poet's body of work merits and can withstand close investigation despite its colloquiality. I then extend cognitive poetic analysis of "Transient" onto poems and songs written in tribute to Purdy that adapt his original poem and conceptual metaphors in order to discuss his life in terms of a journey. In this section I look at works by Bruce Cockburn, Doug Paisley, Grace Vermeer, and Julie McNeill that portray Purdy as a positive influence on Canadian literature. I then examine criticism against Purdy written by River Halen Guri, Michael Lista, Shane Neilson, and Sadiqa de Meijer alongside a review of an anthology of Purdy tribute texts by Lori Fox. I argue in this section that texts written in tribute to Purdy ignore his negative influences on the Canadian literary community, such as the misogyny and racism that appears in much of his work. Finally, I discuss the ongoing work of the Al Purdy A-Frame Association, who have been connected in some way to the publication of all of the collections of Purdy tribute texts published in the past five years. I contend that while Purdy's writing has been discounted far too often, accounts of his life and legacy that capture both his positive and negative effects on the Canadian literary community are lacking and necessary.

LAY SUMMARY

This thesis addresses gaps in research surrounding Al Purdy, a Canadian writer known for his colloquial poetry, which gained literary attention during the late 1960s. His work looks at rural space and overlooked histories, in addition to examining masculinity and Canadian life. My key focus in this thesis is to bring attention to the way Purdy subtly repurposes conventional metaphors to suit the narratives of his poems, specifically discussing his use of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor in “Transient,” one of his most frequently anthologized works. While much of the existing scholarship on Purdy focuses on his foundational contributions to Canadian literature, I seek to examine both the positive and negative influences of his work and legacy on the Canadian literary community in this thesis. Al Purdy’s poetry and legacy are more complex than it may seem.

PREFACE

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, A. French.

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For my parents

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 AL PURDY: A POETIC HISTORY

Canadian poet Al Purdy created and united a large community of readers and writers through his writing, which gained critical attention during the mid-1960s. Purdy's poems are often set between cities in rural townships and in the spaces outside structured urban centres. George Bowering notes in the short biography of Purdy he published in 1970 that the late poet lived much of the transient experience he wrote, whether it was riding freight trains across the country, running a little taxi business (and presumably bootlegging) in Belleville, and working in mattress factories on the west coast and in Montreal (5). Purdy examines movement between urban spaces in some of his most frequently anthologized poems, such as "The Country North of Belleville" and "Transient." Although the theme of transience can be seen in the work of a large number of Canadian poets from the 1960s, Purdy's blunt and often informal approach to mobility countered the ways in which other writers typically glorified the concept.

Purdy's writing career was lengthy and impressive. Howard White and Emma Skagen report the final count of Purdy's poetry publications alone to be "thirty-three books of poetry during his lifetime," not to mention a few posthumous publication credits (xv). The outstanding quality and quantity of his work rendered Purdy a massive figure in Canadian literature, and his memory has lived on in many ways since he died. White & Skagen write that "since his death in 2000, sales of [Purdy's] selection *Rooms for Rent in the Outer Planets: Selected Poems 1962-1996* have topped an impressive thirteen thousand copies and the book was featured in the CBC's 2006 Canada Reads competition" (White and Skagen xv). While he died two decades ago, the past twenty years have seen a significant number of Purdy's readers continuing to pick up his books, suggesting that interest in the late poet persists.

But while White and Skagen use the quantity of publications of Purdy texts in the two decades since his death to illustrate the sense in which he has not been forgotten, that publication history can also be used to highlight a period during which Purdy's memory was put aside. There was a significant lull in popular engagements with Purdy and his poetry that occurred across most genres between 2009 and 2015. While those six years may seem like a dot in time when compared to the span of Purdy's life, the years between Purdy's death and 2009 consisted of several news articles and posthumous poetry publications. The six years that followed, however, were marked by a significant lack of critical and poetic engagements with Purdy's memory. Little new material about Purdy was being produced during this period, after a near decade of significant memorialization.

Following the lull, however, a proliferation of popular engagements with Purdy and his poetry in the form of tributes across several genres has recently brought the late poet back onto the literary and academic scene. These efforts have been propelled by the work of the Al Purdy A-frame Association, an organization established with the goal of preserving the A-frame cabin Purdy built with his wife, Eurithe, on the shore of Roblin Lake in Ontario. The A-frame Association was involved in the creation of the film *Al Purdy Was Here* (Johnson, 2015), which discusses the A-Frame and its preservation at length. The A-frame Association was also involved in the production of the film's accompanying soundtrack, *The Al Purdy Songbook* (Borealis Records, 2018). The Association also benefitted financially from the publication of the last text before the gap in publication I note between 2009 and 2015, *The Al Purdy A-frame Anthology* (Purdy, 2009), as "all profits from *The Al Purdy A-frame Anthology* [went] towards preserving the Purdy home as a retreat for future generations of Canadian writers" ("The Al Purdy A-frame Anthology"). The history of these publications suggests that the A-frame Association has been

involved significantly in the ongoing revival of Al Purdy as a historical figure that has occurred over the past five years.

Another recent publication focused on remembering Purdy is *Beyond Forgetting*, a book of poems written in tribute to Purdy by fellow authors, edited by White and Skagen, that was released in 2018 to mark what would have been Purdy's hundredth birthday. The release of *Beyond Forgetting*, *Al Purdy Was Here*, and *The Al Purdy Songbook* over the course of just three years from 2015 to 2018 suggests a recent return to Purdy's poems and life among Canadian artists, spearheaded by the A-frame Association. But what makes now the time to create texts in tribute to Purdy? How do other artists take up his poetry and what aspects are quietly left at rest? Who and what dictates how we remember Al Purdy? I turn to Purdy's original poetry and its adaptations to look for answers to these questions.

1.2 TRANSCIENCE, METAPHOR, AND THE PURDY PERSONA

I begin this thesis by conducting a cognitive poetic analysis of one of Purdy's poems that is most frequently adapted in the projects created in tribute to him: "Transient." I start the first chapter by justifying the combination of Purdy's work with a cognitive poetic approach in order to highlight the hidden complexities of his colloquial style, addressing the debate regarding the merit of Purdy's writing. After detailing relevant work in the field of cognitive poetics (Dancygier and Sweetser 2014, Lakoff and Turner 1989, Semino 2008), I conduct an analysis of "Transient" and the poem's key conceptual metaphor: LIFE IS A JOURNEY. The goal of this portion of the study is to foreground the subtle nuances of Purdy's informal poetics by subjecting one of his most frequently anthologized poems to a rigorous reading. I specifically interrogate the complicated ways in which Purdy uses the common LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor in "Transient," contending that his creative usages of the metaphor in the poem alone are of note and suggest

that Purdy's work is poetically significant. Through a close cognitive poetic reading of the poem, I argue that "Transient" uses the LIFE IS A JOURNEY conceptual metaphor in innovative ways in order to express the specific experiences of life and transience that Purdy addresses in the text.

In the second chapter of this thesis, I extend the conceptual metaphor work from the first section to other textual artifacts – namely poems from *Beyond Forgetting* and lyrics to songs from *The Al Purdy Songbook* that draw on "Transient" and the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor. The use of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor in the poems "Transient" by Grace Vermeer (24) and "Trains, Beer, & Bronze" Julie McNeill (129) from *Beyond Forgetting* is analyzed alongside that of the songs "Transient" by Doug Paisley and "3 Al Purdys" by Bruce Cockburn from *The Al Purdy Songbook*. This portion of the project entails significant close reading using the cognitive poetic framework established in the project's first chapter. The chapter identifies the ways in which Purdy's conceptual metaphors are repurposed or re-invoked in memorial adaptations of "Transient" in order to mythologize Purdy.

In the third chapter of the thesis, I examine criticism that challenges strictly positive recollections of Purdy based both on his style and persona. These texts include work by River Halen Guri, Michael Lista, Lori Fox, Sadiqa de Meijer, and Shane Neilson. I consider the consequences of the ongoing activity of the Al Purdy A-frame Association and the strictly positive manner in which Purdy and his legacy are portrayed by the organization's efforts and promotional materials. I call for more balanced accounts of Purdy and his writing that acknowledge both the quality of his work and the problematic nature of the late poet's persona. I contend that much is at stake in the work of the A-frame Association and the way Purdy is portrayed in literature connected to the organization.

I conclude the thesis by considering the significance of the project's findings for both Purdy scholars and readers as well as Canadian literature more broadly. Returning to the questions posed in this introduction, I stress the significance of how Purdy is remembered and the potential consequences of continuing to selectively recall him and his work. While this project is centered around Purdy, I argue that its conclusions go beyond a single author study, referencing the contributions of my work to the field of cognitive linguistics. Ultimately, I call for a multifaceted consideration of Purdy and his work.

2. “TRANSIENT,” COGNITIVE POETICS, AND PERSPECTIVES ON PURDY

2.1 WHY PURDY AND CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR?

The simplicity of Purdy’s poetry has been both celebrated and criticized. For some, Purdy’s poetry is vulgar, boring, and fails to make much of a point. For those who enjoy his poems, though, Purdy is a crash course in the musicality of the colloquial, elevating the simplicity of everyday existence to something of mythical significance. Although he died two decades ago, criticism both for and against the quality of Purdy’s work and what is often deemed a problematic poetic persona continue to be published. Shane Neilson’s “The Mock-Love Poetry of Al Purdy: Misogyny, Nation, and Progress,” for example, showcases the difficulty with which Neilson negotiates between loving and hating aspects of Purdy’s writing and actions in life. Neilson writes that “though [he has not] grown out of Purdy, exactly,” arguing at times for the quality of Purdy’s writing, “[he has] stopped overlooking his flaws” both as a writer and a person (Neilson 135). The ongoing publication of positive and negative criticism surrounding Purdy suggests that the scholarly debate surrounding the poetic merit of his poetry is alive and well. In the non-academic realm, the criticism is less deep. This idea is reinforced by the development and publication of projects in tribute to Purdy that rework his poems and life story, presenting him in a positive light that works like Neilson’s intend to question.

Amid this disagreement concerning Purdy’s poems, there has been little investigation of how Purdy’s poetic devices add to or take away from the power of his poetry. Until encountering cognitive poetics, and more specifically conceptual metaphor theory (CMT), I could not articulate why Purdy’s language stood out to me. But after reading work from this field, which is yet to reach substantial crossroads with Purdy’s writing, elements of Purdy’s work became

illuminated. Purdy uses metaphors that are deceptively simple in nature, which does not necessarily suggest inferior poetic quality, but are better seen as a product of their being part of everyday speech. In fact, the undercurrent of colloquial discourse and its unobtrusive use of conceptual metaphors is what explains the controversies around Purdy's language choices: the metaphors he relies on are too obvious for some but appealing to others precisely because of their colloquial roots.

In this chapter, I turn to CMT and cognitive poetics more broadly to argue that Purdy uses common tweaks the colloquial sources of conceptual metaphors in ways fully compatible with his poetics. This observation is supported by the approach to metaphor that CMT proposes. The main claim of the theory is that colloquial language is pervasively and naturally metaphorical, relying on conceptual patterns which provide an understanding of abstract ideas in concrete terms. However, the very same patterns can be used originally and creatively, in literature, but also in other contexts, I focus in this chapter on Purdy's use of conceptual metaphors in the poem "Transient" showing how his poetics keeps crossing the line between ordinary and predictable on the one hand, and original and poetic on the other. I begin the chapter by introducing the cognitive poetic framework I use in the context of Purdy's poem, before putting "Transient" under the focus of this framework. The goals of this chapter are to establish the critical framework employed throughout the remainder of this project and to foreground the creative ways in which Purdy uses conceptual metaphors in his poetry, exemplified by my analysis of "Transient."

Much has been done in cognitive poetics that shows the effectiveness of cognitive analyses in picking apart poetry and comprehending how specific pieces work, but Purdy's colloquial style is yet to be subjected to this heightened level of poetic focus. George Lakoff and

Mark Turner specify the difference between cognitive and literary analysis in their 1989 book *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor*. In a chapter dedicated entirely to a cognitive linguistic examination of William Carlos Williams' "To A Solitary Disciple," Lakoff and Turner write that conventional "literary critics concern themselves with reading a poem by bringing to bear a host of issues." These issues include "the poem's historical context, the biography, dialect, politics, or profession of the author," and a number of others (159). This type of analysis differs from that of Lakoff and Turner's interrogation of Williams' piece, in which they conduct a strictly "linguistic and rhetorical analysis of the role of metaphor in the way we understand [the] poem" (Lakoff & Turner 159). The distinction that Lakoff and Turner make here suggests that cognitive poetic readings offer a completely different toolkit to critical ones, one that may result in entirely different outcomes. In fact, scholars who study literary texts in terms of cognitive poetics have now gone much further in developing their toolkit and studying a range of genres, while attempting to involve an expanded understanding of cognition on the one hand and involving more of the traditional interests of literary criticism on the other. In this thesis, though, I intend to focus on conceptual metaphor and suggest a refreshed view of Purdy's work through CMT.

In addition to conducting metaphorical analysis, I intend to consider the implications of the literary context of Purdy's "Transient" in order to exhibit the biographical significance of the metaphors at play in the poem, which gain importance in later discussions of tribute texts that adapt Purdy's poem as a biographical artifact. By combining cognitive poetic and critical reading styles, I seek in this chapter to offer a dynamic reading of Purdy's poem that presents the hidden complexity of its metaphor and the consequences of this complexity in terms of the debate surrounding Purdy's work.

2.2 RELEVANT CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR THEORY

Working within CMT necessitates identifying the key terms and functions of conceptual metaphors themselves. Elena Semino elaborates on the work of Lakoff & Turner in *Metaphor in Discourse*, writing that "conceptual metaphors are defined as systematic sets of correspondences, or 'mappings', across conceptual domains" (5). Within these mappings, "a 'target' domain (e.g. our knowledge about arguments) is partly structured in terms of a different 'source' domain (e.g. our knowledge about war)" (Semino 5). Semino's example of a war being mapped onto the domain of an argument produces statements of the conceptual metaphor such as *this argument is a real battle* or *they attacked all of my weakest points*. Karen Sullivan writes that metaphors are "named in the format 'TARGET DOMAIN IS SOURCE DOMAIN,' usually in small caps," a convention that I follow throughout this project (Sullivan 392). Using this format, Semino's argument-war metaphor would be written as ARGUMENT IS WAR, where ARGUMENT is the TARGET DOMAIN and WAR is the SOURCE DOMAIN. In other words, CMT linguists study a range of specific expressions to propose the underlying 'mappings' or networks of correlations between apparently unconnected domains, such as 'argument' and 'war'.

It is also crucial to note the ways in which conceptual metaphors exist beyond literature. Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999), Lakoff and Turner (1989), and Dancygier and Sweetser (2014) have all theorized conceptual metaphor as being "a pervasive linguistic phenomenon, which is varied in its textual manifestations [...] and central to many different types of communication" (1). Semino suggests further that "poets do not tend to invent brand new metaphors, but rather exploit creatively the conventional metaphors of everyday language" (Semino 43). In this sense, it is not simply that a poet such as Purdy uses a conceptual metaphor, but rather how he uses it

creatively that is of significance. The fact that poets often rely on ‘creative exploitations’ of common conceptual metaphors means that familiar linguistic constructions can be used in innovative poetic ways to generate new, unique meaning. As a product of their being a part of everyday speech in the way that Semino suggests, the significance of these metaphors may appear subtle or inconsequential in surface-level readings of a poem.

2.3 LAKOFF & TURNER’S EXAMPLE

Lakoff and Turner’s analysis of “To A Solitary Disciple” by William Carlos Williams provides a strong example of a cognitive poetic reading of a poem with a particular interest in how conceptual metaphors function within it. Lakoff and Turner suggest that the familiarity Williams’ reader likely has with the poem’s metaphors may make them appear insignificant, but that these metaphors are actually crucial to generating the text’s core meaning. The authors contend that Williams’ poem uses “such basic conceptual metaphors that we [ourselves] use them unconsciously and automatically without effort, as part of our ordinary language” (Lakoff & Turner 141). What Lakoff and Turner allude to here is the sense in which conceptual metaphors, by using phrases and constructions common in linguistic conversation in a literary context, shorten the distance between the linguistic and the literary. The similar colloquiality of Purdy’s verse means that his metaphors are likely to appear just as inconsequential as Williams’ while actually bearing a great deal of significance.

Lakoff and Turner note that there are multiple levels of metaphor at play in Williams’ poem, implying that this may be the case in other similarly structured pieces. The authors write that “taken one by one, each [metaphor in the poem] is interesting and compelling in itself, but together they function in service of a larger purpose” (Lakoff & Turner 146). This can be seen by

examining a specific instance of the conceptual metaphor at play in the poem, exemplified here by its first stanza. Williams begins the poem by writing

Rather notice, mon cher,
that the moon is
tilted above
the point of the steeple
than that its color
is shell-pink (Williams 1-6)

On a literal level, the speaker here guides the reader to perceive the less obvious colour of the moon rather than its position in the sky. By doing so, Lakoff and Turner write that Williams sets up a specific instance of the larger metaphor at play by discussing “how to look at a scene” on one level, while making “considerable use of metaphor” to generate another level of metaphor. But Lakoff and Turner suggest that the poem as a whole can also “be given a metaphorical interpretation, in which the disciple to whom the poem is addressed is told how to understand the nature of religion in terms of the scene presented to him” (141). Lakoff and Turner’s reading of Williams’ poem is “one in which the source domain [of the poem’s greater metaphor] is the primary reading” of the literal images, and the “target domain is taken to be religion and instructions about the nature of religious belief and practice” (Lakoff & Turner 147). Thus, Williams’ poem operates at two levels simultaneously: that of individual metaphor such as the one presented in the poem’s first stanza, and that of the collective conceptual metaphor of the entire text. Elena Semino explains these levels of metaphor further in *Metaphor in Discourse*, writing that “Specific instances of or variations on a conceptual metaphor are ‘linguistic realizations’ of that metaphor” (Semino 6). We can then understand these linguistic realizations as working separately on one level, as well as together on another to create the overarching

conceptual metaphor in a piece, just as Lakoff and Turner suggest is the case in “To A Solitary Disciple.” Following this idea, each and every manifestation of a poem’s conceptual metaphor offers something new to our understanding of that metaphor, allowing the poet to use multiple linguistic realizations in order to develop complex conceptual metaphors.

2.4 THEORIZING ‘THE JOURNEY’

Using Lakoff and Turner’s analysis of Williams’ poem as a guide, the remainder of this chapter focuses on identifying and discussing instances of conceptual metaphor in Purdy’s frequently adapted poem, “Transient.” Within the larger context of this project, this chapter establishes key conceptual metaphor realizations that exhibit Purdy’s creative use of and additions to common metaphors. Following Lakoff and Turner’s example, the first step of this analysis is to identify instances of the overarching metaphor at play in “Transient” in order to better understand the larger meaning generated by the poem.

The key conceptual metaphor that “Transient” is built upon is, as is to be expected of most conceptual metaphors, a very common one. Purdy’s poem focuses on discussing life in terms of a journey, suggested by the poem’s drawing of multiple parallels between existence and forward motion. Therefore, the main conceptual metaphor at play in “Transient” is the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor, an incredibly common construction that has previously been studied and theorized. The metaphor is often represented through unremarkable expressions, such as *I’m not getting anywhere in my life, I need to keep moving forward with my life goals*, and so on. Despite its common appeal, the metaphor builds on a number of partial and more basic metaphors. In *Figurative Language*, Barbara Dancygier and Eve Sweetser describe the “Location Event Structure Metaphor (Location ESM)” as a collection of mappings from location and motion to event structure (45). Journey metaphors, being constructions based on location and movement

through locations, “are subcases of the Location ESM” because “they add to that more general mapping [of motion along a path] more specifics about the nature of the involvement of the participant” (Dancygier and Sweetser 45). Thus, the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor at the heart of Purdy’s text qualifies as a Location ESM, and so understanding more conventional constructions of this nature will aid in highlighting the creativity of Purdy’s metaphor usage.

Within the Location ESM, many metaphorical constructions beyond the overarching LIFE IS A JOURNEY mapping exist. These mappings include ACTION IS MOTION (46), CHANGE IS MOTION (47), DIFFICULTIES ARE IMPEDIMENTS TO MOTION (46), PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS (55), and a long list of others. Dancygier and Sweetser write that “if LIFE IS A JOURNEY is active” in a text, “then more general mappings such as PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS and ACTION IS FORWARD MOTION are also *necessarily* active” (Dancygier and Sweetser 213). Thus, when Purdy uses the LIFE IS A JOURNEY construction as the basis of “Transient,” he simultaneously generates many more general mappings.

We see Location ESMs occur constantly in the way we discuss our lives in conversation, often talking about LIFE in terms of A JOURNEY along with its host of accompanying mappings. Dancygier and Sweetser state that “you can be *spinning your wheels* at this stage of your career, or your career can be *derailed*” in linguistic occurrences of Location ESMs like the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor. The authors also indicate that the JOURNEY that LIFE is discussed in terms of can manifest itself in many different forms, with instances like Purdy’s rail journey being only one of many ways to structure JOURNEYS conversationally (Dancygier and Sweetser 56). We commonly use Location ESMs to discuss our lives linguistically, and so their appearance in the literary work of a colloquial poet such as Purdy who uses common phrases that render his poetry more accessible is far from surprising. The result of these linguistic constructions transcending

the divide between linguistics and literature is a familiar colloquial poetics that is approachable to readers who may not be familiar with poetic conventions. At the same time, Purdy's text is not simply relying on colloquial expressions. He selects aspects of the concept of Journey, and uses the concept in an original way, making some of aspects of Journey irrelevant. As the analysis in the next section shows, he re-constructs aspects of the Location ESM to construct a very specific and unusual type of journey.

2.5 PURDY'S "TRANSIENT"

The most appropriate way of contending that LIFE IS A JOURNEY is the key conceptual metaphor at play in "Transient" is to look at instances of the metaphor from the poem itself. The conceptual metaphor is alluded to in the opening stanza as Purdy writes:

Riding the boxcars out of Winnipeg in a
morning after rain so close to
the violent sway of fields it's
like running and running
naked with summer in your mouth and
the guy behind you grunts and says
'Got a smoke?' ("Transient" 1-7)

Here, Purdy's subject is placed in motion, from one city (Winnipeg) to an undetermined destination, following the previously outlined Location ESM. This realization does not work on its own as an instance of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor since it gives images of A JOURNEY but fails to discuss aspects of LIFE that are typical of the metaphor such as goals, a purpose, aging, and others. Despite not developing the full conceptual metaphor in the poem's first stanza, Purdy does effectively establish the JOURNEY domain of the text's key metaphor in these lines.

Purdy makes the conceptual metaphor of the poem more clear soon after by discussing the speaker's recent growth into adolescence. In the second stanza, Purdy describes the subject as

Being a boy scarcely a moment and you
hear the rumbling iron roadbed singing
under the wheels at night and a door jerking open
mile after dusty mile riding into Regina with
the dust storm crowding behind you and
a guy you hardly even spoke to
nudges your shoulder chummily and says
'Got a smoke?' ("Transient 8-15)

Purdy connects the JOURNEY at the centre of the poem to LIFE in this stanza more firmly, especially through its first two lines in which "Being a boy scarcely a moment" (8), the subject "hear[s] the rumbling iron roadbed" (9) beneath them while "riding into Regina" ("Transient" 11). The use of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor alone here is not of significant interest, but how Purdy shapes the basic metaphor creatively is important. Establishing the subject as being a young boy in this stanza, Purdy relates the city of Regina to the character's boyhood. This reflects one of the simpler mappings Semino suggests to be at the heart of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor: PURPOSES are DESTINATIONS (Semino 7). In this case, though, Purdy's speaker relates the DESTINATION of Regina not to a PURPOSE, but rather to a stage of the subject's life, boyhood.

The fact that Purdy does not relate the DESTINATION of Regina to a concrete PURPOSE in this instance is crucial, because there is a sense of purposelessness throughout the journey portrayed in Purdy's poem that is begun by this realization of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor. Purdy talks about a series of these milestones that correlate to locations in the subject's life throughout the poem, such as being "in the Crow's Nest mountains with your / first beard

itching” in the third stanza (“Transient” 16-17). Discussing DESTINATIONS in terms of MILESTONES, Purdy avoids relating PURPOSES to DESTINATIONS concretely in the way that Semino suggests is typical of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor. Instead, Purdy’s twist on the common conceptual metaphor allows a sense of purposelessness to become apparent across the poem, developing the titular transience that pervades the text.

The poem’s sense of motion through space without obvious purpose is furthered by Purdy’s delay in communicating the subject’s destination. By the end of the second stanza, the reader can map the trip of Purdy’s subject from Winnipeg to Regina, but these destinations are separated by ten lines and a break in stanzas. This separation between destinations leaves the reader unsure of where Purdy’s subject is headed at first, just as the subject themselves is likely to be in the poem. This differs from the typical LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor in that the explored life is less of a journey with concrete destinations and more of a wandering in search of an unspecified goal. The lack of defined purpose in the subject’s journey is furthered through this delayed delivery of the journey’s destination. Combined with the aforementioned sense of purposelessness the reader gets from Purdy’s connection of life-moments rather than purposes to destinations, this serves to render the JOURNEY that the poem describes A DESTINATIONLESS and ultimately PURPOSELESS JOURNEY at this point in the text.

When we consider the concept of a journey traditionally, it may have a number of stops along the way but typically ends at a final destination. But with Purdy describing an experience of transience, these elements of the traditional journey are absent. This is shown further in the poem’s third stanza, when Purdy describes

Riding into the Crow’s Nest mountains with
your first beard itching and a

hundred hungry guys fanning out thru
the shabby whistlestops for handouts and
not even a sandwich for two hundred miles
only the high mountains and knowing
what it's like to be not quite a child any
more and listening to the tough men
talk of women and talk of the way things are
in 1937 ("Transient" 16-25)

In this stanza, Purdy's subject is shown to have stopped only momentarily in Regina, continuing their journey beyond the city. Purdy's connection of the subject's "first beard itching" (17) in "the Crow's Nest mountains" (16) to "knowing / what it's like to be not quite a child any / more" presents another example of the connection of destinations to milestones in one's life (21-23). The destinations Purdy outlines are notably far from glamorous, exemplified by "the shabby whistlestops" (19) where there is "not even a sandwich for two hundred miles" (20). Not only are these stops unclean and void of food, they are only "whistlestops," or temporary destinations along the subject's journey ("Transient" 19). This temporary nature of the train stops reinforces the transience of the poem's subject by suggesting that they are unable to settle in any one place along their journey for a prolonged period of time. This lack of a permanent destination in the journey suggests that DESTINATIONS are not MILESTONES like they are in typical employments of LIFE IS A JOURNEY. Instead, it is WHISTLESTOPS that correlate to changes in one's LIFE.

Purdy proceeds to write about the encounter that the subject has in an unnamed city, assumed here to be Vancouver due to the allusion to the Coast Salish, with an Indigenous woman and her mother. Purdy describes:

Riding down in the spit-grey sea-level morning

thru dockyard streets and dingy dowager houses
with ocean a jump away and the sky beneath you
in puddles on Water Street and an old Indian woman
pushing her yawning stretching daughter
onto a balcony to yell at the boy-man passing
“Want some fun? – come on up” – and the girl just
come from riding the shrieking bedspring bronco
all the way up and down night to a hitchpost morning
full of mother and dirt and lice and
hardly the place for a princess
of the Coast Salish

(My dove my little one
tonight there will be wine and drunken suitors
from the logging camp to pin you down
in the outlying lands of sleep
where all the roads lead back to the home-village
and water may be walked on) (“Transient” 26-43)

In these lines, Purdy portrays the only woman and only Indigenous character in the poem in a deeply problematic way. Purdy’s treatment of women and Indigenous people in his work is often concerning when read in the present political climate. Most obviously, his racist reliance on the outdated trope of the “princess / of the Coast Salish” here is both troubling and indicative of another reason why scholarly response to Purdy’s work is now mixed, especially when more than his style alone is considered (36-37). This in addition to the perception of the Indigenous woman’s life as “full of mother and dirt and lice,” which suggests a combination of racist,

sexualized, and sexist images about indigeneity (“Transient” 35). Evidently, there is more than just Purdy’s stylistic choices with which contemporary readers might take issue.

Still, the speaker again continues their motion across Canada in this stanza. Notably, the subject reaches the west coast of Canada here, marking what could be the end of the journey if it is directed west as the Pacific Ocean here prevents further western travel by train. Yet the subject’s journey continues, stopping only briefly enough in British Columbia to have the experience described in this section of the poem. The subject of the poem’s JOURNEY has now covered the majority of Canada, yet their travel across the country remains a DESTINATIONLESS JOURNEY. This not only relates to the transience that the poem seeks to convey, but it differs significantly from typical instances of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor in that it lacks an endpoint.

The most basic difference between the journey of Purdy’s subject and that assumed to be the case in conversational employments of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor is the use of a train as the mode of movement along the JOURNEY of LIFE. This alone is not particularly creative, but does open itself to a number of mappings that Purdy has used thus far in the poem, such as the MILESTONES are WHISTLESTOPS mapping. The poem’s subject is also far from riding first-class across Canada and watching the scenery roll by, as may be the case in typical linguistic employments of the conceptual metaphor. Instead, they experience the “violent sway of fields” (3) and “hear the rumbling iron roadbed singing / under the wheels at night and a door jerking open / mile after dusty mile” (“Transient” 9-11). The journey as it has been described thus far is a series of discomforts, with each difficulty seemingly being paired with a new milestone in the subject’s life. This sense of discomfort characterizes the JOURNEY as being rugged, differentiating it from the unspecified nature of most employments of the text’s conceptual metaphor in which the JOURNEY is described in less detail. Purdy goes into detail in describing the journey at the

heart of “Transient,” reworking the base conceptual metaphor with which the text begins and allowing him to communicate a more specific image of LIFE in terms of A JOURNEY.

Purdy’s use of this pairing of images of discomfort from the journey with milestones in the subject’s life further develops the sense of personal growth in the poem, allowing the reader to experience the maturation of the poem’s subject as a result of the hardships they are faced with. This equation of personal growth to difficulties posed by the train journey manifests itself in various linguistic realizations of the key conceptual metaphor, such as the aforementioned finding of “not even a sandwich for two hundred miles” (20) and coming to know “what it’s like to be not quite a child any / more” as a result (“Transient” 22-23). Mappings such as this of difficult instances of the JOURNEY onto the growth of the subject in their LIFE differentiate the overarching conceptual metaphor from its common linguistic form, customizing it here to foreground the grittiness of the discussed JOURNEY. By shifting the basic LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor to entail a more difficult train ride than conventional instances of the metaphor, Purdy simultaneously shifts the perception of the subject to reflect a hardier character who results from their experiences.

After the poem’s fourth stanza, there is a distinct turn from discussing individual hardships of the journey occurring at the various “whistlestops” to the journey becoming a physical part of the poem’s subject (19). Purdy begins this shift by writing:

Stand in the swaying boxcar doorway
moving east away from the sunset and
after a while the eyes digest a country and
the belly perceives a mapmaker’s vision
in dust and dirt on the face and hands here

its smell drawn deep thru the nostrils down
to the lungs and spurts thru the blood stream
campaigns in the lower intestine
and chants love songs to the kidneys (“Transient” 44-53)

Purdy here figures the journey as something being absorbed into the physical subject; a connection made via the use of corporeal terminology. Images of the journey like standing “in the swaying boxcar doorway / moving east from the sunset” are here mapped onto and into the body of the subject (44-45). The subject’s “eyes digest a country” (46) explored by rail while their “belly perceives a mapmaker’s vision / in dust and dirt on the face and hands here” (47-48). These images are consumptions of the travelled land by the body of the speaker, in which the country comes to form a part of the subject, spurting “thru [their] bloodstream” (“Transient” 51). As a result, the JOURNEY is being mapped onto the LIFE of the subject of Purdy’s poem, clearly connecting the two to each other. This connection’s uniqueness comes specifically from the corporeal nature of the mapping, in which the land covered in the JOURNEY comes to form the LIFE of the subject in a very physical way. Again, we see Purdy using the conceptual metaphor creatively by giving specific creative detail in the poem. In this case, Purdy’s use of bodily imagery allows him to take the LIFE IS A JOURNEY construction into the corporeal domain, an unnatural environment for the metaphor.

Continuing through the poem with the same gritty style of imagery as those seen in earlier stanzas, Purdy flavours the Canadian country and the process of it becoming a part of the subject’s body as rugged once again. The eyes of the subject “digest a country” (46) that manifests itself “in dust and dirt on the face and hands” (48), literally getting into the subject’s eyes and being “drawn deep thru the nostrils” in order to become part of the transient figure’s

body (49). While this image might be expected to be discomfoting, once absorbed the country “campaigns in the lower intestine / and chants love songs to the kidneys,” becoming a part of the subject’s physical form in a seemingly harmonious way (“Transient” 52-53). Through these images, Purdy establishes the digestion of the Canadian country in a very physical way through the JOURNEY while simultaneously furthering the sense in which this seemingly unpleasant experience is enjoyable to the poem’s subject.

Purdy continues to connect the JOURNEY of the subject to their LIFE as the poem proceeds, writing:

After a while there is no arrival and
no departure possible any more
you are where you were always going
and the shape of home is under your fingernails
the borders of yourself grown into certainty (“Transient” 54-58)

These lines, which form the opening of the poem’s last stanza, carry a lot of metaphorical significance. The first line “After a while there is no arrival” confirms that there will be no arrival at a final destination along the journey, cementing it as being a DESTINATIONLESS JOURNEY (54). The fact that there is “no departure possible anymore” can be applied both to the inability to depart a train station or, perhaps more likely, the inability of the subject to depart from the life of transience they have come to know (“Transient” 55). Because the subject is unable to end their journey, it becomes a NEVERENDING JOURNEY in addition to being without a final destination.

These two lines together further characterize the JOURNEY being discussed in the poem as a NEVERENDING DESTINATIONLESS JOURNEY. This differs from the traditional metaphorical JOURNEY that reflects the Location ESM because of its lack of a defined endpoint.

Purdy then proceeds to write what may be the most concrete series of lines in terms of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor in the text. Purdy writes that “you are where you were always going / and the shape of home is under your fingernails / the borders of yourself grown into certainty” (56-58). The line “you are where you were always going” shows again the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor in a corporeal sense, with the poem’s subject literally being described as a destination. While the JOURNEY may lack a geographical destination, the subject themselves becomes the journey’s destination in this line, simultaneously becoming the journey’s focus and goal. The two lines that follow this suggestion provide more corporeal imagery, with “the shape of [the subject’s] home” being “under [their] fingernails,” a physical manifestation of the home that the subject finds within themselves through the JOURNEY (57). Purdy writes that the movement through the unknown country results in “the borders of [the self growing] into certainty” as the subject becomes reassured of their LIFE and identity (“Transient” 58). These lines revisit the idea of corporeality, used here to confirm the subject’s certainty of who they have become as a result of the destinations at which they have stopped.

Purdy continues this exploration of a newly affirmed identity in the poem’s closing lines. Discussing both the subject and the country explored in the poem’s JOURNEY with a newfound understanding, Purdy describes

the identity of forests that were always nameless
the selfhood of rivers that are changing always
the nationality of riding freight trains thru the depression
over long green plains and high mountain country
with the best and worst of a love that’s not to be spoken
and a guy right behind you says then
‘Got a smoke?’ (“Transient” 59-65)

While he previously figures the land becoming part of the poem's subject, Purdy here develops the identity of the land beyond the subject. It is important to notice that the selfhood Purdy discusses here is "changing always" (60) and that the forests seen from the train "were always nameless," developing a sense in which the land is just as unsure of itself as the subject (59). This uncertainty of identity being reflected in the landscape that the subject of the poem perceives furthers their sense of similarity, blurring the line between subject and country. Eventually, travelling the country in the way that they do, transience becomes all that the subject knows. This is supported by the characterization of "riding freight trains thru the depression / over long green plains and high mountain country" as the subject's "nationality" ("Transient" 61-62). In this line, Purdy suggests that the subject has become so dedicated to riding the rails that it has become as familiar to them as a cultural identity.

When the subject is asked once again for a cigarette at the poem's conclusion, Purdy writes that

you give him one and stand in the boxcar doorway
or looking out the window of a Montreal apartment
or running the machines in a Vancouver factory
you stand there growing older ("Transient" 66-69)

Having blurred the line between subject and environment, Purdy here returns to the image of being asked for a cigarette, this time with a subject who has changed with each place they have seen. Purdy suggests here through references to the geographically separated cities of Montreal and Vancouver that it does not matter where you are on the journey, you "stand there growing older" (69). Here, growing older is figured as being the result and perhaps the goal of the subject's transience, differing from the conventional goal of ending the journey in a new

geographical space. These lines also importantly show the subject off of the train, exploring the destinations they visit by spending time in “a Montreal apartment” (67) and “running the machines in a Vancouver factory” (“Transient” 68). The removal of the speaker from the train during their journey shows that while the subject is experiencing a literal train journey, this journey deeply impacts their life beyond the railroad.

Having spent the whole poem discussing a series of events that compose a train journey, this stanza suggests that the specificity of riding the rails through Canada is flavouring to a more general JOURNEY. Ultimately, the train detailing works at what Lakoff and Turner identify as the first level of conceptual metaphor at play in this poem, using specific instances of metaphor to make creative changes to the general LIFE IS A JOURNEY structure. By suggesting at the poem’s conclusion that LIFE will continue whether you are “standing in the swaying boxcar doorway” or are nowhere near a railroad at all, Purdy zooms out to suggest that LIFE is always A JOURNEY whether literal or otherwise.

3. PURDY TRIBUTE WORKS INSPIRED BY “TRANSIENT”

Over the past five years, many pieces have been released celebrating the life of Al Purdy, many of which use Purdy’s “Transient” as a way of accessing and detailing the respective creators of each piece’s relationship to the late poet. These texts appear as parts of larger collections, either *The Al Purdy Songbook* or *Beyond Forgetting*. This chapter focuses on texts that reflect on Purdy’s life and positive impact on the Canadian literary community by using images and metaphors from “Transient.” The chapter analyzes how Purdy’s modified LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor from “Transient” is used by these artists to discuss the poet’s LIFE in terms of a JOURNEY similar to that of the subject of Purdy’s original poem. In most cases, PURDY’S LIFE becomes the life of the subject in “Transient,” allowing the creators of these texts to effectively discuss Purdy and his contributions in the colloquial setting of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor. Given Purdy’s down-to-earth poetic voice that many readers find to be either a source of enjoyment or frustration, discussing his life by using familiar conceptual metaphors like LIFE IS A JOURNEY becomes a fitting way of remembering the late poet.

This chapter examines the songs “Transient” by Doug Paisley and “3 Al Purdys” by Bruce Cockburn from *The Al Purdy Songbook* in addition to poems by Grace Vermeer and Julie McNeill from Howard White and Emma Skagen’s anthology *Beyond Forgetting*. Each of these pieces reworks and builds upon Purdy’s “Transient” in a unique way, but there are a number of common threads running through these interpretations of the poem. These threads include the perpetuality of Purdy’s life-journey and the fact that Purdy always remains accessible through his work and the Canadian landscape. These pieces reach common conclusions regarding the significance of Purdy’s life both to their respective creators personally as well as to Canadian

literature and culture more broadly, all using the conceptual metaphor at the heart of “Transient” as a way to reach these conclusions.

3.1 DOUG PAISLEY’S “TRANSIENT”

Doug Paisley’s song, “Transient” adapts elements of Purdy’s “Transient” and its key conceptual metaphor in order to discuss the late poet’s LIFE in terms of A JOURNEY. Paisley’s song possesses a strong likeness to Purdy’s original poem as a result of his use of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor and images of travel across the Canadian landscape. Paisley adds different layers of complexity to the conceptual metaphor at play in “Transient,” though, requiring a redefinition of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY construction within the context of his song. The most notable difference between Purdy and Paisley’s versions of “Transient” is Paisley’s discussion not of LIFE in general in terms of A JOURNEY, but rather of PURDY’S LIFE specifically, which comes to blend with that of the subject of Purdy’s original poem.

Paisley begins his piece with the song’s subject, Purdy, “riding on an eastbound train, trying to get home again.” Unlike Purdy’s subject, who knows only movement between spaces with no defined endpoint, Purdy has “been away from home so long” in Paisley’s song, with “home” acting here as both the point of departure and eventual return. Figuring Purdy as the subject of the poem and PURDY’S LIFE AS THE SUBJECT’S JOURNEY, Paisley’s lyrics suggest that Purdy’s life-journey has a concrete end with the final destination being “home.” Because Purdy’s life has to end, his journey in Paisley’s song eventually must as well. This mandatory ending differs from the journey in Purdy’s poem, which is importantly an ENDLESS JOURNEY with no defined conclusion. Complicating Purdy’s LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor, Paisley’s suggestion that Purdy has “been away from home so long” and is “trying to get home again” indicates that PURDY’S LIFE is being discussed in terms of A JOURNEY HOME (Paisley). Because Paisley’s song

gives a determined endpoint to Purdy's journey, the metaphor at the core of the piece differs from that of Purdy's original poem on a fundamental level.

With the song appearing in the context of an album in tribute to Purdy, it is also likely that Paisley is equating the sense of home he sings of to life. Paisley uses images of "faraway bells" that "are ringing" in the first verse to suggest this, saying that these bells suggests that Purdy has "been away from home so long" (Paisley). These bells gesture towards the practice of ringing a train's bell as it reaches a station, while simultaneously referencing the ringing of a death knell. Through the image of bells, then, Paisley shows that unlike the *ENDLESS JOURNEY* of Purdy's subject, *PURDY'S LIFE* reaches an end at the end of his life. Because home is equated to life and the journey used to communicate it, the end of the journey that is signalled by the ringing of the bells marks the end of Purdy's journey. This further complicates the basic metaphor with which the text begins, suggesting in a sense that *PURDY'S LIFE* is not a *NEVERENDING JOURNEY* as was the case of his subject's in "Transient."

Through the song's chorus, though, Paisley states that Purdy's physical death does not mark a complete loss of his life, since his voice remains through his work. Paisley sings in the song's chorus that "when it's time for saying goodbye" he will "still hear [Purdy's] voice," suggesting a sense in which Purdy is still alive after his physical death. Paisley also sings that "this [song] is my blood flowing into you," suggesting that in his musical interpretation of Purdy's original poem he is still able to communicate with the late poet (Paisley). By re-engaging with Purdy through the song, Paisley suggests that he can communicate with Purdy's work even after the *JOURNEY* of his *LIFE* reaches its home in lifelessness.

Paisley's claim here complicates the conceptual metaphor as it has been understood thus far. The songwriter's belief that he can still engage with Purdy through his music characterizes

Purdy's JOURNEY BACK TO LIFELESSNESS as resulting only in a partial loss of his life. Since Paisley claims that he can still speak with Purdy by engaging with his art, PURDY'S LIFE IS NOT A JOURNEY BACK TO LIFELESSNESS at all. Instead, Paisley's song suggests that PURDY'S LIFE, like that of the subject of the original "Transient," is A NEVERENDING JOURNEY with which his readers and acquaintances are always able to interact artistically. Though the perpetuality of Purdy's life in Paisley's song comes in a different form from that of the subject of Purdy's poem, the sentiment is similar. This allows Paisley to rework Purdy's original metaphor in a creative way in order to more accurately capture how he sees Purdy's life-journey as perpetual.

But it is not just through art that Paisley suggests Purdy to still be within his readers' reach. We also see the significance of the Canadian landscape explored in the song and used by Paisley as a way to return to aspects of Purdy's original work, thus allowing him to interact with the late poet. Paisley follows in Purdy's footsteps by listing Canadian spaces explored during Purdy's life-journey. Paisley lists "the Continental Divide," "Sault Ste Marie," and "the Kootenay" in his song, echoing the naming of brief stops along the train ride in Purdy's original poem. Paisley also references Purdy's poem "The Country North of Belleville" by singing of "ploughed furrows in [Purdy's] brain," an image that also reflects the corporeal unity with land seen in Purdy's "Transient" (Paisley). Using rural Canadian images as a way of returning to Purdy's work, Paisley suggests that Purdy is still accessible beyond his death both through interacting with his written work and exploration of the Canadian landscape.

Between Purdy's written work and engagement with images of Canada in "Transient," Paisley ultimately suggests two journeys to be at play in his song. On one hand, Paisley explores the NEVERENDING JOURNEY that is PURDY'S LIFE, rendered perpetual by the staying power of Purdy's body of written work and his connection to the Canadian landscape. On the other,

Paisley confronts his grief at the loss of Purdy's physical existence, a LIFE characterized by A JOURNEY BACK TO LIFELESSNESS. Paisley's song works to reposition Purdy from the role of poet to that of subject and traveller in "Transient," using a modified version of Purdy's own conceptual metaphor to discuss his life after its physical end. By doing so, Paisley works within the literary concept that Purdy employs in his poem while simultaneously communicating the sense in which Purdy's life is perpetuated by his work and connection to the Canadian landscape.

3.2 "TRANSIENT" AND "3 AL PURDYS"

Bruce Cockburn similarly explores Purdy's life and death in his song "3 Al Purdys," which appears as the first track on *The Al Purdy Songbook*. Unlike Paisley's song, Cockburn's is written from Purdy's point of view. The piece recounts Purdy's life in three stages from its beginnings in transience, proceeding to his engagement with poetry, and concluding with the poet's death and legacy. Just as Purdy reworked and selected elements of the common LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor in "Transient," Cockburn uses lines and motifs from Purdy's poem in his song to discuss the poet's LIFE in terms of A JOURNEY.

Beginning the song by directly reciting lines 45-57 of "Transient," Cockburn establishes the track as being written, spoken, and sung from Purdy's point of view. Cockburn notably speaks these lines instead of singing them, putting on a Purdy-esque voice to do so. In Howard White and Emma Skagen's *Beyond Forgetting*, in which the lyrics to "3 Al Purdys" appear as a poem, these lines of Purdy's "Transient" are italicized and act as an epigraph to the rest of the piece. By referencing images of the journey of Purdy's subject in the song's spoken epigraph, Cockburn both recalls Purdy's original poem and grounds the song in the metaphorical and literal journeys crafted within it.

Of particular note is Cockburn's choice to use the section of "Transient" containing corporeal imagery as his epigraph. Using these lines as the introduction to a piece that celebrates Purdy's biographical journey, Cockburn suggests that Purdy himself became the land through which he travelled. By positioning Purdy as an embodiment of the Canadian landscape in his epigraph, Cockburn shifts Purdy from being the author of "Transient" to becoming blurred with his own poem's subject, similar to Paisley. Cockburn's blurring of the divide between Purdy and the land he wrote about reflects claims that Purdy was "the voice of the land," a title written on both Purdy's statue in Toronto's Queen's Park and on his book-shaped gravestone (Vermeersch). Cockburn's inclusion of these lines as well as his speaking of them in a Purdy-esque voice perpetuates claims that Purdy spoke on behalf of the land he travelled while simultaneously positioning the poet as his own poem's subject.

After beginning the song by speaking images of the transience that composed Purdy's adolescence, Cockburn sings of Purdy's introduction to poetry in the first verse. The verse establishes the unlikely nature of Purdy's relationship with poetry by referencing his lack of "schooling past learning how to read" (2) and being "a product of some parents of the sort that shouldn't breed" (1). Though not directly discussing the journey here, Cockburn does use instances of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor to talk about Purdy's career by writing that Purdy "did embark" on a "career of destitution" (Cockburn 4). Though subtle on the surface, when paired with the images of Purdy's adolescent travel in the song's epigraph this reference to the journey as a way of discussing Purdy's literary career is important. The line recalls motifs of the journey from Purdy's "Transient," beginning a series of references to the fact that Purdy's LIFE WAS A JOURNEY akin to that of his poem's subject.

The next few verses of Cockburn's song drift away from the journey metaphor, but recall other motifs from Purdy's original poem. In the song's second verse, Cockburn echoes Purdy's shifting of locations within a piece by listing images of various Canadian spaces. Cockburn discusses "the corners neither sung nor seen" (15), such as "Sherbourne and Queen" in the second verse (16). Cockburn's speaker, a version of Purdy, then claims "I resemble that assembly [of unexplored corners of Canada] but I'm not the same," suggesting a sense in which Purdy reflected aspects of overlooked parts of Canada but still stood out (17). This is important, because if Purdy is to be seen as the voice of the land, it would be fitting for his voice to represent the lives of all Canadians, even those that are overlooked or unexplored. The Purdy-speaker then suggests that the difference between themselves and working-class Canadians is the fact that "Al Purdy's poems are the name of my game" (18). Thus, Cockburn's Purdy figure comes to represent elements of Canadian society by virtue of "resembling that assembly," while also standing out from it by possessing exceptional writing prowess (Cockburn 17).

After singing details of Purdy's life and relationship to poetry in the verses and choruses of the song, Cockburn returns to speaking in a Purdy-esque voice at the end of "3 Al Purdys." Cockburn's shift away from singing to spoken word works to draw the listener's attention back to the power of language itself, a fitting movement given the content Cockburn recites.

Concluding his song, Cockburn says:

*"And after the essence of everything
had exchanged itself for words and became
another being and could even be summoned
from the far distance we chanted a spell of names
and we said 'mountain be our friend'
and we said 'River guard us from enemies'*

*And we said what it seemed the gods themselves
might say if we had dreamed them and they
had dreamed us from their high places
and they spoke to us in the forest
from the river and the mountain
and the mouths of the ochre-painted dead
had speech again and the waters
spoke and the speech had words
and our children remembered” (Cockburn 27-41).*

Cockburn here suggests that Purdy comes to speak on behalf of the regions that run through his blood. The songwriter does this by stating that after “the essence” of Purdy was traded for words (27), “the mouths of the ochre-painted dead / had speech again and the waters / spoke” through Purdy’s words and writing (38-40). Cockburn’s claim that Purdy gives voice to the dead implies both that the poet meditated upon forgotten histories and that he continues to speak despite becoming one of “the ochre-painted dead” himself (Cockburn 38). Because Purdy’s words give him the opportunity to continue speaking, and because his life is represented in part by the landscape, PURDY’S LIFE again becomes NEVERENDING in Cockburn’s song. This is a similar sentiment to Paisley’s piece, in which Purdy’s physical JOURNEY of LIFE comes to an end, but his SPIRITUAL LIFE is represented as A NEVERENDING JOURNEY.

Cockburn’s claim that Purdy’s life continues intangibly after its physical end characterizes the song’s base metaphor further. If PURDY’S LIFE is A JOURNEY, and PURDY’S LIFE is NEVERENDING, then we come to see PURDY’S LIFE as AN ENDLESS JOURNEY once again. Cockburn’s metaphor uncoincidentally resembles Purdy’s conceptual metaphor in “Transient,” which originally suggested that LIFE is A NEVERENDING DESTINATIONLESS JOURNEY. Cockburn’s song takes

this metaphor and claims that PURDY'S LIFE was an ENDLESS JOURNEY itself, akin to the life described in Paisley's piece. Thus, Cockburn operates within the conceptual metaphor of Purdy's "Transient" to claim that the poet is still accessible after his physical death both through his work and his links to Canadian spaces.

3.3 PURDY AND VERMEER'S "TRANSIENT"

Like Paisley and Cockburn, Grace Vermeer figures Purdy as the man riding the rails in her adaptation of "Transient" from White and Skagen's *Beyond Forgetting*. Vermeer begins her poem by echoing Cockburn and Paisley's idea that Purdy remains accessible via his work, beginning with the line "I was searching for Al Purdy on Dundas in London / Attic books, second floor, poetry section" (1-2). Vermeer's search for Al Purdy in a bookstore is not a search for the real Al Purdy, but rather a search for his books. These lines subtly suggest that Purdy's books are nearly equivalent to him and so readers are able to access Purdy through his work.

With Purdy's books here allowing his readers to communicate with him, Vermeer writes that "the phone rang [and it] was Al," suggesting that Purdy was alive at the time of Vermeer's bookstore search (Vermeer 3). Vermeer's poem not only reflects Paisley and Cockburn's suggestion that Purdy remains accessible through his work after his death but builds upon it by adding that he was always reachable through his poetry. Vermeer's phone call from Purdy, as she flips through the bookstore poetry section in search of a way of communicating with him, suggests in a sense that reading a Purdy poem is comparable to an actual conversation with the poet. Just as Paisley and Cockburn suggest, readers' ability to communicate with Purdy through his work characterizes his LIFE as A NEVERENDING JOURNEY that is always accessible.

Recounting the phone call from Purdy she received, Vermeer states that her conversation with Purdy was interrupted by “a drifter” asking Purdy for a cigarette, just as Purdy’s subject in “Transient” is repetitively asked for a cigarette (5). Vermeer’s Purdy stops mid-sentence to say “*just a minute, / [the drifter] wants a smoke*” (7-8). Vermeer here echoes the technique that Paisley and Cockburn use in their respective songs, placing Purdy as the subject of his own poem’s journey, consequentially describing Purdy’s LIFE AS A JOURNEY akin to that of the subject of “Transient.” Vermeer recalling the subject of Purdy’s poem being asked repetitively for a cigarette suggests that Purdy himself lived this experience, so discussing his LIFE in terms of the JOURNEY of the poem’s subject is fitting.

Just as Purdy’s subject gives out cigarettes throughout “Transient,” Vermeer’s Purdy is generous enough to share a cigarette in her poem. Vermeer shows that despite knowing “*this guy wants a handout*” (6), Purdy is willing to “[find] a cigarette, then a match” for his desperate travelling partner (Vermeer 10). Giving the cigarette is a significant action in Vermeer’s poem, because it characterizes Purdy as an authentic image of the subject he created in “Transient.” By having Purdy share a cigarette with his fellow traveller, Vermeer shows both Purdy’s sympathy for and willingness to help those struggling along journeys of their own. Vermeer’s poem, though not explicitly redefining the conceptual metaphor at play in Purdy’s “Transient,” helps to characterize the late poet while operating within the metaphor of his own work. The piece tells the reader that PURDY’S LIFE IS A NEVERENDING JOURNEY that Purdy actually lived.

Just as Purdy’s “Transient” conveys a sense of purposelessness about the journey detailed within the poem, Vermeer suggests a sense of purposelessness about the journey of life more broadly. Vermeer writes that

...you can stand there

on the rumbling roadbed while [Purdy] draws a map,
you think you're holding summer in your mouth,
then you notice –
no arrivals, no departures,
it's just you, standing there, getting old,
then older (Vermeer 11-17).

Vermeer here conveys a sense of purposelessness in two ways. First, she suggests that it does not matter where you are on the journey – the destinations are irrelevant as you simply “stand there” no matter where you are (11). This reflects the sense of transience in Purdy’s poem, in which the subject visits a multitude of places but simply grows older no matter where they go. Second, Vermeer’s simple statement that there are “no arrivals, no departures, / it’s just you, standing there, getting old” (15-16) suggests that no matter where you are, you are standing in the same spot on the train car giving a “drifter” a cigarette, undergoing the same process of maturation whether you recognize it or not (5). While you may “think you’re holding summer in your mouth” as you experience your journey, the bottom line of the life-journey is a growing up and eventual death (Vermeer 13). Through these lines, Vermeer communicates the purposelessness of the journey in Purdy’s poem as well as that of the journey of Purdy’s life.

Vermeer’s “Transient” functions within the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor established in Purdy’s poem. Though seemingly simple, the poem’s characterization of PURDY’S LIFE contains a great deal of hidden complexity, reflecting the overlooked significance of Purdy’s own colloquial verse. Vermeer upholds some of the values of Purdy’s colloquial writing style in her writing as well, using terms like “drifter” (5) and “*handout*” (6), as well as referring to a fellow train passenger as “*this guy*” (6) and a cigarette as “*a smoke*” (Vermeer 8). Notably, most of these lines come via italics, through Purdy’s voice. This suggests that Vermeer recognizes the

significance of Purdy's vernacular and adopts it via these colloquial terms. Ultimately, Vermeer's piece works within Purdy's metaphor and style in order to discuss PURDY'S LIFE in terms of THE NEVERENDING AND PURPOSELESS JOURNEY initially described in the original "Transient." By doing so, Vermeer operates similarly to Paisley and Cockburn's songs, which use Purdy's poem in order to discuss the late poet's LIFE in terms of A COMPLICATED JOURNEY. Analysis of Vermeer's piece in combination with that of Paisley and Cockburn's respective works foregrounds the way in which Purdy is still accessible through his work while simultaneously characterizing Purdy's subject as reflective of himself.

3.4 PURDY AND MCNEILL'S "TRAINS, BEER & BRONZE"

Like Cockburn, Paisley, and Vermeer's pieces, Julie McNeill's poem "Trains, Beer & Bronze" uses elements of Purdy's "Transient" in order to remember the late poet. Unlike these pieces, however, McNeill's poem describes Purdy's life-journey as taking place most significantly at one location: the poet's A-Frame cabin. The poem begins with an epigraph that is echoed throughout the Purdy canon, with McNeill choosing to open the piece with the words "the voice of the land" (McNeill). Before the poem even begins, then, McNeill has hinted towards the sense in which Purdy's image and voice are intertwined with the Canadian landscape, echoing claims made in Cockburn's "3 Al Purdys."

Though not spending an extensive amount of time on the journey metaphor in her poem, McNeill opens the piece with an important recharacterization of the conceptual metaphor at play in "Transient." The poem begins by suggesting that "train cars / took [Purdy's] young man's voice / and roughened it," with the train cars here enacting Purdy's maturation (1-3). McNeill proceeds to suggest that the train cars also "took [Purdy's] impressionable ears / and pounded into them / the pulse of Canada" (McNeill 4-6). While readers of Purdy's "Transient" understand

the journey as a whole to have developed the subject's maturity and masculinity, McNeill here suggests that the train cars impressed these things upon Purdy when he himself rode the rails.

In the same stanza, McNeill proceeds to give an image of Purdy's life that is echoed throughout the anthology of Purdy tribute poems in which her piece appears, that of Purdy writing in his A-Frame cabin. McNeill writes that Purdy "brewed people's poetry / in the A-frame's simplicity / and shared it" (7-9). The A-frame here acts as a departure point for Purdy's journey in the poem, in which he proceeds to "[amble] into lecture halls / shirtsleeves rolled up / and [give] thirsty students / tales for all the Annettes" after successfully publishing his work (McNeill 11-13). McNeill's poem captures a different side of Purdy's life than that explored in Cockburn, Paisley, and Vermeer's respective works, which focus on Purdy's time spent riding boxcars across Canada.

Despite giving the literary side of Purdy's life-journey more attention than the physical rail journey alone in her piece, McNeill reaches similar conclusions to those reached by Cockburn, Paisley, and Vermeer regarding Purdy's life. McNeill, bringing the poem into the present tense while viewing Purdy's statue in Toronto's Queen's Park, writes "I hear your voice / in the wind blowing across Queen's Park," suggesting that Purdy's voice is still very much intertwined with Canadian nature (19-20). Notably, Purdy's voice here comes not with the rugged Canadian landscape explored in "Transient," but through an urban greenspace that is surrounded by tall buildings and busy streets. Returning the poem to the point from which Purdy departs his journey, McNeill writes that "other poets [now] sit in the A-frame / wondering where [Purdy's] gone" (McNeill 25-26). Ending the poem with this image of other poets continuing in Purdy's footsteps through the A-frame's writer-in-residence program, McNeill suggests in a

different way that PURDY'S LIFE IS A NEVERENDING JOURNEY perpetuated by living poets continuing his legacy.

While different from the very literal JOURNEY used to discuss PURDY'S LIFE in Cockburn, Paisley, and Vermeer's respective pieces, McNeill operates in a less literal LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor to discuss Purdy's life. McNeill's piece gives images of the journey of Purdy's literary career, in which he takes inspiration from the train cars that "pound into [his ears] / the pulse of Canada" (5-6) so that he can "[brew] people's poetry / in the A-frame's simplicity" (7-8). This poetry, providing inspiration to the next generation of writers, leaves "other poets [sitting] in the A-frame" after Purdy is gone (McNeill 25). McNeill implies that these poets, who sit in the A-frame after Purdy's death, will brew people's poetry of their own to inspire the next generation just as Purdy did, perpetuating his contribution to Canadian literature. These poets, by following in Purdy's footsteps, serve to make the JOURNEY of PURDY'S LIFE as it is presented in the poem a NEVERENDING JOURNEY similar to that of Cockburn, Paisley, and Vermeer's texts.

3.5 CULTURAL VALUE OF PURDY'S JOURNEY

Cockburn, Paisley, McNeill, and Vermeer all characterize PURDY'S LIFE as being A NEVERENDING JOURNEY. This characterization provides a sense of comfort to these creators in the wake of Purdy's death, as they are able to continue communicating with Purdy's life and the legacy he left behind through their tribute texts. Purdy lives on for each of these creators via the land, his poetry and his contributions to the writing community. It is important to note that these are, as one would expect of an anthology and album dedicated to remembering Purdy, positive interpretations of his life and legacy. For these creators and their fellow contributors, Al Purdy is a significant figure in Canadian literature, as well as Canadian culture more broadly, and they use their tribute texts as a way of making these claims.

4. THE VOICE OF WHOSE LAND?

Al Purdy's colloquial style has made him a controversial figure artistically ever since his first popular poetry collection was published. There is more to Purdy than people take issue with than just his artistic style, though. Tribute texts like those of Cockburn, Paisley, McNeill, and Vermeer analyzed in the previous chapter cast Purdy in a favourable light because of his contribution to Canadian literature, but this characterization of Purdy is problematic in many ways. Purdy as a person beyond his literary contributions has been argued to represent many of the problems with the country from a political and cultural standpoint. With misogyny and racism at times subtly present in Purdy's work and running rampant at others, even the best Purdy poems should have a few red flags. Purdy is a complicated figure, and so painting an image of him that is strictly positive is an issue even after his death.

It is important to note that the previously analyzed tribute projects all appear in collections that are connected in some way to restoring and maintaining Al Purdy's A-frame cabin, whether connected with the Al Purdy A-frame Association directly or indirectly. The cabin, now home to a writer-in-residence program, had a campaign launched in its name by the A-Frame Association to fund renovations, maintenance, and a number of upgrades that were considered necessary to keeping the structure standing. The initiative characterized restoring and maintaining the A-frame as vital for national culture given its historical significance and the role it plays in the narrative of Purdy's life and legacy.

Part of this campaign included the creation of *Al Purdy Was Here*, a film documenting Purdy's life and the A-Frame Association's efforts to save his home. The soundtrack of *Al Purdy Was Here* became *The Al Purdy Songbook* and Borealis Records, the songbook's producer, donated all proceeds from the songbook to the A-Frame Association directly

(alpurdywashere.com). The other collection of tribute texts analyzed in this thesis, *Beyond Forgetting*, did not send all its proceeds to the A-Frame Association. That being said, the book's unnumbered first pages state that "many of the poets who contributed their work to [the] anthology chose to donate their honorarium money to the Al Purdy A-Frame Project," implying that many of the contributors actively buy into the claim that Purdy's home was and is a crucial cultural space (*Beyond Forgetting*). Ultimately, both *Beyond Forgetting* and *The Al Purdy Songbook* have benefited the efforts of the A-Frame Association financially in some way.

If it would favour anybody for Al Purdy to stay a relevant Canadian cultural figure, the A-Frame Association would likely be the group who could potentially benefit most. It is not particularly surprising, then, that the authors whose texts compose the tribute projects with ties to the A-Frame Association cast Purdy in a favourable light. These tribute projects often perpetuate an idealization of Purdy as being "the voice of the land," a moniker carved into Purdy's grave stone and the title of his statue in Toronto's Queen's Park (Vermeersch). Very few authors behind the texts that compose the previously studied tribute projects criticize Purdy's character beyond the page in any way, reflecting what Shane Neilson calls "a national refusal to cop to [Purdy's] personal flaws" (Neilson 147). With this in mind, I will consider a number of the pieces that have been published over the course of the past decade that counter the trend toward celebration and tribute, instead producing work that functions in part at least against the cultural remembrance of Al Purdy. The texts are used to exhibit the sense in which there is more to Purdy and his LIFE and JOURNEY than his work and pieces written in tribute to him have shown.

Analyzing works by River Halen Guri, Michael Lista, Lori Fox, Shane Neilson, and Sadiqa de Meijer, this chapter considers perspectives that show how Purdy's legacy consists of more than a bundle of contributions to Canadian literature, a lakeside cabin, and a statue in a

Toronto park. Through a reading of these texts, I contend that the A-frame cabin itself is not simply a historically significant literary site, but a complicated and troubling space for a multitude of reasons. After analyzing these pieces, I criticize the continued work of the Al Purdy A-Frame Association, which actively preserves Purdy's positive legacy.

4.1 RIVER HALEN GURI'S "HORSEPLAY: SOME POSES IN SEARCH OF LOVE"

River Halen Guri was writer-in-residence at Purdy's A-frame between October and December of 2015 and went on to write reflections on the residency after it was completed ("Horseplay: Some Poses in Search of Love"). Despite living and writing in Purdy's house, Guri argues that they knew little about the late poet. Beginning "Horseplay: Some Poses in Search of Love," Guri writes a brief list of "total facts known about Al Purdy." Implying that they lied on their application to become writer-in-residence, Guri reminisces, "[m]y whole career I have toiled in the shadow of the man with the white, flapping hair [...] Yeah, that's right. I'm a person. I did not say these things. [But] I implied them." Guri suggests that speaking positively of Purdy humanized them by allowing them to show they are "a person" and adhere to the popular consensus regarding Purdy with which writers feel pressure to align (Guri). Guri's choice to resist this pressure to learn about Purdy casts them outside of the opinions of many of Canadian literature's elite who have created uncritical works for Purdy tribute projects or voiced support for the A-frame Association.

Despite their lack of knowledge regarding Purdy and the general positive consensus surrounding Purdy's legacy, Guri writes of Purdy's poems that although they appreciate their candour "I do not like their misogyny or racism" (Guri). These issues are seen in "Transient," which contains an entire stanza about a sex worker who is the poem's only Indigenous character and one of the few in Purdy's work. Purdy's treatment of women and people of colour does not

improve noticeably beyond “Transient” either, with entire collections he wrote on Indigenous life such as *North of Summer* often reading like misinformed and outdated anthropological studies with line breaks.

Guri attempts to understand why they might not appreciate Purdy’s writing or persona, as if they are othered from the Canadian literary community by disliking aspects of Purdy’s work. Guri flippantly muses that “maybe [their dislike of Purdy] is because both my grandfathers died before I was born. I never had the chance to develop affection for old white men with tobacco breath and what they say when they’re exhaling” (Guri). Guri’s statement here notably reads like an ironic excuse, as if they recognize that their views on Purdy are contrary to those seemingly agreed upon by the Canadian literary community, and thus require contextualization. Guri begins the article by reducing Purdy’s life and legacy to the features of it that they find unappealing, casting Purdy in a light contrary to that of the tribute projects analyzed in the previous chapter.

With their views on Purdy in mind, Guri writes that they began their stay “with a resolution: So long as I was living in this house, I would learn as little about Al Purdy as possible.” Guri’s piece details the difficulty with which they stuck to this vow, citing Purdy’s tall bookshelves, a bust of D.H. Lawrence, and a poem pinned on the wall as obstacles that proved particularly difficult to avoid (Guri). Even without knowing much about Purdy, what Guri knew was enough to put them off, suggesting a sense in which the problematic nature of Purdy’s character is not hidden to any significant extent. Guri’s initial resolution foregrounds a sense in which some of the people who know very little about Purdy also have very little interest in learning more after being put off by the easily found troubling aspects of the poet and his persona.

While lumping Purdy in with generic “old white [men] with tobacco breath” may seem a one-dimensional interpretation of a rather complex figure, so too is calling him the voice of the land without questioning what or who the land’s voice might actually address (Guri). Purdy’s reputation, work, and persona are not one-sided and Guri is not the only person to recognize the misogyny and racism inherent in them. Even through a brief reading of their piece, it becomes evident that Purdy’s work does not address Guri’s concerns with the aspects of Canadian culture that Purdy represents. Simply recalling Purdy in a positive light without question has serious implications for Canadian literature and Canadian culture more broadly. With Purdy being representative of cultural values carried over from an outdated society, continuing to consider Purdy “the voice” of anybody’s land is problematic to say the least. It is because of this that the work of the A-frame Association, who devote an entire page titled “Al Purdy – The Voice of the Land” on their website to defending Purdy’s role as national representative, can be considered troubling (“The Voice of the Land”). How can Purdy’s voice stand for Canada if it does not stand for the concerns of a broad cross-section of the country’s people? As it obviously does not voice the concerns of writers like Guri, who does Purdy’s voice continue to speak for?

4.2 MICHAEL LISTA ON AL PURDY

Guri is not the only author to take issue with Purdy and the connection of him to ideas of nation and cultural representation. In his essay “Poetry Slam: Cowardly critics and bad art – a codependency,” which appeared online via *The Walrus* in 2016, Michael Lista similarly calls Purdy into question. According to Lista, Al Purdy was “the biggest beneficiary” of “literary nationalism” in Canada. If readers are unfamiliar with the late poet, Lista recommends they “imagine a down-market D.H. Lawrence mixed with the worst of Charles Bukowski” in order to get an idea of Purdy’s style and persona (“Poetry Slam”). Known for his scathing reviews of

some of Canadian literature's favourite writers, Lista is obviously not an admirer of Purdy's work and personality.

Lista proceeds to recognize some of the components that attract people to Purdy, characterizing them here, though, as negative aspects of the late poet's work and personality. Lista writes that "Purdy was an early formalist who broke the shackles of foreign traditions to embrace an unpretentious, rural vernacular – what poet and critic David Solway called 'Standard Average Canadian'" ("On Poetry"). It is important to note that what Lista is discussing is exactly what I have argued in earlier chapters can divide people regarding Purdy: his use of colloquialisms and vernacular speech. Lista clearly sees Purdy's vernacular as a negative attribute of his work, while it was embraced and celebrated by most of the artists whose works were included in the previously analyzed tribute projects. Summarizing Solway's issue with Purdy, Lista writes that Purdy perseveres as a Canadian poet "not because he sounds different from every other poet, but because he shows us how to all sound the same [through his colloquial verse], which is what Canadians secretly desire" ("On Poetry"). Lista is being hyperbolic here, as it is obvious from reading critical engagements with Purdy's writing and role as a writer such as Guri's that not everybody wants to sound like Al Purdy. Still, Lista here gestures towards the problematic nature of considering a colloquial voice like Purdy's "the voice of the land."

Lista also criticized Purdy five years earlier in an article for the *National Post*, writing that "Purdy is a dangerous influence" because "his easy vernacular only sounds spontaneous." Despite later stating his lack of admiration for Purdy's style, Lista does admit there is a sense in which Purdy's voice is "a calculated, deliberately crafted effort that took decades to master" ("On Poetry"). Lista positions himself here as both recognizing the precision of Purdy's colloquialism while simultaneously disliking its results. It appears that the biggest problem Lista

has with Purdy's voice is the sameness it has the potential to produce. If every Canadian writer ends up writing like Al Purdy, to what extent do those writers buy into the elements that Guri contends Purdy's writing represents?

This sameness that Lista gestures towards is dangerous, because if poets in Canada strive to achieve a similarity to Purdy they may also end up reflecting the misogyny and racism Guri finds in his verse. For writers like Lista and Guri, tying Purdy to ideas of nation and remembering him strictly with fondness is problematic for a multitude of artistic and cultural reasons. With issues of misogyny and racism being identifiable throughout Purdy's writing, how can his voice be that of a land that positions itself as welcomingly inclusive on the global stage? Does Purdy really reflect Canadian writers and what they strive for? Following Lista and Guri's claims along with those of the tribute artists examined in the last chapter one thing becomes clear: Purdy is an incredibly complex figure, and the appropriateness of his selection as "the voice of the land" is questionable at best.

4.3 LORI FOX'S "THAT OLD DRUNK'S PLACE?"

In 2019, *ARC Poetry Magazine* published a review of Howard White and Emma Skagen's *Beyond Forgetting* by Lori Fox, entitled "That Old Drunk's Place." The review ultimately found the collection of poems in tribute to Purdy "the perfect one-on-one introduction to the personality behind [the late poet]." As glowing as the review is, what will stand out to critical readers is Fox's introduction, in which she recounts taking a trip to Purdy's A-frame in her early twenties. Lost along the way, Fox "stopped to ask a local man who was leaning against his pickup, smoking a cigarette" for directions to Purdy's A-Frame. In Fox's story, the local responds by "flicking the butt over his shoulder" and replying "'Why the fuck would you want to get to that old drunk's place?'" (Fox). Though used in the review as a whimsical anecdote fondly

recalling the local perception of Purdy as the town alcoholic, the opening to Fox's review reflects much of what is wrong with how Purdy's legacy is frequently evaluated.

It is important to note that Fox is not the one in this story to recall the Purdy who drowned himself, figuratively speaking, in homemade beer and wine, it is the local man. Standing "against his pickup, smoking a cigarette," the man seems to be the spitting image of what one might assume to be Purdy's target audience, but even he recognizes that there are problems with the way Purdy is remembered. Still, Fox proceeds to celebrate Purdy in the review, calling Purdy "one of the country's most beloved, if not most celebrated, poets" (Fox). In this case, Fox's story reads as endearing, as if the man leaning against his pickup knowing nothing of Purdy's literary contributions is cause for amusement to the reader who knows of Purdy's accolades.

But Purdy being a celebrated poet does not change his potentially overly close relationship with alcohol, nor does it remove the misogyny or racism that Guri notes from Purdy's writing or cancel out the sameness Lista describes. In many ways, Fox's review exemplifies the issue this project seeks to address: a blindness to Purdy's personal shortcomings among many of his readers. Because of the way in which Purdy has been portrayed in tributes and glorified without critique, glossing over these attributes continues the sense in which Purdy is remembered simply as the "voice of the land" without any resistance. Fox is not blind to issues some may have with Purdy though, instead she implies that her reader here will laugh them off just as much of Canadian literature has in their tribute projects. If an Ameliasburg man cannot shrug off these characteristics, why can so many of Canadian literature's elites?

4.4 SAIDQA DE MEIJER'S "ANCESTOR VS. ANCESTOR"

Sadiqa de Meijer is the only poet included in *Beyond Forgetting* whose piece and corresponding biography mention any resistance to glorifying Purdy's persona, work, and name. de Meijer's poem "Ancestor vs. Ancestor" comes early in the anthology created in celebration of what would have been Purdy's hundredth birthday, and de Meijer's writing is very different from most of the collection. de Meijer's piece pits her European ancestors against Purdy's Canadian ones, contrasting their understandings of colonialism. de Meijer writes from the perspective of her ancestors that before European influence, a space "was dark" and "could be what we wanted" (11). Expressing the way in which unexplored countries seemed full of beauty and potential, de Meijer's speaker recounts "animists, ivory, pith of strange fruits" (12) and a feeling that "We must have been, for all intents, asleep" and dreaming (13). de Meijer effectively describes the sense of possibility instilled in spaces unclaimed by European colonists across the globe and reiterates the justification of much colonial expansion.

But de Meijer also references the troubling influences of colonialism, suggesting that the people whose ancestors colonized spaces often overlook these negative repercussions themselves. After nations were determined, "flickered and lit" (14) out of their darkness, de Meijer importantly writes "there was no fault to speak of. / And we didn't speak of it" (de Meijer 15-16). Of course, there are faults to colonialism and colonized spaces, and de Meijer foregrounds this unwillingness to address those faults inherent in colonized countries in her final lines. Though speaking broadly about colonialism as a force, de Meijer's poem can certainly be applied to Canada specifically, and likely should be as a result of the collection in which it appears. With most of the faults of colonialism being overlooked in Purdy's written work and in

the criticism of his work as well, de Meijer indirectly questions the appropriateness of Purdy being dubbed “the voice of the land” in her poem.

It is not just de Meijer’s poem that stands out from the rest of the collection. Indeed, the poet’s biography and accompanying statement at the end of the collection both similarly resist Purdy’s legacy in many ways. In her statement, de Meijer discusses spending a month living at Purdy’s A-frame, writing that she “grappled with the books on the A-frame shelves” because “there were many white, anthropological perspectives on Indigenous and tribal cultures.” de Meijer proceeds to write that these perspectives were “the sort of studies that are almost zoological in tone,” pointing to the problematic nature of Purdy as the owner and assumed reader of these texts and implicitly criticizing the time in which he lived. de Meijer’s most powerful statement comes as she writes that “as an immigrant writer of mixed race [...] Someone in my background could have written the books in question, and someone else could have been their subject” (*Beyond Forgetting* 153). de Meijer aligns herself with Purdy and the subjects of his poems, arguing that she understands both sides of the argument surrounding the late poet and his legacy.

That being said, de Meijer’s acknowledgment of some of the flaws behind Purdy’s writing still appears in a book that celebrates the late poet from fifty-three other writers, none of the rest of whom substantially discuss Purdy’s personal attributes. While it would be possible to argue that a book in honour of Purdy like *Beyond Forgetting* was fully necessary if the entire canon was against the late poet, the opposite seems to be the case. A similar statement can be made for *The Al Purdy Songbook*, a project in which no contributors make statements countering uncritical celebration of Purdy.

4.5 SHANE NEILSON'S "THE MOCK-LOVE POETRY OF AL PURDY"

Shane Neilson's "The Mock-Love Poetry of Al Purdy: Misogyny, Nation, and Progress," which appears in his 2019 collection of essays *Constructive Negativity*, also criticizes "the habitual misogyny of the Purdy persona" along with a host of other issues with the late poet (135). Neilson writes that "instances equating Purdy and his work with 'nation' are distressing in their frequency" since the poet's writing and persona can both be seen as flawed representatives for any nation for a multitude of reasons (Neilson 136). Neilson proceeds to outline these reasons while simultaneously highlighting aspects of Purdy's body of work that fail to represent an entire nation's literary focus.

Despite questioning the appropriateness of Purdy as a representative of Canadian ideals, Neilson positions himself as straddling the argumentative divide concerning Purdy's figure. Neilson writes that he remains "an admirer of Purdy" but that he can still recognize that "the selection of Purdy as a 'national poet' is problematic for reasons in excess of those that would apply to other poets of his generation" (138). While figuring himself as a fan of some of Purdy's work, Neilson does not let this stop him from foregrounding significant issues with Purdy's persona. Admitting Purdy's flaws, Neilson states that "Al Purdy wrote from a particularly 'macho' stance – and there's no avoiding that. Ditto his [problematic] representations of race which come from the zone of whiteness" (139). While an admirer of Purdy's work, Neilson suggests the Purdy persona is unavoidably problematic and should not be overlooked. Though still critical of Purdy's persona, Neilson's essay strikes a balance between a dismissal of Purdy altogether and an overt blindness to Purdy's "personal flaws" seen in a number of tribute texts (Neilson 137).

With issues lingering around Purdy's work, Neilson importantly brings up the issue of Purdy's A-frame and the literary and cultural symbol it has become. Neilson correctly highlights the fact that "a great amount of money and effort has been invested in presenting Purdy, for good or for ill, as 'our guy'" (137). Though subtly referencing the efforts of the A-frame Association here, Neilson makes this reference clear later in the essay, questioning whether Purdy's cabin should be preserved "as a national literary monument." Calling the "very public activities" of the A-frame Association "a pressing matter in the present," Neilson foregrounds the fact that "many white writers are on record making the connection between Purdy's wooden structure and nation" (146). Neilson highlights the problematic nature of the activities of the A-frame Association, who are actively preserving the role of a complex and ultimately problematic figure in Canadian culture. In the conclusion of his essay, Neilson poses a pressing question: "what will be the effect of state and community support for a residency grafted onto a site in which the darker forces of nation coalesced and our national preference for hypermasculinist (and misogynist) art is carried into our future?" (Neilson 147).

4.6 PURDY'S CULTURAL LEGACY

Tribute texts that recognize only the positives of Al Purdy's legacy are flawed in many ways, but the purpose of this project is not to call for a wave of revolts against Purdy as a writer. As cognitive poetic analysis of "Transient" showed, complete dismissals of Purdy's writing overlook the subtle nuances of the poet's colloquial style, and beyond his poems Purdy was certainly a key figure in developing Canadian literature.

With this in mind, there remains a significant obstacle to reaching a balanced account of Purdy's life and impact: the ongoing activity of the Al Purdy A-frame Association. The A-frame Association has been running a writer-in-residence program since 2014. Writers selected for the

residency are paid a weekly stipend and have their travel to the A-frame covered by the A-frame Association, who have put a great deal of time and effort into preserving Purdy's home. By offering writers paid time in which to hone their craft, residencies like that of the A-frame Association are crucial spaces for Canadian writing. The issue with the Al Purdy A-Frame Association is not their writer-in-residence program, though, it is their glorification of an iconic author from the 1970s who personified 1970s values in today's cultural climate.

Running a writer-in-residence program like that of the A-frame Association is not entirely cause for concern on its own. What is problematic is the way in which the organization has worked to preserve Purdy's image and characterize the A-frame as an essential space in Canadian literary history. The A-frame Association has invested a tremendous amount of effort and funds in maintaining Purdy as Canadian literature's voice of the land. But whose concerns Purdy's voice addresses is still up for debate, as has been shown through the perspectives explored in this chapter. Despite the growing list of authors writing against Purdy, the A-frame Association is yet to recognize Purdy's problematic treatment of race, gender, and nation in any significant way. This seems to be the case, as well, for most projects associated with the A-frame Association, as *Beyond Forgetting* and *The Al Purdy Songbook* largely sweep Purdy's misdeeds and problematic statements under the metaphorical rug.

Purdy's legacy being continued by a writer-in-residence program could be considered fitting if it included proper consideration of the problematic nature of many of his works and attitudes beyond and on the page. Purdy was a popular poet. He was a key figure in the writing community and his contributions should not go overlooked. In many ways, using funds to support Canadian writers with an interest in dedicating time to their work seems appropriate when considering Purdy's role in the country's literature. But much of the A-frame Association's

marketing materials imply that prospective writers-in-residence should be just as excited to live in Purdy's cabin because it was where he wrote and lived, just as they would be for the residency.

With the perspectives of the authors explored in this chapter in mind, one comes to question the appeal of Purdy's small cabin in rural Ontario. Neilson highlights Purdy's imperfection by writing that while the late poet "wrote many of his great poems [at the A-frame]," the building is "also the place where he neglected his wife and the place from which he banished his son" (Neilson 146-147). Just as there is more to Al Purdy than a couple of train rides and some admittedly significant contributions to Canadian literature, there is an unseen side to the A-frame and the association behind it. For example, Guri may have written about Purdy and his legacy after their time at Purdy's cabin, but it seems unlikely that the A-frame Association would support the application of a writer who openly acknowledges Purdy's imperfections. As Guri writes, "not everyone was invited" to the A-frame during Purdy's life (Guri). Maybe we should not be surprised that little has changed after his death.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 THE POLITICS OF PURDY

I posed three questions in the introduction to this thesis, the first of which asked what makes now the time to create texts in tribute to Al Purdy. The answer to this question can be found in the activities of the Al Purdy A-frame Association, and their efforts to preserve the image of Purdy as a national literary icon. The work of the A-Frame Association has prompted artists to write pieces both for and against Purdy as a man and as an artist, as they either support or discourage the activities of the organization and the way in which it portrays the late poet. It is important now to consider the ramifications of recollections of Purdy as they potentially benefit the A-frame Association. The vital role Purdy's name and home play in the activities of the association necessitates that he is recalled positively, even if in many cases he should not be.

I also asked how other artists take up Purdy's poetry and what aspects are quietly left at rest in these pieces. It appears from analysis of texts from *Beyond Forgetting* and *The Al Purdy Songbook* that other artists mainly take up Purdy's poetry in a manner that supports an uncritical legacy for the poet. They repurpose his metaphors in order to recall him selectively as a positive and innovative influence on the Canadian literary community, and a figure contemporary readers can value. That being said, the criticism presented in the third chapter suggests there is more to Purdy than these tribute texts show. Ultimately, there appear to be multiple perspectives on Purdy as a literary figure, yet there are no single works that capture the various perspectives on the late poet and explain why people love him, dislike him, or position themselves somewhere in between.

Though I focus here on the work and legacy of a single author, this discussion of Purdy has broader applications that should be considered. There are many Canadian writers from the 1960s and 1970s who have had an impact on Canadian literary and artistic communities since that period. One might think of Leonard Cohen, who has been positioned as a cultural symbol on a much larger scale than that of Purdy and had a number of projects created in his memory since his death. How we remember writers is important, whether it be through art or our everyday lives. Selectively remembering positive aspects of deceased artists like Purdy who were largely not held accountable for their actions during their lifetime perpetuates a host of problems. We see artists like Purdy as representatives of a community, and it is not just their image that stands for the represented group, but their actions and opinions as well. To have Purdy be an unquestioned representative of Canadian literature in the tribute texts implies that his misogyny and racism are excusable. Considering figures who become cultural symbols, whether they are dead or alive, prompts larger questions of what a culture's values are. Considering Al Purdy prompts questions of what Canadian literature stands for, whose voices it amplifies, and whose are quietly ignored.

5.2 PURDY AND COGNITIVE POETICS

This thesis began very similarly to my engagement with Purdy; developing from a strictly poetic relationship to a larger consideration of what is at stake in remembering poets, their legacy, and their work. Approaching Purdy's "Transient" through cognitive poetics can be seen as subjecting a colloquial style to formal analysis in an unlikely pairing that contributes to an understanding of poetry written in an informal vernacular more broadly. Combining Purdy's work and conceptual metaphor brings cognitive poetics to colloquial writing. The results of this analysis show the subtle complexities of Purdy's colloquial poetics, particularly the way they are

used in “Transient.” Purdy’s use of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor in “Transient” is innovative and complex. Purdy’s use of common conceptual metaphors often goes overlooked in his work, and “Transient” is just one example of this.

Bringing cognitive poetics together with Purdy’s writing has the potential to provide many more contributions both to cognitive poetics and to Canadian literature. Studying the writing of poets who are overlooked when considering potential works for close formal analysis extends the reach of cognitive poetics and shows its potential applications. The prevalence of conceptual metaphor in the works of celebrated and neglected Canadian poets can also be foregrounded by analysis similar to that conducted in this thesis. Though an unlikely pairing, subjecting colloquial and Canadian poetry to cognitive poetic examination can provide important results for both cognitive poetics and Canadian literature. The results of analyzing Purdy’s “Transient” and its adaptations in this project suggest the value of Purdy’s poetics and their ability to withstand formal analysis. More cognitive poetic studies of Purdy’s work and that of similar informal poets more broadly has the potential to provide more interesting and important results.

5.3 PURDY’S WORK AND LEGACY

There is a significant lack of critical engagement with Purdy’s work and legacy currently being published, but the A-frame Association’s writer-in-residence program continues to run. This puts Purdy’s misogyny and racism identified in criticism of him and his work at risk of being forgotten. This thesis contributes to the field of Canadian literature and more specifically studies of and on Purdy by attempting to put a marker in between strictly celebratory accounts of him as a literary figure and pushing him aside entirely. That being said, there need to be more careful considerations of Purdy and how we perceive his writing and legacy. How to treat Al

Purdy is complicated, just as his work and legacy are complex entities. As I said at the beginning, there is more to Purdy than a long list of poetry publications, a small house on an Ontario lake, and a statue in a Toronto park.

There are many limitations to my own research and this project. My work is based entirely on “Transient,” but Purdy wrote so many other poems. A cognitive poetic study focused on some of Purdy’s lesser-known writing would likely have a different outcome, just as the results of a similar study of another of Purdy’s more popular poems would likely differ. My thesis is but one of a long list of steps required to address the complexities of Purdy’s verse and memory, there are so many more needed before anything can be concluded beyond the findings of my work. Furthermore, a study focused on whether metaphors from other Purdy poems appear in tribute texts to the late poet from the projects I have analyzed and how they function in those texts could provide fascinating results that would build upon my work. Such a study would likely advance the general understanding of tribute texts by showing that this trend of working within a writer’s original uses of common metaphors goes beyond adaptations of “Transient” to tribute projects more generally.

Regarding how we treat Purdy’s legacy, more could be done. More balanced accounts of Purdy’s life and work should be produced. How and why someone is chosen as representative of a literary community should be considered more regularly, as other Canadian writers are often remembered in similar ways to Purdy. Studying the way in which these figures are recalled could potentially tell us more about Canadian literature and how it treats authors after they die. Those who are quick to dismiss Purdy should consider him further, and those who hold onto him as a cultural symbol should ask themselves why. What I hope my work has shown is the merit of Purdy’s writing and the troubling nature of how both his poetry and legacy have been treated.

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